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SOVIET MAN-NOW

SOVIET MAN—NOW

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At the "International Congress in Defence of Culture" Andre Gide made the following comments:

"I have seen some admirable works produced recently by the Soviet Government, but up to now none in which the new man whom it is elaborating and whom we are eagerly awaiting, has taken shape. It is still telling us about the struggle, about the formative period, about the bringing forth. . . . What sort of opinion would we have about a treatise—on radium, shall we say?—which is restricted to describing the process by which it is obtained? Naturally the first thing to be done is to 'win'⁵ it, but what interests me most of all, what is essential for me to know more than anything else, is the properties, the qualities, and the effectiveness of this new, radio-active metal."¹

These words, which sound very much like a challenge, deserve careful attention. They would seem far to transcend the literary problem to which the author of *Les Nourritures* intended to restrict himself. c .

For some time past **the** "new Soviet man"⁵⁵ has **been** more and more the subject of general

¹ *Marianne*, June 26, 1935.

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discussion, and if Gide is interested in him it must be because it is essential to know what this man represents and what are the new values he has to offer us. Soviet humanism, which has recently come into existence, guarantees these values; it is attempting to create a sort of new spirituality, a spirituality something like the "radio-active metal" spoken of by Gide. Soviet humanism is born of matter, and, according to the Marxist doctrine, the "new man" is the product of economic and social circumstances, not of an ideology.

The "evolution" of the Soviet regime is a term of common parlance. There are some who find that it acts like a balm on their intellectual, moral, or political disquiet. Others deplore it as being a diminution of revolutionary dynamism, as a gradual degeneration into bourgeoisism. Why upset and ruin this vast country and sacrifice millions of human lives if the result is to be nothing more than a reconstruction of what has gone before?

A third party adopts a rather cynical attitude, surmising that the successive concessions made by the powers that be are merely a clever *mise en scene*, a temporary retreat, the object being to give the country a breathing space in anticipation of the release of a fresh offensive on the part of militant Marxism. This has Happened once

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already, on the morrow of the N.E.P. (New Political Economy, 1921-1929), when, after a pause following on militant Communism, Stalin decreed an enforced collectivism and the realization of the Five-Year Plan "in four years," during which all the forces of the country were to be employed.

* * * * *

The world at large is free to choose one or other of these hypotheses and to predict this or that result for the evolution that is taking place. What is certain is that this evolution exists, and that it has been determined by extremely important factors, which we shall do our best to analyse, for this metamorphosis itself will enable us perhaps to gain a clearer insight into the character of the "new man" who has come to life in the U.S.S.R.

It need hardly be said that in a short study such as this it would be idle to attempt to deal exhaustively with such a complex question, especially since a large number of treatises and newspaper and magazine articles have already been devoted to the present situation in the U.S.S.R.

But the most strictly accurate recital of the facts, the most conscientious and impartial analysis of the Soviet's economic administration, cannot give us a complete idea of what is happening in Russia. Even Gide, who is in close touch

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with Communist sources, confines himself to queries and approximations, and writers who adopt a definitely critical attitude towards the Soviet experiment provide us with a series of pessimistic pictures, which, though they are not exaggerated (for the reality is gloomy enough in all conscience), no more explain the nature of the Russian revolution and its ultimate developments than the optimistic pictures painted by the friends of the U.S.S.R.

Writers who adopt a favourable or an unfavourable attitude towards the country are equally at fault. They confound Marxist Communism with the infinitely deeper and more organic manifestations of the national consciousness; they address their praises or their reproaches indifferently to *one or other* of these phenomena, which are often contradictory and nearly always distinctive.

In our opinion, the only way of avoiding this confusion is to envisage, or at least to attempt to envisage, a vast historiosophical panorama embracing in a general way the national, social, and religious aspirations of the Russian people.

We shall see then that it is possible to distinguish *fortuitous* phenomena occasioned by the Marxist dictators from the great developments which we consider to be *organic* because they are rooted in the very soul of the people

It may be that at the beginning of the Revolution these developments coincided in depth with the peripheral effect of militant Marxism, the

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latter being considered as an instrument of destruction, as an emblem of retribution. But for several years now this revolutionary action has been replaced by forces which we shall designate *post-revolutionary*, forces destined to surpass and overcome Marxism. They may be described as the *nationalization* and the *spiritualization* of the Revolution, and it is to this irresistible force that the Communist leaders have been compelled to yield, as we hope to show in the course of this essay.

Whether the Soviet Government is actually tending towards bourgeoisism and is becoming reactionary, or whether it is merely seeking a little breathing-space, is of little moment. Our interest is centred on the secret but extraordinarily active strength that has foiled the original Marxist plan. It is a common saying that truth will have its revenge; we prefer to say that truth is constantly healing and re-creating the universe.

One of the most profound realities of Russian life is the passionately eager search for the *social truth* and the conviction that this truth exists, though it may not yet have been fully discovered and materialized. It is a transcendent criterion, and all the Communistic measures that have sought to do it violence have come to grief.

It is indeed remarkable that Stalin with his formidable array of coercion and propaganda has failed to alter the true visage of the country. Russia has its own destiny, and though it has

witnessed the foundering of the pre-Revolutionary world, it was not for the purpose of building the Communistic City, but its own city, under the aegis of a regenerated Christianity.

The first pause was announced by Stalin two years ago, in an address delivered to the Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party, in January 1934-

It was a question of settling the main outlines of a new *realist* agrarian policy. As is well known, the Soviet theoreticians, when collectivization first began, were strongly in favour of creating "integral agricultural communities," in the style of *phalansteres*, which were to socialize not only the means of production, but the peasants' entire existence. This collectivization was to lead to the *levelling* and the absolute *uniformity* of Communistic agrarian society.

The "integral community," however, was never anything more than a "social myth."⁵⁵ Some attempts were made to form agricultural *phalansteres*, but on the whole the experiment was a failure. By way of compensation, the *Kolkhoz* was developed. This was a form of co-operation in production, in which only the means of production were communized. But the Communist legislators let it be understood that the *Kolkhoz* was only an intermediary and transitory stage, and that the peasant was first to accommo-

date himself to collective production so as finally to be ready for the integral community, the crowning-point of the Marxist system.

Meanwhile the *Kolkhoz* was subjected to extremely rigorous treatment: land, live stock, implements, and even the peasants⁵ personal belongings were collectivized by brutal and violent means. The peasants were deprived of every means of enjoying their property as individuals and were forced to devote their whole energy to the collective domain. Moreover, they were overburdened with taxes imposed by the State and subjected to the surveillance of the *political sections*, which were nothing less than police organizations.

.....

These measures amounted to a progressive levelling, to the systematic tightening of the Communist vice, with the object of ensuring the eventual success of the *phalansteres*. It was against these ends and against the intolerable yoke of the *Kolkhozian* regime between the years 1929 and 1932 that the peasants revolted in a body. Neither the repressions of the political sections, nor the transportation of *entire villages* to the northern regions, nor the militarization of field labour, had been able to break this resistance. After the disaster of the last harvests and the flight to the towns of the agricultural labourers, Stalin was forced to acknowledge that it was time to divert his agrarian policy into other channels.

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In his speech of January 1934 he announced in no uncertain terms the ineffectiveness of the integral community.

*'Every Leninist/' he said, "knows that the levelling of needs and tastes is an absurdity fit only for the *petit bourgeois* or some primitive sect, not for society organized on Marxist lines, for it is impossible to expect men to have the same needs and tastes and to live under uniform conditions. . . . Marxism is based on the principle that the needs of individuals are not, and cannot be, the same in every case, either in quantity or quality. . . . We no longer have any communities where needs and conditions are brought to a common level. Experience has shown that the community would undoubtedly have perished if it had not given up this levelling."¹

In the place of the "integral community" and the *Kolkhoz* of the strict observance, Stalin proposed, as a new model of agrarian collectivity, the *Artel*, one of the traditional forms of co-operation in Russia. According to this system, only the means of production are communized, each agricultural worker being allowed to retain *a. private sector*, consisting of living quarters, stable, live stock, poultry, and a plot of ground, whose dimensions were to be fixed by fecial decrees and became more and more extensive. In explaining the advantages of a *mitigated* collective system, Stalin took care to add that "in present

¹ *Izvestia*, January 27, 1934.

conditions the *Artel* seems to be the only possible form of the collective movement, as it caters for both the personal interests of the workers of the *Kolkhoz* and the interests of society." It is not difficult to detect in these words the rudiments of a personalism which hitherto the Marxists had refused to recognize.

The consequences of this speech were most significant. The mitigation which he announced did not go so far as to include the total suppression of the heavy taxes imposed on the *Kolkhoz* (though they were appreciably diminished) nor the alleviation of the rigours of a plan evolved in bureaucratic laboratories, but there is no doubt that the *Kolkhoz* was gradually relieved of its barrack-like character and of its rigid collectivity and that it assumed a far more elastic form of co-operation.

As we have already said, this *volte-face*, the effects of which were far-reaching, was due to the desperate resistance of the agricultural population and to the heavy sacrifices which it undertook for the sake of preventing the creation of the "communities."

"It cannot be denied," writes the Moscow correspondent of the *Courrier Socialiste*,¹ "that they (the Russian peasants) have displayed great powers of resistance towards the political authorities during collectivization. This resistance has

¹ A Menshevik organ published in Paris. It provides regular and well-informed reports on the situation in the U.S.S.R.

cost them millions of men who have literally starved to death and millions of others who have been transported or sent to concentration camps, which is equivalent to a death sentence."¹

It was to this opposition, which no form of terrorism could subdue, that the Soviet leaders were compelled to yield. Stalin's speech of January 1934 was a concession made willy-nilly to the peasants as a body. But in making these concessions he took care to base them on solid Marxist motives. He reminded his listeners that Marx and Engels had been violent opponents of the levelling preached by Socialist Utopians, and that Lenin had condemned the equalitarian idea as "an absurd invention of intellectuals." With sagacious casuistry he showed how a mitigated collectivization was in full accord with orthodox Communist doctrine and was consequently the last word in Socialist ideas. As for the "integral community," he gave his audience to understand that though it might not be possible to realize it at the moment, there was nothing to prevent its realization at some future period.

If we have dwelt at some length on these preliminary observations it is because they contain the whole problem of the Soviet evolution and provide us with a good example of Stalin's methods. All the zigzags of his realistic policy, and even the most opportunist of his measures, are backed by unassailable dialectic.

¹ December 28, 1935.

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During this same year, 1934, another most important event took place in the U.S.S.R., the heroic odyssey of the *Chelyushkin*. It will be sufficient if we briefly recapitulate the facts; the adventure has been popularized by the Press and the cinema, and it is only recently that Paris paid its homage to the learned explorer who was its chief hero.

On February 13, 1934, the *Chelyushkin*, which had set forth with the mission of studying the possibilities of regular navigation in the Arctic Ocean, was crushed by ice in the Behring Straits. Besides the captain and the crew, the vessel contained the members of the Polar expedition led by Professor Otto Schmidt, and several women and children bound for the scientific base on Wrangel Island. Of the hundred persons involved in the catastrophe only one lost his life. The remainder escaped on to the pack-ice.

Thanks to perfect discipline and the faultless landing of the passengers, the crew, and provisions, Professor Schmidt succeeded in settling his little colony on the ice, where they stayed six weeks, until Molokhov, Vodopianov, Levandovski, and several other famous airmen managed to land on the improvised aerodrome and rescue the men, women and children, their belongings, their dogs, and their scientific apparatus.

During its long and anxious stay on the moving ice, which continually threatened to engulf it, the little community had preserved a perfect morale,

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a lofty sense of duty, and a solidarity which enabled it to triumph over every obstacle. Professor Schmidt had instituted a reading circle and a journal; he had continued his scientific observations; and by means of the wireless he had maintained almost uninterrupted communication with the capital.

After their physical labours, which were extremely arduous, for their camp and aerodrome suffered continual damage from the pressure of the shifting ice, the men read Pushkin, the only author they had been able to rescue from the ship's library, and followed a course of higher mathematics.

The women and children had been evacuated by aeroplane shortly after the shipwreck, but snowstorms had raged with such violence that a month elapsed before the aviators could return. These airmen were the pick of the young Soviet air force; they were the sons of peasants and workmen, and were the pioneers of the Siberian air mail. To effect this rescue, which presented superhuman difficulties, they had to brave Arctic squalls and perform feats of prowess which kept the whole country in suspense. However, in spite of its intensely dramatic character, the rescue was carried out with smoothness, calmness and discipline. Professor Schmidt was the last to be taken off the ice; he was at the end of his strength and was suffering severely from congestion of the lungs.

The adventure was not merely an extraordinarily sporting performance and a great scientific achievement¹; it had a profoundly human aspect. The patience and courage of the little colony when faced with the perils of the Arctic, the generous effort of the young aviators who hastened to the rescue, were in accordance with the real national tradition. The odyssey of the *Chelyushkin* evoked in the breast of every citizen of the U.S.S.R. a feeling of legitimate pride.

Acting on the characteristically spontaneous instinct which is perhaps his most distinctive trait, Stalin sensed the outburst of national enthusiasm that this epic of the Arctic would awaken. Patriotic sentiments long stifled by Marxism threatened to manifest themselves with an irresistible force. Stalin forestalled this imminent explosion. He dealt with it in the same way as he had dealt with the anti-Communist tendencies of the peasants. He *legitimized* and *dogmatized* a movement that had originated outside the regime and ran contrary to its principles. In the telegram which he sent to Professor Schmidt the day after he was rescued the dictator mentioned for the first time the word "*Fatherland*"

Henceforward the "Sovietic Fatherland" became a recognized expression. This change of front was all the more opportune in that it co-

¹ The scientific observations made by the Schmidt expedition have enabled a regular steamer service to be opened in the Arctic with the aid of powerful ice-breakers.

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incided with the exigencies of national defence. With the advent of Hitler and the expansion of Japan the possibility of a foreign invasion demanded immediate attention.

But it was not only a most profound and, as it were, purified patriotism that the odyssey of the *Chelyushkin* had awakened. It had demonstrated that the success or failure of a collective group depended as much on the personal moral qualities of its members as on the energy and initiative of its head. Thanks to the *esprit de corps* displayed by a little group of persons stranded on the Arctic ice, the value of personality had been realized anew at the same time as that of one's native country.

These new currents looked as though they might effect a breach in the Marxist ramparts, and yet it would have been equally dangerous to stifle them, for they were necessary to consolidate the forces of the country in the face of a possible external enemy. They had to be embanked, but not suppressed, and adroitly diverted into the main stream.

Professor Schmidt, the crew of the *Chelyushkin*, and the intrepid aviators were given a triumphant welcome in Moscow. The spontaneous enthusiasm, the popular admiration of the first few days, were deftly replaced by Sovietic pomp. Press articles by qualified ideologists, broadcasting, the cinema, and every other means of political publicity were used to give the hardy Titans of the

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polar regions the appearance of representatives of officialdom.

We heard Professor Schmidt in Paris. We saw that he had the fervour of a great *savant* and the contemplative spirit of the men who had lived in communion with "the great white silence," but in the lecture he gave at the University of Paris he spoke very little of the odyssey of the *Chelyushkin* and its protagonists. The hero seemed to be playing a predetermined role. He was chiefly anxious to belaud the government which had financed and facilitated the expedition, and to emphasize the technical and economic advantages accruing therefrom. He spoke not as an explorer, but as an ambassador.

* * * * *

It is a significant fact that it was immediately after the triumph of Otto Schmidt and the heroic airmen that the expression "the new Soviet man" first cropped up in the official Press in Moscow. We have recalled the salient facts of the Polar odyssey of February-April 1934, because, in our opinion, it marked the beginning of a new era. It was the spontaneous outflow of new spiritual forces. The beginning of this year 1934 saw the first outlines of a "humanism" that was soon to be deepened and developed by Gorki and Bukharin. Further, this ideological evolution was to coincide with a whole series of economic and political transformations that distinguish the

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years 1934 and 1935, transformations that may be compared to a succession of inchoate revolutions, for they have radically changed the outward appearance of the U.S.S.R.

November 28, 1934: Abolition of bread cards.

February 1935: Remoulding of the Constitution with the proposal to reintroduce direct and secret voting for the election of the Soviets in 1937, and to "democratize" the regime by introducing certain parliamentary elements.

May 1935: Promulgation of the new statute of the *Kolkhoz*, by which the peasant's private sector was to be considerably enlarged. Henceforward the sector was to comprise a dwelling, a plot of land $\frac{1}{4}$ hectare in area, 3-5 cows, 1 horse, 20-40 sheep, sows, poultry, etc. . . . Further, the new statute provided for the admission into the cadres of the *Kolkhoz* of the *kulaks* and other *non-proletarian* elements. It conferred administrative prerogatives and extended powers on the *Kolkhozian* assembly; and finally it defined the character of collective property—it belonged to the State, but was handed over for exploitation to the workers of the *Kolkhoz*, who were to have the *perpetual enjoyment* of it. This definition is of great importance inasmuch as it confers a character of stability on collective property.

June 1935: Dissolution of the Association of Old Bolsheviks, which was a sort of Marxist

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Upper House, and which since 1922 had ensured the orthodoxy of governmental measures.

September 1935: Educational reform, consisting in the reintroduction of the old pedagogic methods: Pupils' reports, stricter surveillance of their conduct. Abolition of the distinction between proletarian and non-proletarian children. Parents to be held responsible for their children's conduct.

September 1935: Reform of the family code, making divorce facilities more complex and enforcing by stricter methods the responsibility of parents for their children who are under age. Reintroduction of affiliation law. The abandonment of children by their parents to be punished by imprisonment.

(A Press campaign was launched to bring before the public the rights of children and the virtues of maternity. To emphasize the importance of this new spirit and the dignity of "the Soviet family," Stalin paid an official visit to his mother.)

October-November 1935: Suppression of all food cards; increase of open State shops; liquidation of the *Torgsin*; currency reform.

December 30: Suppression of class privileges in the departments of higher education, which henceforward were to be open to students of non-proletarian origin, who had previously been excluded.

Clearly all these reforms are of supreme

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importance, but from the economic point of view it was the abolition of the bread tickets which showed the most marked change in the methods of government.

Before the introduction of this reform, workers in the U.S.S.R. were paid for their services in money and with cards entitling them to purchase the staple articles of food at reduced rates. These cards were of four denominations corresponding to the qualifications of the worker to whom they were awarded:

(i) Skilled workmen and "shock" workmen (the latter were entitled to a supplementary ration).

(2) Lower-grade State employees, artisans, non-skilled workers (except those employed in particularly arduous tasks, who belonged to the first category).

(3) Other categories of non-skilled workers.

(4) Sick children.

The consumers were attached to co-operative stores depending on the services (offices, factories, workshops) in which they were employed. The stores supplied them with comestibles at prices varying with the category but always lower than those prevailing at the open State shops. The holders of cards of the first category, which entitled them to purchase goods at the lowest prices, were the privileged class under this regime.

There were also the *£.R.K.* shops, reserved for

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specialists (engineers, doctors and brain-workers); the *Insnab* shops, for foreign specialists and foreign Communists; and the *Torgsin*, where payment could be made only in foreign currency or in gold. The *Torgsin* had been established for the absorption of gold and objects of value preserved by individuals and of foreign currency brought there by tourists or sent by Russian *imigres* residing abroad, who used this institution to assist their relations who had stayed behind in the U.S.S.R.

Finally, there were the State shops, open to all and sundry, like the open markets of the *Kolkhoz*, where food was obtainable without cards but at much higher prices. Employees were also entitled to meals at the restaurants attached to factories and offices.

This extremely complicated system¹ had brought about a distinction between the holders of different kinds of cards which was as serious as

¹ We append a summarized comparative table of the four categories of cards. Each of the categories was divided into sub-categories, but for reasons of space they have been omitted here.

I

1 kg. of bread per day.
1 kg. of meat per month,
1 kg. of sugar per month.
2 kg. of oil or fat per month.

II

400 gr. of black bread per day.
400 gr. of sugar per month.
200 gr. of oil or fat per month.

III

400 gr. of black bread per day.

IV

200 gr. of milk per day (for sick children).

the old caste distinctions, if not more so. Those who benefited by the system were the holders of cards of the first category, foreigners, specialists, and the qualified representatives of the army (who came under a special clause). As for the other categories, the little that they received was far from providing them with the minimum of comfort. The fact that this distinction by categories held good also in the canteens and the factory restaurants increased the general discontent.

The card system had brought about another phenomenon: the variation in the purchasing power of the rouble, known as the " Socialist rouble," which could not have any fixed value, as its purchasing power varied according to the category to which the purchaser belonged. Finally, the existence of the *Torgsin* made it quite impossible to fix the rate of the "Socialist rouble."

The reforms carried out in 1934-1935 have finally abolished the complexity of this regime. Foodstuffs may now be bought freely in the State shops.¹ But to facilitate the execution of these important reforms it was necessary to have recourse to two other measures: increase of wages

¹ The Soviet authorities maintained that these reforms were made possible by the increased production of foodstuffs. Actually the re-establishment of uncontrolled commerce was determined by the fact that the State, to which all the shops belong, relies on the purchasing power of the population for the enrichment of the treasury. The taxes which are levied on the State shops amount to 62,690 milliards, which is equivalent to 79.6 per cent of the budget. This means that the U.S.S.R. is the only country in the world where bread, meat and other necessities of life are taxed.

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and lowering of prices. These measures have already been effected, but the workers (especially those belonging to the privileged category) have suffered pretty severely from the abolition of the card system. In actual figures they are reckoned to have lost 20-25 roubles per month. Nevertheless, writes the correspondent of the *Courrier Socialiste*¹:

"no one would like to see the reintroduction of the system. Though the lowering of prices is infinitesimal up to now, it is expected to make rapid progress in the future, which ought to bring about a corresponding improvement in the standard of living. To-day the people are experiencing the simple delight of being able to spend their money as they like, even though the individual's resources have been lessened."

One of the results of the abolition of the cards is the demand for increased wages; this played an important part in the development of the Stakhanovist movement, which we shall consider later.

As regards the *stabilization of the family*, about which there is so much talk nowadays in the U.S.S.R., how exactly has it been affected by the recent reforms? An examination of the texts will show that it is principally a matter of severe punishment for fathers who have left their homes

¹ In the article already cited.

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and are avoiding payment for the sustenance of their children who are under age.

No alteration has been made to the Soviet matrimonial code. As is well known, the code makes no difference between free love and marriage, the latter being considered merely a formality of registration. The code has always been strict as regards the obligations of the father towards his children (irrespective of whether the union was uncontrolled or registered), and there is no doubt that this was one of its most positive elements. But in spite of its strictness the interests of minors were not sufficiently protected. The father had no difficulty in evading his obligations by decamping, changing his address, and giving a false report to the authorities about his domestic situation. The new laws encourage and facilitate affiliation claims and have increased the penalties; the defaulting father is liable to a fine not exceeding 50 per cent of his salary and to imprisonment for 1-3 years.

As for divorce, the new law does not restrict it; it remains as it was, viz. *unilateral*, but the procedure has become more complex, inasmuch as both parties must be informed of the divorce and their responsibility towards their children has to be definitely established.

No legal change has been made concerning abortion; it is still authorized in hospitals. But one must not omit to mention that there seems to be a movement against this practice. The State

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favours an increase in the birth-rate and has given unofficial instructions to doctors to discourage abortions.

Though it would be premature to speak of a real stabilization of family life, there is no doubt that there is a new spirit at work among the directors of the U.S.S.R. They realize that a healthy and progressive State cannot exist without a healthy family. It is not so much the new laws which are important as the vast publicity given to them, elementary as they are. They are promulgated with a great *eclat* accompanied by detailed commentaries. Stalin's dramatic gesture in paying an official visit to his mother shows the importance that the dictator attaches to the new family ethics.

The situation is much the same in the sphere of education. The scholastic reform already mentioned, which means a return to the old pedagogic methods, was introduced only after numerous attempts had been made to reform the educational system on Communistic lines. The attempts failed, and the State was unable to ensure the moral and physical guardianship of the child such as is prescribed by out-and-out Communism. Its resources and its methods were quite inadequate. If the child was to be removed from its family it would have been necessary to establish an untold number of *creches*, nursery schools, and immense juvenile *phalansteres*. But

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with the exception of some highly interesting attempts at educational centres—an invariable subject for comment on the part of travellers to the U.S.S.R.—which are quite inadequate, the State as nurse has failed to perform the immense task it set itself.

This is undoubtedly one of the causes of the renaissance of family ethics in the U.S.S.R. The State has been obliged to appeal once more to the family, to parents, to ensure the future of Soviet children. On February 28, 1935, a decree was promulgated that henceforward fathers and mothers would be held responsible for their children's indifferent reports and bad conduct at school. This responsibility would weigh most heavily on Communist families, who would be brought before a *party tribunal*.

"A Communist is judged," we read in an article on this subject which appeared in *Pravda* of March 4, 1935, "not only by his output in the workshop, but also by the way he educates his children. If he educates them well, he is a good Communist; if he educates them badly, he is a bad one."

Parental authority has thus been re-established in a very rigorous form. There is something personally affronting in parents being held responsible to a tribunal. Can true family discipline, true parental authority, be exercised under legal pressure?

But at least the new pedagogic spirit **that now**

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prevails in the U.S.S.R. may put a stop to the laying of information by children against their parents, which has hitherto been prescribed to the young citizens of the Soviet and which is one of the worst blemishes of the Communistic educational system. The re-establishment, and one might even say reinforcement, of parental authority is in direct opposition to the former system, which debased the family and exalted the State, the guardian and foster-father of Communist children. Class morality encouraged denunciation, family ethics will certainly not tolerate it.

In essence, however, despite the modifications to which we have drawn the attention of our readers, the laws in the U.S.S.R. affecting marriage and the family remain as they were in the beginning, namely a series of experiments undertaken by a materialist and militantly atheistic State, which regards the union of man and woman solely from a strictly naturalistic and economic standpoint.

The consequences of these dangerous experiments threaten the physical and moral well-being of the population to such a degree that the legislators have been induced by the very necessities of life to regard certain aspects of the matter in the light of traditional ethics.

On the other hand, it would be a grievous error to imagine that the whole population of the U.S.S.R. is given over to depravity as a result of the legislation inspired by atheistic ethics. It

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would be a malicious and completely unjustifiable condemnation. Despite the fantastic zigzagging of their legislators, the men of Russia have been too absorbed in the immense constructive effort in which they have been summoned to participate to sink into debauchery. And as for the Russian woman, she has remained what she has always been—a devoted companion and a valiant mother. For her, suddenly emancipated and left, from childhood, to her own resources, the Revolution was more "the hard school of life" than a school of vice, and the bonds that unite her to man have been more often forged in suffering than in pleasure.

Nothing does more damage than those long extracts from self-criticisms gleaned haphazard from the Soviet Press which are cited in support of the contention that the population of the U.S.S.R. is morally degraded. The facts quoted may well be true, but an investigation made in other countries with other regimes would reveal no less serious vices and moral depravity. But in the U.S.S.R., as elsewhere, these failings do not contaminate the whole population. And the mere fact that self-criticism *exists* proves that the authorities would like to eliminate these scourges. But the effort is only possible because the majority of the Russian people has remained fundamentally sound. Otherwise no legislation could raise the status of the family. Ethics are not manufactured by decrees.

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Our optimism seems to be justified by the rigorous exclusion of indecency and vulgarity from the literature that reflects life under the Soviet. A certain realism is to be found here and there among novelists when describing scenes of brutality (episodes from the civil war and militant Communism), but the woman in question is always depicted as the victim of the upheaval, not as enjoying her newly-won liberty. When she is forced by tragic circumstances to renounce maternity she does not selfishly rejoice as though she had been freed from an obnoxious duty, but regards her plight as a torture and a humiliation.

If we except the fictitious novels of Kollontai, describing life in "the Russian hive"; and certain pages of Gladkov and Shaguinian, distinguished for their Communistic banality, there is no panegyric of depravity to be found in the literature of the Soviet.

Finally, the books and periodicals of the U.S.S.R. do not regale their readers with accounts of lascivious or criminal adventures such as are published only too often in the bourgeois world.

These are, in broad outline, the economic and legislative reforms carried out in the U.S.S.R. during the past year, and the principal manifestations of the spirit that prompted them.

To complete the picture we deem it indispensable to quote the words addressed by Stalin in the

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spring of 1935 to the cadets of the Military Academy. In the course of his speech the dictator stressed two novel aspects of his "realist policy": the immediate creation of cadres of men qualified in every branch of the national economy, and the necessity of treating these men with respect, *even if they were not Communists*.

Henceforward he no longer takes as his basis the Party, but the vast strata of the population to whose loyalty he appeals. He seems to be giving his sanction to the fact that these masses, though participating in the Revolution, do not necessarily subscribe to the Communist programme—a highly important distinction, marking one of the stages in *the nationalization of the Revolution*. The reconstruction of the country is no longer dependent on the Party, but on the whole Soviet Union. Man has been restored to his former dignity, irrespective of his Marxist orthodoxy.

Let us see how Stalin formulates these new features of his realist policy.

"Without men," he says, "technical efficiency is not practicable. Machinery controlled by men who know how to master it can and ought to accomplish miracles. But now we must give our attention primarily to the men, to the cadres, to the workers. As it is, the bureaucratic attitude to labour is outrageous. Men are played about with as though they were puppets. Machinery and technical affairs are treated with respect, but no attention is paid to the men. . . . First and fore-

most we must learn how to appreciate men. Given good cadres in industry and agriculture, in transport and the army, our country will be invincible."

He brings his speech to a conclusion with:

"I drink to the health of every Bolshevik, no matter whether he belongs or does not belong to the Party. Yes, I drink to the health of those who have not joined the Party. The members of the Party are a minority,¹ the majority is formed of non-party men. Whoever serves the cause of the proletariat is a Bolshevik, and there are many non-party men who serve it. . . . Do not misunderstand me; I am not attempting to dissuade you from joining the Party; I merely wish to say that among the non-party men there are many who are loyal. . . ."²

This speech, though purely political, had extremely curious ideological and even economic consequences. To it was due, as we shall see later, the birth of the Stakhanovist movement. It is also in accordance with the spirit of Soviet humanism, and this, too, has yet to be discussed. "Take care of the man!" . . . "Treat him with respect!" . . . "A non-party man deserves as much consideration as a Communist." Such were the new Stalinian slogans.

If we are to believe the Soviet leaders, this evolution, whose principal stages we have done

¹ The Communist Party has about five million members in the U.S.S.R.

² *Pravda*, May 6, 1935.

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our best to indicate, has come about according to programme, according to the dynamic principle, which demands constant metamorphoses: thesis, antithesis, synthesis, the three "periods" of the transformation by the Communist City draws nearer and nearer to its final goal—the classless society. The integral regime, such as we have known it up to now in the U.S.S.R., with its food tickets, its "Socialist rouble," its rigid collective groups, its family completely subjected to class morality, its universities barred to non-proletarians, etc., etc.—all that belongs to *the period of transition* which precedes the inauguration of the classless society, which finally permits of the free development of man.

But so far there is no sign of the coming of a classless society in a country in which, on the contrary, new social, bureaucratic, political, and military forces are in process of formation which did not exist before the Revolution.

Thousands of men from the lower strata of the population have been thrown out of their habitual *milieu* by the Revolution and have risen to the surface, where they occupy the positions of authority vacated by the former classes. It seems to us that this is one of the most tangible and lasting effects of the Russian revolution; it may have a salutary influence on an immense country whose ruling class was too restricted, too remote from the people, too firmly anchored to tradition. It would be more accurate to speak

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not of the disappearance but of a new and vigorous crop, of the *elite*, which will develop the fertile and creative energies of the country, provided that it, too, does not turn into a privileged class.

It is no doubt owing to the ever-increasing strength of this *elite* which has risen from the ranks of the people that it has been able to break through the barriers set up in Russia by a handful of fanatics. The reforms to which we have referred have been occasioned by a deep-seated reaction in the national conscience.

The will of a people which has been subjugated and deprived of every sort of freedom has succeeded, after a spiritual struggle that arouses our sympathy and admiration, in imposing *its own* policy on those in power, who have had to legitimize it by way of speeches and decrees. But the real meaning of the Soviet evolution is not to be found in speeches and decrees. It is only a rough mould fashioned by most astute opportunists, and it shows more signs of being a progressive bourgeoisism than a creation of a "new world."

But what is taking place within the mould? What new values are destined to emerge therefrom? That is the problem of the Russian of to-morrow. To-day we know nothing, or next to nothing, beyond the fact that these spiritual forces have *already* offered a successful resistance to every assault that has been made upon them.

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We have recently witnessed the last act of the Soviet evolution of 1935. Stalin's speech about the necessity of creating new cadres of men resulted in the birth of the extraordinary *Stakhanovist Movement*, which has received considerable attention from the Press in every country of the world.

In the night of August 30, 1935, Stakhanov, a non-party worker employed in a mine in the Donetz, created a remarkable record. He thought of a new method of apportioning the labour by letting the automatic hammer work for six hours on end, while the rest of the party propped up the roof and cleared away the coal. By this means he succeeded in breaking up 102 tons of coal in the six hours.

A few days later, as a result of improved methods of labour, similar records were made by other workers in the Soviet Union: Bussiguin, in the automobile factory at Gorkoff; Smetanin, in the "Skorokhod" shoe factory; the spinners, E. and M. Vinogradov; the road-mender Krivinnos; and others. The increased production due to these new methods created a great sensation, and exceeded the most optimistic calculations of the experts. And these methods had been evolved, not by the directors of factories, but by the intelligence and the endurance of the worker, his powers of observation, his practical experience.

Stakhanov and his fellow record-makers immediately became the heroes of the Union. Their

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achievements gave rise to a wave of enthusiasm that swept across the whole country. But it was to end in the same way as the patriotic fervour aroused by the odyssey of the *Chelyushkin*.

The "Stakhanovists" were given a triumphal reception in Moscow; they were covered with flowers and dazed with speeches. The front pages of the Soviet newspapers were, and still are, occupied by the names and photographs of these new champions, and accounts of their remarkable records. The movement initiated by them has taken hold of the workshops, factories, mines, and railways. It has spread even to the artistic and intellectual world: theatrical directors are hoping to give several performances a day; Stakhanovist methods figure in the syllabus of the Academy of Science; delegations of Stakhanovist workers have been sent abroad. Finally, Stalin called a meeting of the "heroes of labour" at the Kremlin, where he gave them an inspiring address, taking care to stress the fact that the Stakhanov-Bussiguin movement was conceived in the very womb of the masses in a perfectly spontaneous manner:

"To a certain extent, the movement developed in spite of the factory directors, and it had to struggle against them. You all know of the difficulties undergone by Mussinsky, who was employed at a saw-mill at Archangel and who worked out his labour system unbeknown to the management and his overseers. Stakhanov's trials were almost as severe. He had to fight, not only

certain officials, but even his fellow-workers, who jeered at his innovations. . . . The movement is irresistible because it has been born spontaneously."¹

Stalin goes on to compare the Stakhanov movement to the October Revolution, to the creation of the first Soviets, to a sort of "explosion." But he hastens to add that it is a question not only of a creative impulse but also of a high degree of professional competence, of superior technical qualities.

"What sort of people are they (who began the movement)? For the most part they are young or middle-aged workers, of both sexes, well educated and well trained in their work. They set a high standard of care and precision, they realize the importance of the time factor, and they calculate, not in minutes, but in seconds."²

We see here how Stalin, with his sagacity and his versatility, has managed to turn to his own advantage a spontaneous movement of popular energy and the professional experience of highly skilled workers. Once again, by legitimizing it, he has deprived this organic impulse of whatever danger it might have had for the stability of a rigidly planned industry. The Stakhanovists have upset the plan, but henceforward the plan will be adapted to their standards.

It is here that arises the real danger of the new

¹ *Izvestia*, November 22.

² Extract from the foregoing article.

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methods. The Soviet chiefs were not content to crown the beneficent heroes of labour with laurel wreaths. They are now appealing to *all* the workers in the Union to follow their example. It is now proposed to set up in every factory a higher rate of output, which will be somewhere between the normal rate and the highest records made by the Stakhanovists. This is tantamount to expecting the rank and file to perform feats of which only the *elite* are capable.

The same thing has happened with the "Udarniki" ("shock" workers), the "Otlichniki" (picked factory hands), the "Izotovtzy" (emulators of the record worker Izotov), etc. All these various categories of picked workers were at first formed spontaneously for motives of emulation, enthusiasm for increased production, and so forth, when the first Five-Year Plan was in operation. But immediately one of these categories was formed the Soviet Government tried to induce the other workers of the Union to join it; it degenerated into a forced enthusiasm and factitious emulation. The standard of the "shock brigades" sank rapidly; their members degenerated into mere professionals and caused serious damage to the machines, which they used without the slightest care.

The Stakhanovist movement has gone the same way. The Soviet pomp having done its work, there is nothing left of the heroic records set up by Stakhanov and his colleagues but a sort of super-

Taylorism introduced by demagogic methods. This Taylorism, or Fordization is quite likely to develop into pure and simple sweating.

The *Izvestia* of November 16, 1935, reports the following remarks as having been made by a foreign specialist to one of the foremost Soviet technicians:

"I must say that you Bolsheviks have invented something highly ingenious in this Stakhanov-Bussiguin movement. We know something about this kind of system ourselves. You have only to excite the enthusiasm of the best workers so that they exceed the regulation index figure, and the rest will follow suit. Everyone will be out to beat the index figure, and then all you have to do is to raise it."

The Soviet organ that quotes this interview is indignant at the Stakhanovist work record and rationalization being compared with the intensive production of capitalist factories, but it is not very easy to see how the Communist technicians manage to draw a distinction between the two methods of production. In capitalist countries, rationalization, to which Socialism is opposed, is founded on the demand for high wages and on piece work. We see precisely the same situation arising in the U.S.S.R.¹

¹ But the great difference between profit made in the U.S.S.R. and profit made in capitalist countries is that accumulation of private wealth is impossible under the Soviet regime. One must be careful, therefore, not to over-estimate the analogies between the bourgeois tendencies of the Soviet Union and those of countries where unmitigated capitalism is the order of the day.

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The ordinary worker in the Soviet Union is well aware of what is happening, and he is showing an increasing distrust and hostility towards the Stakhanovists. Whereas by clever publicity Stakhanovist methods are exhibited to the foreigner as the latest achievement of the Soviet system, this super-Taylorism is meeting with serious obstacles in the country itself and is opposed by the workers. Severe punishments have been provided for workers who try to resist the Stakhanovist movement, which is being received in an atmosphere of sullen discontent.¹

A few days after having rendered homage to the Stakhanovists Stalin called another meeting, this time of the "Combiners" (drivers of reaping and threshing machines). The theme of private interest and the welfare of the Soviet was developed still more enthusiastically. "Let us be prosperous!" . . . "Life is splendid!" . . . "Life is becoming more beautiful and more enjoyable every day!" . . . These are the latest Stalinian slogans. Mysticism seems to have been discarded with the other accessories of the heroic period. The "shock" Bolshevik has been forgotten, and it is now the turn of the "joyous youth" type to be belauded by the Soviet showmen.

Admittedly this change of front was due to the extreme exhaustion of the country, which is

¹ A penetrating appreciation of Stakhanovism is to be found in the *Peuple* (the organ of the French syndicalists) of January 7 and 8, 1936.

making but a slow recovery from the intensive collectivization to which it has been subjected, and which is longing for a period of rest. The astonishing feature of the situation is the cynicism with which the Soviet leaders adopt capitalist methods and palm them off as new manifestations of the Socialist idea. Stalin has failed to effect the subtle combination of personal and social interests that he announced in his speech of January 1934. He now seeks to win over the *elite* of the workers by the bait of personal gain and *petit bourgeois* comforts.

One can appreciate the warning recently addressed by Gide to the Soviet youth:

"Every new conquest made in the realm of science or letters is immediately followed by a mental relaxation. At such times as these man looks for rest, for comfort. That which in reality is only a step in the endless staircase seems to him to be a broad plateau where he can stretch himself at ease. I appeal to you, therefore, from the heart of the West: Do not relax, young forces of the new Russia!"¹

Although it attracted the abnormal attention of the Western world by its solemnity and its numbers, the Stakhanovist congress was not the first collective manifestation of this kind.

Almost every year there are meetings of picked

¹ *Commune*, December 1935.

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workers at the Kremlin—skilled workers from the key industries, "shock" Kolkhozians of both sexes, all the *Celebrities of the Field and Factory*, to use the Soviet expression.

These assemblies held in the heart of the Red capital are of great importance. They put the workers in direct communication with the Government and inspire them with the knowledge that they are playing their part in shaping the destiny of their country.

Let us be under no delusion. These congresses are of no political effect; they have not even a deliberative character. They meet to receive directions, not to give them, and the "platform" speeches of Stalin and his colleagues usually feature on the programme. But they afford the "celebrities" an opportunity of giving their chiefs professional advice (more or less indirectly). They initiate them into the mysteries of high politics, and create a sort of physical contact between the people and those who govern them. Finally, and this is their chief advantage, they enable the picked worker to sit in the seats reserved for the heroes of the Union.

We must resist the temptation, then, of indulging in sarcasm at the expense of these congresses of "celebrities." These demonstrations often seem to be more justified, more necessary, than those organized by the moneyed interests in the newspaper and political world. The "shock" worker, the hero of the factory, is more deserving of

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honour than beauty queens, criminal notorieties, and film stars, with their princely salaries.

We are likely to remain in a state of ignorance as to the truth of the situation if we refuse to recognize the dynamic qualities of certain methods employed in the U.S.S.R. In our opinion, it is this dynamism that holds the secret of the suggestive strength of Soviet propaganda. This propaganda reflects the spiritual impulse, the thirst for purification, inherent in the Russian people. Those who are in sympathy with Communism, or imagine that they are, are under the impression that these qualities are inherent in the regime. But the methods employed by the Government having nothing specifically Marxist or Communist about them.

These meetings of "celebrities," for example, were certainly not provided for by Marx. They are more of an organic phenomenon, so to speak, possibly a distant echo of the meetings of the *Mir* and the *Artel*, the two essential forms of Russian social life. In spite of his omnipotence, Stalin finds himself forced to make use of these social organisms of national origin. For the moment he has been able to give them the character of a strictly disciplined procession or parade, but one day the parade may overflow the boundaries marked out for it and become a deliberative assembly.

For the time being the "celebrities" serve and support the Government. Solemnly feted at the Kremlin, familiarly harangued by Stalin, they

even seem to be attached to it. And yet the workers who take part in these congresses are not Communists; most of them are *non-party* men, but "loyal," as Stalin recently described them.

It is quite possible that these loyalists of to-day may turn into deliberate opponents to-morrow, for they are better informed than the rank and file from which they have emerged, and they have a clearer notion of the difficulties that beset their country.

It may be wondered why these *corps d'elite*, who have not by any means assimilated Marxist ideas, not even in a rudimentary form, give their support to the Stalinian dictatorship, which has treated the people in the most inhuman way during the recent period of wholesale collectivization.

The citizens of the Soviet will reply that this regime, however inhumanly it may treat the proletariat, has conferred on it a new kind of dignity, the consciousness of being a chosen class. The sacrifices that the Government demands from the people are demanded in the name of the people; the punishments inflicted on it when it resists carry with them no humiliation. "The working classes," writes Henri de Mann *a propos* of the proletariat in the capitalistic world, "are rendered inferior because they feel themselves to be inferior."¹ It is this inferiority complex which has disappeared from the consciousness of the Soviet worker.

¹ *Au delà du Marxisme.*

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In this connection it is interesting to hear **the** testimony given by a certain Solonevich, who escaped from a Soviet prison and who, although he paints the gloomiest picture of the concentration camps in the U.S.S.R., admits the absence of this feeling of inferiority even among those who have been imprisoned—both agricultural and industrial workers—for having resisted collectivization.

"According to the Communistic ideology," writes Solonevich, "the person, or the sum total of persons, has been replaced by the impersonal 'class' or the still more impersonal 'masses'. . . . In the measures taken (by the Soviet Government) there is no element of personal humiliation, of personal insult. In spite of all the cruelty of the Soviet, the prisoners in the concentration camps, including the peasants, are treated with more politeness than, for instance, we treated our servants before the War. . . . Bolshevik cruelty has no anger, no passion in it; it is the cold, impersonal cruelty of a machine, of the electric chair, for example. But there is no meanness about it, it is not a contempt for one's inferiors. . . ."

"The reality in Soviet Russia," continues Solonevich, "has enough gloomy shades about it without adding to them and painting everything black. That would be not only unjust but unreasonable. Absolute blackness does not exist in Nature. The democratization of life, the absence of the class spirit, the disappearance of the dis-

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paraging meaning formerly attached to the word 'Jew' are the few positive elements of 'the school of Soviet life.' The proverbial 'softness' of the Russian is a thing of the past, for whoever was subject to this softness would not survive two days in the struggle for existence. Millions perish, but millions of others are being moulded. The 'school of life' is harder here than in the ghetto or the Klondike. The division of mankind into nations and classes has also disappeared; we are all in the same boat. . . . And thus we see growing up beneath 'the trials of divine chastisement' a young generation that has an everlasting hunger, but whose mind is clear, whose will is firm, which is stripped of snobbishness, which knows nothing of the Marxist ideology and certainly nothing of patient suffering. It is a hardy generation."¹

Nothing could give us a better idea of the soul of Soviet Russia than the passage we have just quoted. And it is precisely this atmosphere that prevails at the "meetings of celebrities," which is attended by a large number of young people. It is these non-party men and women who represent the "hardy generation" of which Solonevich speaks. If they submit for the moment to the Party dictatorship, it is because they do not realize their strength. They have an obscure feeling that this dictatorship, with all its defects

¹ *Dernieres Nouvelles* (published in Paris), of April 17, 1935. It was for this "daily" that Solonevich wrote his impressive memoirs entitled "La Russie dans les Camps de Concentration."

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and blemishes, has conferred a new dignity on them. And they fear the return of masters who might try to deprive them of this dignity and plunge them back into a state of inferiority.

This, it seems to us, is one of the basic reasons for the stability of the regime which is otherwise decidedly unpopular.

II

We have considered it essential to draw a distinction between what we have termed "the Sovietic pomp" and the profound realities of life in the U.S.S.R. The new world which is being unfolded to our eyes contains organic, spontaneous, and real values hidden by a system of shams and illusions. To doubt these values would be an injustice; to accept them blindly as they are presented to us by Soviet propaganda would be a grave mistake.

This distinction should be applied to Soviet humanism, a problem which we willingly hand over to philosophers, contenting ourselves with indicating its history and the atmosphere in which it has developed.

But before we broach this question we must recall briefly the break that was made with determinism by the Soviet philosophers and the laying down of the auto-dynamic principle which

underlies the conception of the new man. This conception is a departure from pure materialism and sociological determinism and rejects the mechanistic theory, of which, incidentally, Marx was never an adherent.

Berdiaev calls this rupture "the crisis of materialism⁵⁵ in the heart of Soviet philosophy. For the latter sees in matter itself a revolutionary and dynamic principle, and "this is equivalent to attributing to matter an active spiritual principle not determined from without.⁵⁵ In other words, "the dialectic declares that matter contains conflicting forces that themselves engender movement." In this revolutionary Marxism there is an element of conflict and action, to such a degree that "every young Communist credits himself with the ability to reform the world.⁵⁵ The fact is, concludes Berdiaev, "no system of deterministic monism has ever been maintained to the bitter end. . . . For such a system conflicts with the human intellect.^{5,1}

....

This active, transfiguring element dominates the "Soviet man," a picture of whom suddenly appeared in the Press of the U.S.S.R. shortly after the odyssey of the *Chelyuskin*, and to whom qualified ideologists devoted numerous commentaries.

Needless to say, the "Soviet man⁵⁵ is wholly

¹ *Destin de l'Homme dans le Monde Actuel.*

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dependent on the Russian Marxist doctrine; he has issued forth from the womb of Socialism and the Party; his full development can take place only in a classless society; and he manifests himself most completely by his creative activity. Let us hear what *Pravda*¹ has to say about him:

"The most remarkable feature of the development of the Socialist structure is its creation of a new type of man, whose ideology is permeated by the fundamental principle that work is a question of courage and of honour. The type has been born in the womb of the masses. . . . Soviet industry has forged and educated thousands of new men, industrial directors, engineers, skilled workmen. . . . They are characterized, not only by their boldness, their spirit of enterprise, but by something even more important, their technical culture."

This new man, attached to a new conception of work, is not without greatness inasmuch as he was born in the heroic atmosphere of the national reconstruction. But then we have the inevitable corollary:

"The new man is not formed of his own accord, and it is the Party that directs the whole process of the Socialist remoulding and the re-education of the masses. The Communist must adhere to the programme and the discipline of the Party. . . . At different times the Party may have different demands to make."

¹ May 17, 1934.

The same idea is expressed by Bukharin in an article on Soviet culture.^x He reminds his readers that at the time of militant Communism and the civil war the Party demanded a Spartan attitude, a maximum of courage and endurance, on the part of the individual:

"A great ideal demands an active heroism which has become a natural social quality inherent in a large class and a large party. Communism is the incarnation of fraternity between every person in the world, but its realization presupposes a victory gained after the most implacable class-war. This victory will be preceded by an international alliance of the proletariat, by the most thorough-going revolutionary internationalism, by a universal class-hatred of capitalism. Hence the reason why Christian charity, which is applicable to all, even one's enemies, is the greatest enemy of Communism."

* Communist society ensures the fulness of life, but this fulness is bound up with the planned State, and this is no fetter that impedes free creation; on the contrary, this free creation is only possible as the result of political planning:

"This why every kind of work, whether material or 'spiritual,'⁵ develops on a single basis (the classless society, the Party's general line of policy). . . . Communism is the incarnation of the fulness, the multiplicity, the riches, of material and spir-

¹ *Pravda*, March 30, 1934.

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itual life. It is poles apart from the ideology of the feeble and the faint-hearted."

Budkharin takes care to write the word "spiritual" in inverted commas, to show that this spirituality is of the Marxist variety, a spirituality that has nothing transcendent about it. Marxists use the word "spiritual" to denote everything that is not directly concerned with economics pure and simple. It is the sum total of man's psychic and creative (dynamic) energy, the artistic, scientific, intellectual life, etc. . . . It is important to know the exact meaning of the word as used by Marxists; for them, materialism and immanentism have deprived it entirely of its transcendental or ethical character. It is not even concerned with sensibility or emotion. For the Marxist the spiritual may be a creative reality, but the real is always essentially material.

The extracts we have given posit the premisses of Soviet humanism, but the incipient doctrine is to be completed by Gorki, though he directs it into slightly different channels. To the theme of the combative man and the Socialist creation he adds imperceptibly that of man heralding a new fraternity, an immense social redemption. Humanism is to be replaced by humanitarianism, a class humanitarianism, from which warfare is not excluded:

"We have seen in our own days," writes Gorki

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in the famous article that announced his doctrine,^x "the emergence of the humanism evolved by Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, a humanism having as its object the complete emancipation of the body of workers of every race and every nationality, so that this body may be snatched from the claws of the capitalists. The doctrine is based essentially on the love of man. . . . This revolutionary humanism confers on the proletariat the right to fight capitalism to the death, the right to destroy and annihilate the hateful systems of the bourgeois world. . . . For the first time in history the true love of man has been organized as a creative force and sets itself the task of freeing millions of workers."

Without this passage our knowledge of the history of Soviet humanism would be sadly incomplete. The theme of the love of humanity (so very Russian) is mixed with elements of hatred and violence that drag on it like a dead weight. But in spite of this Marxist conception of the indispensable class-war, one feels a new breath in these words of Gorki, a timid breath, a flickering light, but a light that once kindled may perhaps never be extinguished.²

¹ *Pravda*, May 23, 1934.

² It must not be forgotten, however, that on the morrow of the assassination of Kirov, Gorki, in an official telegram, demanded that the direst penalty should be inflicted on the murderers. Similarly, on January 26, 1936, he published a defence of the staffs of the concentration camps, whose "humanitarian activity" was intended to re-educate the prisoners, who had been found guilty of political crimes. So far as we know, such a defence had never before been made by a writer representing a country's intellectual *élite*.

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The new doctrine met with considerable success, probably because it was unconsciously expected. It was under the aegis of humanism that the congress of Soviet writers was held in September 1934. This congress created a great sensation; the foreign writers who attended it came back deeply impressed. There can be little doubt that the new humanism contributed greatly to the *rapprochement* between Soviet writers and the intellectuals of the West. Scanty consideration was given to the fact that the thinkers of the U.S.S.R. and their guests did not interpret the word "humanism" in exactly the same way. For the humanists of the West, even those who are far removed from Christianity, are "spiritual" people attached by strong bonds to basic Christian ideas. Whereas the Soviet humanists find their doctrine in dialectic materialism and class warfare.

This misapprehension was evident throughout the congress. The poets and novelists were carried away by this breath of humanity. They thought they were inhaling a freer and more charitable air; their lungs expanded in this suddenly softened atmosphere. The apparent yielding seemed to disquiet some of the fanatical adherents of out-and-out Communism:

"In the course of our congress," said one of these fanatics, the poet A. Surkov, "a word which a few days ago would have aroused suspicion, if not hostility, has acquired civic rights. The word is 'humanism/' Some of our comrades conceive

this humanism as though it were a young, fair-haired girl walking through a scented meadow, a damsel wreathed in flowers. . . . The picture is certainly attractive, and yet I must reject it. Something within me revolts against it. I feel compelled to say that our humanism is different. Perhaps it is more brutal, but it is certainly more beautiful. . . . We are always talking about 'love, joy, and pride,'⁵ which form the ingredients of humanism, but our younger writers are too apt to forget the fourth element of humanism, which is expressed in the austere but beautiful idea of hatred."

Nevertheless, in spite of this summons to hate and strife, it might be a mistake to think that the Soviet humanism is wholly pagan. To quote the expression of Jacques Maritain, it may yet be that it is more a question of a "misdirected Christian impulse." In his article on the new doctrine Gorki admits that the Gospels are *in essence humanistic*. Such an admission coming from a Soviet pontiff is most significant.¹ It shows that as soon as it is a question of the human being the natural tendency is to recognize transcendent values and the fact that no purely materialistic system can be "maintained to the bitter end."

Thus appears the first crack in the structure of dialectic materialism. Without the admission of what is not only spiritual but transcendent, the "Soviet man" remains piece of a lifeless mechan-

¹ In the article quoted Gorki contrasts "the humanistic Gospels" with the Old Testament.

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ism, an artificial man. The reason why he has not been a source of inspiration to literature—a fact noted with dismay by Gide—is that *he does not exist in flesh and blood*. He lives only in speeches and manifestoes. He is the protagonist of the "Soviet pomp." . . . But artists and intellectuals, both in Russia and in Western Europe, imagine in all sincerity that they recognize in the very sound of the word "humanism"⁵⁵ something free and noble-minded on which they set their hopes.

The progress of Soviet humanism did not cease with Gorki's initial manifestoes and the discussions that took place during the congress of writers. Expressions of class hatred become less and less violent, and emphasis was laid on the imminent approach of a classless society which will obviate the necessity for hostilities and remove the yoke of an inhuman dictatorship.

In this perfect society the unfolding, the fulness, of man will be realized at last; his spiritual liberty (in the Marxist sense of the word) will be recognized; and his autonomy re-established. Arguments in favour of the new Soviet doctrine are now derived from the youthful works of Marx and the humanism which he borrowed from Feuerbach. The doctrine envisages a more extensive field for free creation, a sort of effervescence of energies and ideas. According to

Bukharin, for example,¹ the Communist regime has already introduced the golden age—

"in which man has become the master of Nature and social forces, and all the laws of compulsion have been abolished . . . all the social spectres which haunt humanity are disappearing . . . anxiety about one's daily bread no longer exists, and there is realized for the first time the true humanism, a universal humanism, which confers untold wealth on life and enables man to develop all his faculties."

All the Communist thinkers insist on the characteristic feature of the perfect Marxist society being *the development of free creation*. Here, as in the case of the word "spiritual," it is a special kind of freedom, not to be confused with a freedom based on transcendent values. In a recent study² Berdiaev points out very clearly the vital difference between the two conceptions:

"The attainment of Communistic liberty means the realization of energy by collective social action, by a collective transformation of life . . . it means the realization of energy and the transformation of life in a given direction, which is dictated by a predetermined conception of the truth, by a predetermined doctrine. It is a liberty subject to a fixed ideology, not one tenet of which may be withdrawn. Communistic liberty confers no liberty on those who refuse to adhere to the

¹ *Izvestia*, December 8, 1935.

² *De la Mission Prophétique de la Parole et de l'Idée* (La Cite* Nouvelle, No. 10, 1935).

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one and only saving Faith, to the one and only doctrine. It deprives its opponents of every right."

The accuracy of this interpretation of the Communistic conception of liberty is confirmed by the reports from Moscow published by the *Courrier Socialiste* on November 29, 1935:

"For some time now the persecution of those who think differently from the Government has become more severe. If, before Kirov's assassination, there were optimists who thought that the Government might relax, they must be disillusioned now. The G.P.U. seems to have lost all sense of restraint; it is like an uncaged beast. . . . Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, Anarchists, are all arrested indiscriminately and sent to 'isolation' and concentration camps. They have even introduced new methods of punishment: political prisoners are sentenced to penal servitude. Trotskyists, Mensheviks and the rest are now to work in the mines, to fall a prey to scurvy, and die of exhaustion and disease. I have seen a letter from a young Trotskyist who has spent the last few years either in prison or in exile. He has just been arrested again and sent to work in the lead mines in the Altai Mountains. This is what he writes: 'I have to work in water up to my waist. I've lost nearly all my teeth with scurvy. . . . Help me! Men are dying like flies all round me.' Old revolutionaries, who have already known the inside of the Tsarist bagnios, are arrested and transported . . . and their Communist friends dare not help them. Sick,

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worn out, and with no winter clothing, they are sent North. These men are being sent to certain death; pity is unknown in our days. There is no hope at present of the Government relaxing its merciless methods."

It is difficult to see how the free creation and the full development of man of which Bukharin speaks can be realized under such conditions. The reason why the Soviet humanists have not even thought of dealing with the problem of real liberty is that they have not yet dealt with any of the great transcendent problems. Their conception of man is still rooted in materialism; it seems even less spiritual than that which was manifested to some extent at the congress of writers. In the article which we have just quoted, and which, incidentally, was directed against a Christian thinker, Bukharin concludes thus:

"It is absurd to worry ourselves about God like pious old women. It is not man who is created in the image and likeness of God; God is created in the image and likeness of man. We have not the slightest need of him. . . . Man having realized his own value, a happy and creative human society is for us an end in itself and has no need to be sanctioned by divine idols."

It is curious to read at a time when humanism is in full swing words written by one of the leading Soviet ideologists which might have been copied from an elementary manual on militant atheism.

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As we read the passage we cannot help feeling uneasy about the fate of the "new man"⁵⁵ who has not yet been freed from his Marxist mould and who seems to be becoming more and more unreal.

Ought one to conclude from all this that there is no new man in the U.S.S.R.? That, we think, would be a grave mistake. The ideologists of Moscow were not in error when they announced the coming of a new type of human being.

But it bears no resemblance to the artificial "Communist man."

Naturally, after eighteen years of strife, of suffering, of feverish investigation (which was charged with dynamism, even though it was misdirected), a deep, inevitable change must have taken place in the heart of the Russian people. The long list of official reforms is only the reflection of this change, the forced recording of a spiritual curve. The portrait of the young Soviet man sketched by Solonevich gives us a fairly accurate notion of what has happened to this "hardy generation."

At the beginning of this work we spoke of a broad historiosophical conception¹ which would

¹ At the present time even the Soviet Government seems to be imbued with the same idea. The Press of the U.S.S.R. is now publishing resounding articles setting forth the necessity of a return to historical tradition. According to this new idea, the builders of Communist Russia are directly continuing **the work** of the Muscovite Tsars and of Peter the Great.

include the Russian revolution with all its contradictions, its failures, its creative impulses, its *post-revolutionary* developments.

It is not a question of adopting a political attitude but of a sort of spiritual charter, gradually evolved by the young forces of Soviet Russia. Corresponding to this work that is going on in the very heart of the U.S.S.R., there is a post-revolutionary movement the adherents of which are Russians living abroad who believe in the gradual *nationalization* and *spiritualization* of the Revolution.¹

Recognizing the Revolution as a *fait accompli*, the "post-revolutionaries" consider that it is destined to pass beyond the limits of Marxism and to create essentially organic forms which, though stamped with the new spirit, will be attached to the great Russian national and religious tradition. The conceptions that they have formulated are not the fantastic, sentimental dreams of a milk-and-water idealism; they are the prefiguration, perhaps even already the

¹ The post-revolutionary group in Paris is working out a programme that aims at the abolition of both private and State capitalism, i.e., the exploitation of man by his fellow-man and of man by the forces of the State. It envisages a co-operative system inspired by the Russian solidarity, and is a counterblast to Fascism. It is opposed to foreign interference of any kind in the U.S.S.R. Cf. "Le Mouvement Post-Revolutionnaire Russe," by J. Schirinski-Schikhmalov, in *Esprit* (1934).

Similar movements, recognizing the Russian revolution as a *fait accompli*, but striving nevertheless for a spiritual liberation and a social transformation, have sprung up around the review *La Cite Nouvelle*, directed by J. Bunakov and G. Fedatov, and the weekly publication *La Russie Nouvelle*, directed by A. Kerenski.

reflection, of a concrete reality in process of being born behind the shifting stage effects of the "Sovietic pomp."

A return to the past may be impossible, but it is equally impossible to live in the stifling atmosphere of Marxist materialism, the crushing ceiling through which a large breach must be made to admit the light of heaven.

This breach can only be made by an immense impulse of charity, taking the place of hatred. This is the motive that inspires the following lines from the young poet L. Savinkov:

Our brothers had departed for the slaughter;
 The war rose up behind them.
 We are come to distribute life;
 We are the builders of the truth;
 We are not impelled by hate.
 It is not anger that makes us raise
 Our toil-worn hands.¹

Viewed from this spiritual angle, man, as he really exists in the U.S.S.R., presents certain features which are most characteristic. But these features are not exclusively the dowry of the Revolution; they have been formed, or rather crystallized, under its influence, but they are part of a far deeper, more organic complex of the Russian soul. First and foremost they are manifested in the attitude of the peasant towards the

¹ *Avant-Poste*, by L. Savinkov, Paris, 1936.

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soil (still a vital problem for the Russian social conscience).

To our mind, the character of the resistance offered by the rural masses to agrarian collectivization has not been sufficiently examined. This resistance was deliberately ignored and passed over in silence by the Communists until the appearance of Cholokhov's, the Soviet writer's *The Cleavers of the Ground*, which gave an impressive and most realistic description of the struggle.

Capitalist sociologists, for their part, lost no time in proclaiming that the instincts of small proprietors were firmly implanted in the soul of the Russian peasant, and that collectivism, that social chimera, had definitely failed.

Which is true—the Communist or the capitalist point of view? Or rather, which is more in conformity with the truth? "Collectivization is a complete success," says Stalin. "Collectivization is an utter failure," retort his adversaries. Is it possible to discover the purpose of Stalin's agrarian experiment?

We put this question recently to a peasant who has escaped from Soviet Russia. After throwing in his lot with the Communists, at the age of nineteen, he was gradually disillusioned as to the truth of the Marxist social theory. He finally joined the peasants in opposition, was imprisoned, and then transported to Siberia. He managed to escape in September 1935, and after surmounting a thousand obstacles, crossed the frontier. He is

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now thirty-six years old; he has his Soviet agricultural diploma, and worked for a long time in the *Kolkhoz* and the *Sovkhoz*.

According to his account, he began by having a sincere belief in the Communistic myth, which at the beginning of the Revolution seemed to coincide with the search for the Russian social truth. Though he was the son of a prosperous farmer, the young man did not hesitate to become a member of the party, and served it loyally in various agrarian organizations. Even more, before Stalin launched his scheme of out-and-out collectivization, he, in his native village, had evolved a project for a collectivized farm.

It is noteworthy that when this project was put before the Communist authorities, it was considered anti-revolutionary, and was rejected as being a co-operative system on most autonomous principles, and in no way dependent on the State.

It should be added that as long as it was a question of forming agricultural co-operative systems independent of the State, the people welcomed, and even anticipated, them. And the case of our agriculturalist was no exception to the rule. It was the State which obstructed the development of these free *Kolkhozes*, which, according to the Government, hindered the formation of integral communities.

It was not, therefore, the collective principle in itself that aroused the opposition of the peasants,

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but the grave abuses of Stalin's integral collectivization. In the process of this collectivization the agrarian masses have been cruelly persecuted, as we have seen. In addition, they saw the disappearance of the last vestiges of an autonomous rural administration and of a free co-operation, two essential elements of social life, the loss of which brought about a deep and bitter disillusionment among the people.

Finally, the people were wounded in their religious susceptibilities, for the collectivization of the land was carried out under the aegis of the atheists—a point which cannot be emphasized too strongly. In a moving story, the Soviet writer Karenin shows us a "Communist constructor" ploughing up ancestral graves—a sinister and ferocious picture symbolizing the tragedy of the country more effectively than the most touching verbal description.

It is against this violence, these brutal and inhuman methods, that the Russian peasant has risen. He has realized the sterility and the impiety of the system to which he might have given his allegiance in the first days of the Revolution. Thenceforward his conception of society put up with the dynamic forces of Communism but would not yield absolutely to them. It was thus, for instance, that the rural masses, in spite of incitements to pillage, made no attempt, in a large number of cases, to appropriate for their own benefit the domains of dispossessed landlords.

They looked on them as *national property* which ought to be portioned out according to a fair agrarian legislation or converted into collective domains, such as homes for the aged, model farms, or agricultural colleges.

The fact is that the social ethics of the Russian peasant are far older than the Marxist doctrine. In our opinion, one of the most interesting aspects of this social conception is that of the "*rightful enjoyment of wealth.*"

It must be remembered that the Russian people had a very limited experience of "property" in the Western sense of the word.

Subjected for centuries to the regime of the *Mir*, they knew of only one right of enjoyment of the land (the land of God, the land of the Tsar), so that there is nothing in the nationalization and portioning out of the land that should run counter to their traditional ideas. But this right of enjoyment is very definitely limited, as it depends solely on the work that is done. The cultivator takes possession of the land by right of the labour which he puts into it; the customary law of the *Mir* gave to each man the ground "where his axe, his scythe, and his plough had been at work."¹

This taking possession of the land *by right of labour* was the only confirmation of the right of enjoyment under the communal regime of the *Mir*, it being impossible to buy, sell or bequeath

¹ Cf. "Tradition Gommunautaire Russe," in *Esprit*, January i, 1935.

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the land. It was *portioned out* among the peasants, who put their personal seal on it, so to speak, with their axes, their scythes, and their ploughs. If one of them ceased working and left his land, it went back to the common stock of the *Mir* and was redistributed to the working members of the community.

It was due to this most individualistic regime that the Russian acquired his conception of the *rightful enjoyment of wealth*, an enjoyment confirmed by personal work, the only source of possession. The land, not being the object of sale, purchase, or any other commercial transaction, was something sacred, inviolable. Whoever speculates in land, whoever tries to enrich himself by any other means than work is a *kulak*, an unrighteous man, a man who "forgets God."

The agrarian reform of Stolypin, introduced some years before the War, gave the peasant the right to leave the *Mir* and to convert his plot of land into a private property, in the manner of Western European farmers. The object of the measure was gradually to put an end to the regime of the *Mir*, which was obsolete and even archaic from a scientific point of view. However, at the time of the Revolution, sixty per cent of the arable land was still subject to this regime, and even the peasants who benefited from the new law (such as the family of the witness of whom we have just been speaking) have retained the most individual ethical sense that looks on *the sale of land*

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or the speculation in it as unlawful commerce, and considers that the only authority for the enjoyment of wealth is personal labour.

This conception, we imagine, was at the root of the hostility of the masses towards the owners of large estates and the *kulaks* (rich peasants). It was far less a question of personal resentment than of a moral condemnation of a regime that authorized the holding of land without working on it, and of speculation. It is for this reason that any return to the old seigniorial domains would be impossible. Our witness used this characteristic remark in speaking of a certain landed proprietor of his locality, who is now living abroad as an *emigre*:

"If it depended on us peasants, he would be permitted to return to the U.S.S.R. He has left a good impression behind him, and we don't wish him any harm. We wouldn't stop him coming home provided that he gave up all idea of settling down in his former property, which is now a home for the aged. . . . But, if he likes, he can cultivate his plot, like the rest of us. We would give him the necessary land. . . ."

We have quoted his actual words because they illustrate in striking fashion the attitude of the peasant towards the land. It is clear that this attitude is opposed to large estates being in private ownership, but it is also opposed to small properties such as we know them. A farm, however small, that might be the object of sale or

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speculation, that is to say, *anything furnishing material for speculation*, would offend popular ethics.

Are we to presume, then, that the peasant would welcome a return to the old regime of the *Mir*? This would be hardly possible, for this regime, which prescribed periodical redistribution of the communal land among the peasants, gave the enjoyment of wealth a too fluid character, and gave rise to innumerable lawsuits.

This, briefly told, is the dilemma of the agrarian question in Russia. Clearly it is not easy to solve, and we make no pretence of doing so. We have merely indicated its main aspects as represented to us by a typical member of the Russian agrarian masses.

As regards integral collectivization, the masses have had the opportunity of judging and condemning the Communist experiment. The rural districts rose up against the apparatus of Stalinian collectivization, which, as we have seen, has been obliged to make considerable concessions. As a result of these concessions the people are more amenable to the collective regime.

"In recent years," writes the correspondent of the *Courrier Socialiste*, "a change of mind has taken place among the peasants. . . . They are beginning to realize that it is more profitable to stay in the country than to work in the towns. In the Ukraine especially the situation has improved. The produce there is twice as cheap as it is here

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[the Moscow district]. Every Kolkhozian has his plot of land, his cattle, and his poultry. . . . He knows what contribution the State will levy on him and what use he will make of what is left. A certain contentment, a certain satisfaction, is beginning to show itself. . . . Naturally, the better the peasant is fed, the more liberty he will want. Up to now, the peasants may be heard making such remarks as: 'In itself, collectivization is a good thing. What is bad is our enslavement.' "

As to the practical results of the collective regime, the writer adds:

"It is very difficult to give an exact description of life in the Kolkhozes. The greatest diversity prevails there. In some of them, especially in the Moscow area, there are schools, *creches*, theatres,¹ and cinemas, which things, of course, were unknown in the country in Russia in pre-Revolution days. But in others, even when they are quite near Moscow, everything is as it always was. The way of living is of the most promiscuous description: the whole family uses the same spoon to eat almost inedible food, and white bread has not been seen for the last five years."

Nevertheless, the Moscow correspondent, whose impartiality is obvious, reckons that if the regime of collectivization is maintained for two or

¹ There is a very interesting article on the theatre in the country, by V. Zenzinov, in the *Dernieres Nouvelles Russes* of November 10, 1935. The Kolkhozian Theatre attracts millions of spectators, and numerous theatrical companies tour the country only. The artistes are usually highly delighted with their rustic tours.

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three years more and continues to develop in the direction of greater independence, it will become one of the established customs of the country and will meet with no further opposition.

One may safely say that at present the rural masses are reaping the fruits of their victories and that the phase of agrarian Communism has been definitely left behind. The new *Slite*, coming together at the congresses of "Celebrities," has become conscious of its strength. Hitherto, the rulers have had to treat it with respect; they will soon have to consult it.

It is difficult to say what form of agrarian exploitation will be elaborated by the people the day this consultation takes place, but it will certainly be determined by the social ethics of the Russian and by his conception of the rightful enjoyment of wealth justified by labour. It is also extremely probable that the present collective system will develop in the direction of a co-operative regime, applied, not by rigid State organizations, but by a free community.

With regard to factory hands, their fate is closely bound up with that of the peasants, as most of them have come from the rural masses and share their interests. The industrial worker has also undergone a deep-seated evolution. He has traversed the successive phases of the Socialist construction and has been able to form an opinion

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of the experiment. Far from emancipating him, as Marx promised him it would, the experiment has subjugated him to the State and made his very existence dependent on the Party. The history of trade unionism in the U.S.S.R. is well known; it consists of a careful watch kept by the Party organizations over the professional organizations, of the systematic suppression of any tendency to independence on the part of the syndicates, and the conversion of the non-political trade unions into more and more centralized State organizations. At the present time a reform of the trade syndicates is under consideration, but it is significant that it is not the representatives of the syndicates who are preparing the plans, but Stalin himself, in collaboration with the chief official of the trade unions, Chvernik, who is completely subservient to the Party.

It cannot be denied, however, that the Soviet worker is on a higher level than the worker in pre-Revolution days, not so much as regards his standard of living (which is now very difficult to ascertain, owing to the recent suppression of food cards) as his knowledge. The proletarian now has a far more extensive system of education at his disposal than before; scholarships are open to him by which he can increase his technical knowledge and develop his intellectual abilities. Participation in the Five-Year Plan has, despite its rigours, deepened the worker's knowledge of his responsibilities, and it has given him the

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conviction that he is sharing in a great national work, and an *almost mystic sense of his destiny*.

The Stakhanovist movement has demonstrated the dynamism of the workers, their extraordinary qualities of endurance, and the revealing of a creative energy that is no longer willing to submit to "planning."

The Soviet leaders have said that the Revolution has forged "new men," but it is precisely these men who are preventing and who always will prevent the realization of Communism.

There remains one question which is perhaps more difficult to answer: When this metamorphosis is complete, when the new man appears before us in his final state, free, and disencumbered of the travesty of "Soviet pomp," what will be the intrinsic value of his "ego," of his inmost nature, of his purely spiritual complex?

At present we can only see the social man struggling to regain his independence. Marxism, especially the Russian variety of it, has accustomed us, perhaps, in spite of ourselves, to think of man solely as a member of society. It is at this point that we may recall the question that Gide asks so anxiously.

For there is another man, man faced with the mystery of love and death, man in his solitariness face to face with God. This man is still hidden from our eyes, and we shall not be able to see into

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him until, after reconquering his social independence, he has reconquered his spiritual independence.

However, the witness that we have already cited let fall some words which seem to indicate, or rather suggest, a metaphysical nostalgia, which, in the case of this peasant's son, is particularly moving. In speaking of the subjects he studied when at a Soviet high school, he remarked: "We were taught about the leading philosophers of materialism, but not a word was said about Socrates or Plato. . . ."

* * * * *

One of the means we have of appreciating, if only approximately, the accumulation of spiritual forces in the U.S.S.R. is by noting the manifestations of religious life. It is an infinitely complex problem, which deserves to be studied by itself.

It would certainly be premature to announce, as some would like to do, the cessation of the anti-religious war, but it may be asserted that hostilities have slackened during recent months owing to the numerous checks received on the "no God" front. These checks have been acknowledged even by the Soviet Press. *Pravda* has complained on several occasions that the Communists are too "passive," while the defenders of the Church are becoming more and more "active."

Another reason why religious persecution has

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been relaxed is that since the Soviet Government has entered into closer relations with Western Europe it has taken care to conceal its anti-religious policy. The brutal action of the atheists has been replaced by a more subtle and more prudent propaganda. There is even talk of summoning a council of bishops in 1936 for the purpose of electing a patriarch. The Metropolitan, Peter Krutizki, the "custodian" of the patriarchal throne, has recently returned from exile after an absence of many years. In the country, churches which had been closed during the collectivization period, have been gradually restored to divine service.

These measures are indicative only of a relative relaxation, certainly not of a return to religious liberty.

The tone of anti-religious writers is still extremely harsh and shows no signs of granting that "free spiritual development" promised by Sovietic humanism. In one of her recent articles Marietta Shaguinian, the official interpreter of the general line of policy and the panegyrist of the atheists, was indignant at "the secret union of all those who still believe in God," whom she compares to weeds in the Communistic City which will certainly be uprooted. The word "pope," used in its most offensive sense, is still current among ideologists who have not yet learnt to abandon the language of harsh and insulting polemics.

We may quote as an example a passage taken

from an article written for *Izvestia* by its foreign correspondent II 'a Ehrenburg, and published on August 28, 1935. The article is entitled "New Matters":

"The Catholic pavilion at the Brussels Exhibition is called *Rerum Novarum* ('New Matters'). This was the name of the Papal Encyclical published 44 years ago, which dealt with the labour question. The Catholics have learnt at a most opportune moment that Marxism cannot be got rid of by *Te Deums*. In the newspapers intended for the *bourgeois* they wax wroth at 'the insolent demands of idlers who simulate hunger,' and in the newspapers intended for the workers they sympathize with their 'just claims.' They even go so far as to engineer harmless strikes, after having taken care to obtain permission not only from the bishop but also from the industrialist concerned. They are nothing more or less than a holy kind of *agents provocateurs*) instead of the police, we have the heavenly armies, represented by 'the reverend gentlemen,' who are called to direct the workers' movement."¹

This article shows that militant atheism has no intention of disarming, and that though the representatives of the Soviet regime may be careful what they say and do in "spiritual" matters when they are out of Russia, they do not take the same precautions on the home front.

Moreover, the clergy are still looked on generally as pariahs by the other citizens of the U.S.S.R.

¹ *Izvestia*, August 28, 1935.

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They are taxed out of existence, subjected to continual annoyance, and frequently deprived of their domicile and a residential permit. The population is warned against priests and religious, who are suspected *en bloc* of being anti-revolutionary, and it requires very great courage and self-abnegation to give asylum to priests who have been proscribed and hunted out of their parishes. They may console themselves with the thought that, like the Son of Man, they have not where to lay their head.

It is very difficult to give an accurate estimate of the number of priests and religious whose names are on the prison registers or who are still in a prison or concentration camp, as the servants of the Church are never persecuted *as such* by the Soviet authorities. They take care not to charge them with being members of this or that denomination, but prosecute them for having contravened one of the articles of the penal code concerning counter-revolutionary action, espionage, sabotage, or "the exploitation of the religious prejudices" of the people.

This intentional confusion makes it extremely difficult to gauge at all accurately the number of those who have been the victims of religious persecution. It suffices to say that of the 100,000 monasteries that existed in Russia before the Revolution, not one has survived. There must, therefore, be thousands of monks and nuns who have perished.

How is it possible to talk of humanism as long as this situation continues, as long as terror still reigns and the concentration camps are full to overflowing? At the beginning of this study we cited the evidence of the correspondent of the *Courrier Socialiste* regarding a recrudescence of this terror. According to equally reliable sources, the number of persons detained in prisons and camps and sentenced to transportation now amounts to no less than 7 million. How is one to discover how many of these unfortunate people have been punished on account of their religious convictions?¹

These millions of prisoners include Orthodox and Catholic priests, monks and nuns, pastors, and Rabbis, and the martyrology is not by any means complete. The Catholic Church has many names inscribed in this martyrology, and in the spring of 1935 she lost one of her greatest and most zealous servants, Mgr. L. Federov, the Catholic Exarch of Russia, who died in exile after a term of cruel imprisonment.

This prelate, who evoked the admiration of everyone who had the honour of making his acquaintance, undertook a grand work at the beginning of the Revolution. In collaboration with the Orthodox Patriarch, Tikhon, he devoted

¹ Of these 7 millions it is calculated that 500,000 have been incarcerated in the gaols of the G.P.U., 1,500,000 have been kept in the concentration camps, and 5,000,000 have been transported. Two million peasants have been sentenced to various punishments for having resisted collectivization.

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himself body and soul to effecting a reconciliation between the two Churches with the object of paving the way for the final Union. The work, which showed signs of meeting with success, was interrupted by the arrest of both the Patriarch and the Exarch, but the reconciliation has been realized in a wholly supernatural manner: the Catholics and the Orthodox have made common cause together, whether in prison, or in the concentration camp, or at liberty (though they are always menaced with persecution). They vie with one another in ardent faith, they learn to know and help each other, they pledge themselves to each other, and die side by side. This new brotherhood in common suffering, in imitation of Christ crucified, is undoubtedly the greatest miracle of present-day Christianity.

And so, after eighteen years of systematic persecution, the Church has not succumbed. She has been driven back into the catacombs, her servants have been scattered, but they have not ceased to pray and to offer up the holy sacrifice.

It is only prudence and anxiety not to expose to further dangers those who are suffering for the Faith that prevents us describing the heroism of these soldiers of Christ and the irresistible force of their spiritual action.

In fine, the atheists have only succeeded in shattering the remnants of a clerical caste that, by reason of its complicity with the Tsarist State, had long lost any semblance of prestige. It was a

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caste comprising only "court bishops" and cassocked civil servants. Their responsibility is great, for it was their abuses, their reactionary spirit, their indifference to the social problem, that gave the atheists an excuse for denouncing the complicity of the Church with hidden forces. But those who have never identified themselves with this caste, and are the true representatives of the Russian Church, have emerged from the Revolution with added strength. Made glorious by their martyrdom, ready to perform heroic deeds at a moment's notice, they continue their labours in the U.S.S.R. in a manner that, as we have already said, is nothing short of supernatural.

There is no doubt whatever that oppression has merely increased the spiritual resistance. The peasant whose testimony we have cited tells us of a new type of ascetic and missionary. In the place of the secular priest, married and burdened with a family, there has appeared the humble hermit who is content to live in a hut unfit for cattle and to wander from village to village, begging alms.

There are also ordinary laymen with a knowledge of the Scriptures who go from one district to another bearing the word of God and reciting liturgical prayers. The closed churches, the desecrated graveyards, the burnt ikons, live again in the popular prayers and hymns. A Golden Legend is gradually taking shape throughout the country, and once more, to use the

beautiful metaphor of the poet, "Christ is passing through Russia in the semblance of a slave."

One of the most noteworthy religious movements now in progress in Russia is that of the evangelical sects, especially the Baptists, who preach an elementary but extremely stirring doctrine amid the densest masses of the people. These sects, offshoots of Protestantism, passionate devotees of morality and the Scriptures, have long existed in Russia, but their expansion was particularly rapid during the Revolution. In 1932 it was estimated that the number of young people composing the various evangelical organizations amounted to two million. This figure is quoted by the American writer Sherwood Eddie, who is in sympathy with the Soviet experiment and has therefore no reason to exaggerate the forces opposed to Communism.¹ Seeing that at the time this estimate was made Communist youth numbered three million members, this figure of two million organized young Christians is extremely significant.

Heckert, another pro-Soviet writer, defends the anti-religious policy of the Communist leaders but acknowledges the success of the Baptist propaganda, adding that the Russian people is deeply imbued with the spirit of the Gospels. This admission is especially remarkable coming from a writer who has no hesitation in criticising the

¹ Sherwood Eddie, *Russia Today* (New York: Farrar & Rhinehart, 1934).

Russian Church and sees in Communism "a new faith."⁵²

The Tolstoyans are still quite numerous in the U.S.S.R. Like the Baptists, they spread their doctrines amid the masses. These lay missionaries are much liked by the peasants; their asceticism, their humility, and their "non-resistance"⁵⁵ inspire them with respect. The cult of Tolstoi himself has retained much of its vigour and, as is well known, Yasnaya Poly ana has never ceased to be a pilgrimage resort. The Soviet Government has not dared profane the memory of the great writer. As for the peasants, they know that Tolstoi loved the people and wanted to identify himself with them. One might almost say that it is the social feeling of this thinker rather than his doctrine that attracts the masses.

The Tolstoyans voluntarily co-operate with the peasants, and even the Soviet authorities sometimes enlist their aid for social services, for their probity and their sobriety make them excellent employees. But the Tolstoyans acknowledge neither the State, nor the law, nor the obligation to perform military service, and Communism has not succeeded in overcoming their passive resistance, which makes them redoubtable opponents of the regime.

The multiplication of sects and the impotence of the Church, deprived of her Patriarch, renders the religious problem infinitely complex and

² Heckert, *Religion and Communism and Moscow Dialogues*,

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hazardous, but the aspects of popular life that we have indicated testify to the miraculous survival of the spirit of Christianity in the U.S.S.R.

Sooner or later the Church will re-emerge from the catacombs and shine with a new splendour, but on the day when religious freedom is proclaimed and she wins back her right to action there will be grave problems for her to solve. She will have to deal with a new conscience and she will not be able to adopt a neutral attitude towards the transformation of society. She will have to make her choice between a past that has gone for ever and a future which she alone will be capable of building on the immovable foundation of transcendent values.

When that day comes, the Church's mission will be to develop a comprehensive social action that may be put at the disposal of the new man. The priest must become the collaborator of the worker and banish the mistrust aroused by the complicity of certain members of the former clergy with the powers that be and the hidden forces of money. The Russian people is still labouring under the painful impression that the clergy is an exclusive caste attached to the past, and to the past only, and that it longs for the return of an obsolete regime.

The Church must be mindful of the fact that her mission is to preserve dogma intact, that she is not dependent on any temporal regime or on any particular historical epoch, but that she is

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the Spouse of Him who has been called the "Father of the Future Age."⁵⁵

Neither the mawkish humanism fit for congresses of intellectuals nor Marxist humanism, of a more heroic character but charged with hate and staggering beneath the weight of materialism, can provide substantial nourishment; only the true Christian humanism can do this.

The artificial Communistic man fabricated by the ideologists of Moscow has certainly no craving for spiritual food, but the man of 1936 who really exists at the present day in the U.S.S.R. hungers and thirsts after transcendent justice. This man has been created neither to the image of the "shock Communist" nor to that of "joyous youth." He is an infinitely more complex and more tragic figure, embodying all the aspirations, all the longing for transfiguration, and all the suffering of Russia.

January 12, 1936.

