

LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 505  
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

New Lives for Old  
in Today's Russia  
Anna Louise Strong

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What Has Happened to the Common  
Folk of the Soviet Republic

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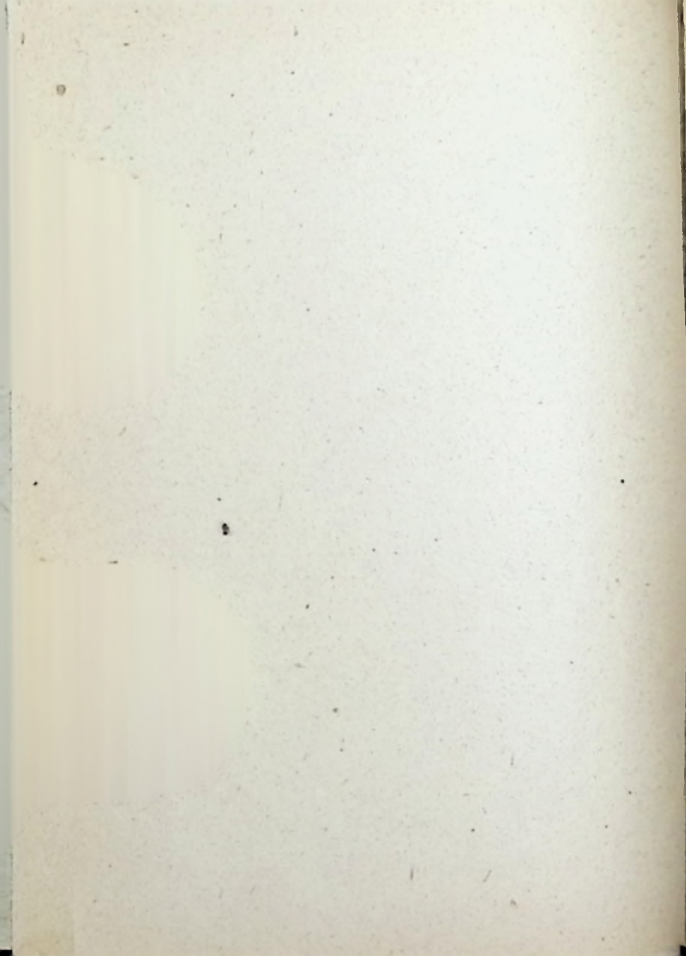
HALDEMAN-JULIUS PUBLICATIONS  
GIRARD, KANSAS

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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# NEW LIVES FOR OLD IN TODAY'S RUSSIA

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE COMMON FOLK OF THE SOVIET REPUBLIC

In every successful revolution, some classes in the community rise at the expense of others. There are three classes in Russia today that have gained in power and in expectations through the revolution—the younger generation of peasants, the industrial workers, and the people of suppressed nationalities. None of these classes as yet has an easy material life; but all of them have opportunities that they never had before. Out of their opportunities they are building not only a fuller life for themselves, but a new republic which will be a far more potent nation than the old Russia.

Even the oppression of the czar himself and all his nobility was not so deadly as that more intimate oppression of the patriarchal family, the rule of the Old Ones. Only today, when the young peasants of Russia have broken that rule, does it begin to be apparent what energetic vitality the Slavic race may pour into the revival of life in the village, into schools and reading huts, dramatic clubs, and better farming. The story of "John the Son of John" is the story of the youngest peasant.

Dunia is the story of the industrial worker—

in this case also the story of the emerging woman. It also reveals, not only the change of an individual life, but the drawing into national service of human forces which were hitherto wasted. The old rulers of Russia did not even manage their own industry; they hired Germans, British, French, Belgians as overseers and managers. This was why they fell, not only because they were corrupt and oppressive, but because they were unable to organize their country. The Dunias of Russian factories, who yesterday were herded like beasts into promiscuous kennels, are today showing their response to the chances of education, and going even at the age of forty for special training to come back and be women's organizers or directors of factories.

The people of suppressed races, like Elizaveta of the Northern Forests,—they also have received the chance to emerge as equal citizens with equal rights to knowledge. They are responding with devotion and the gift of a life's service which will have its own importance in the awakening of all Asia.

All of these are the common folk of the Soviet Republic, and all of the stories are true ones. They have been chosen from many similar stories because each one is typical of more than the individual described. Each one covers the history of an important class, in the intimate details of home life, religion, work, oppression and emergence into new freedom. It is in no case a freedom of comfort or personal profit; it is a freedom to struggle and



labor as equals and to rejoice in the steady slow results of labor.

None of them are "success stories" of the American Magazine type. None of them get rich, or attain a life of ease. One of them is suffering the personal tragedy of an estranged husband; another is dying slowly of tuberculosis. But from the Russian standpoint, they are all "success stories," the stories of the men and women who "won" in the Revolution.

### ELIZAVETA OF THE NORTHERN FORESTS

Today in Moscow they print school books in more than forty languages, to serve the needs of the many nationalities scattered across the land. But far beyond the confines of Moscow, in the wild spaces, live tribes too small to get their books from the capital. Some twenty more languages are used in school text-books printed in these out-lying regions. Many of these languages have been reduced to writing only since the revolution. From one of these tribes, unknown to the outside world, came Elizaveta, the Tongushka.

Certainly no one could have imagined for her that prim Russian name Elizaveta except the unimaginative priest of the Orthodox Church who christened her amid her struggling protests in the Arctic forests of northeastern Siberia. An ugly squat figure, strong but awkward, with straight black hair framing a flat-tish yellow face half Mongol, half the Alaska Indian type—she attracted notice by the charm

of her ugliness. Although I met her in a sanitarium of the Crimea taking a cure for tuberculosis, her active movements indicated untrammelled vitality. Her sudden smiles, grimaces and bodily gestures preserved the naivete of a child. Yet she was a woman of thirty-five who had lived through the wars and revolutions of three races, and been inspired by a great devotion that would not let her rest.

There are sixty odd nationalities scattered today across the Soviet Republic. Names you have never heard of—Kirghiz, Bashkir, Chuvash, Yakut, Tongushki, as well as the better known races of Armenian, Georgian, Turk, Tartar. To all of them the revolution has brought political equality; all of them are citizens today of the Soviet Republic. Tribes that were despised and cheated are now helped to organize schools in their own language and to start co-operatives for the sale of their produce. The Soviet Union has conceived a new method for the reconciling of nationalities, the method of economic unity with cultural diversity.

Many of these nationalities I met in the Peasants' Sanitarium in Livadia, the former summer palace of the czar. I remember giggling Tartar girls with bright yellow kerchiefs assuring me that the revolution had removed their veils and given them a chance to study to be doctors. They chattered among themselves in their own language; only one of them could speak Russian. A dark-skinned peasant I met who came from Central Asia, two weeks' journey beyond the railroad in the

direction of Chinese Turkestan; I could not talk with him for he spoke only his own language.

Once in a group of peasants we started comparing distances. A tall, sad, pale-faced man from beyond Nijni began the discussion by complaining of the ninety miles he lives from the railway. "It is the farthest dark of the woods," he said, "through swamps and broken bridges. We cannot have all the improvements that some do. . . ." A moment later he was gasping at the tale of a brown-faced woman, who related her twenty-nine days' trip to reach the railroad, by boat and horse, from the Siberian woods north of Irkutsk. She related her story thrice, for the peasant tales are inexhaustible. Only on the third recital did she remember to add the first ninety miles from her home village to the first river. The pale-faced Nijni man grinned at his own discomfiture. "And I thought ninety miles was the farthest dark of the woods. This woman forgets to count it."

The brown-faced woman was a Yakutka, one of a numerous race which is scattered across northeastern Siberia. Proudly she told how her district had "had the Soviet Power without interruption ever since 1918." Too far away from the railway to be drawn into the civil war of Kolchak, they kept in touch with Moscow by the Great Northern Telegraph which traversed their region. There were many political exiles in that district, banished years ago by the czar. These men organized after the revolution schools and village councils for

the Yakuts. And since the Yakuts live in isolated huts in winter, "each man near his own hay," they built for their school a dormitory and dining-room.

"On Mondays we drive over to school and leave the children, and on Saturdays we bring them home unless there is a blizzard," she explained proudly. The "dormitory" was doubtless a large log-cabin with little pallets of straw along its floor, but it was the first education these Yakut children had known.

It was at this point that Elizaveta broke into the discussion. I am afraid that she loved the limelight a little. In any event, she could not endure to see it taken by a Yakuta, a rival tribe of the far north. Or perhaps it was merely a child's fondness for out-shining others in the matter of distances. "I come from fifteen hundred versts beyond where *she* lives," said Elizaveta with scorn.

She succeeded. The palm was hers. The peasants stared with gasps of admiration. Six thousand versts she had traveled to reach the railway, a journey of forty-two days by horse and steamer. "My village," she said, "is north of the Arctic Circle. First I took a small boat south up our river, then horses over the divide to the Lena River, then by steamer fifteen days south past the city of Yakutsk till the waters grew shallow and we turned to row-boats. At last when even the row-boats could go no further, we took horses up to the steep mountains. Then a day and a half on foot over the high passes, and down to the four-day auto road that goes to Irkutsk. . . ."

We sighed. It was a magnificent journey. In the time she took to make it, a speed tour might once and a half circle the earth. "I cannot go back till spring," she added. "When the rivers break up, you can slide quick, quick down river. But now it would be many months of sleigh ride in forty degrees of cold."

She had captured her audience. For the remaining half hour till the bell rang she described her people. "I am not a Yakutka like her," she indicated her brown-faced neighbor with a nod. "I am Tongushka. We live farther north than the Yakuts; we are not peasants but workers. We neither plow nor reap; we hunt and fish." A touch of pride came into her manner. Workers are today the aristocracy of the Soviet Republic, so this woman of a primitive wandering tribe that had never learned to till the earth, transferred herself in thought to the category of "specialized workers."

She went on to boast of her tribe. "Our women never were slaves to their men, as among the Russians and Yakuts. If the man hunts, his wife hunts also; our women were always free. We do not build houses but camp in tents lined with fur. O—O—Oh, such a soft, warm, cozy home." She looked about her critically at the marble halls of the czar which were neither soft nor cozy. It was clear that the czar's splendor failed to impress her. "When the hunting fails and we get only ten skins a day, then we move on. An unquiet like the students'; they also don't live in one place. We travel with dogs and reindeer; even

the big moose is our cattle. We are the only people in the world that can tame the moose; the Yakuts and Russians only shoot him. He goes faster than a horse but not so fast as reindeer. Reindeer are fast like airplanes. When we move our homes we need no heavy harness. Just a lash over the neck of the reindeer and—pouf—like the wind." She was almost chanting.

"All the furs in the world come from us," she boasted with pardonable exaggeration. "We send our furs to Germany and England—even to your America. You think they are very precious; you give much money. But to us they are nothing. We give them away for a cup of tea. . . ." She was childishly bragging but now a flash came into her eyes.

"That was how they cheated us in the old days. My people are kindly and hospitable. If you give them a cup of tea in friendship, they must come next day with a present. They think shame unless they give back more than they receive. So the old traders gave us tea, but not in friendship. They gave big parties of vodka to the people. Next day we would bring them a wagon-load of precious furs. They cheated us, and afterwards despised us. Eh! But it was bad in the old days. All my life have I hated bourgeois."

In the many walks that we took, through the czar's famous gardens, Elizaveta told me the story of her life. The earliest years must be piecéd together by inference: "strangers told me this long after." Her father and

mother died within a few days of her birth, and in spite of her proud boasts of the cozy homes and free life of her people, it was evidently hunger that killed them.

"My father was away on a hunting trip when I was born, and my mother died a few days after my birth. I think her heart broke because her man was away," said Elizaveta naively. "Then my father came back and they told him she was dead, so he turned away at once and went back to the woods."

"He was afraid to go where the dead lay," guessed Elizaveta when I asked the reason for this amazing conduct. But later she gave another guess. "He did not think she was really dead, but only that she wanted food, so he went to get it. He went as far as Okhotsk Sea and shot at a moose, but he fell from the cliff in the sea and was drowned. . . ." Through these confused guesses appears a tragic picture which Elizaveta herself has not troubled to deduce—a long unsuccessful hunt while the woman waited for food, the return for news, and the despairing departure of the hunter who dared not face wife and child without meat, taking a desperate last unsuccessful chance. Elizaveta's idealized version of the warm cozy home in the north was shot through with grimmer meanings.

But none of these grim meanings reached Elizaveta. "When our babies are born," she said proudly, "we bathe them outdoors in snow and then wrap them in a bear-skin. When Russian babies are born, if they do not cry, the doctor strikes them to make them come

alive. We do not need to strike babies; we rub snow over them. The Russians have doctors and midwives, but our women help each other. Our babies are strong; Russian babies are no good." After Elizaveta's tale of her own birth, and knowing something of the death rate of this non-populous tribe, I did not take her claim very seriously.

Elizaveta's first memories are not of her own people but of a family of Yakuts, among whom she lived at the age of six, since the wandering Tongushki could not care for a motherless baby. Elizaveta did not like the Yakuts. "They are dirty, dirty. They live in small huts worse than stables, plastered over with clay. The cattle and people sleep together. When I was six years old, I learned that these were not my own people. Then the old Yakut died and his wife did not like me, so I ran away to a Russian priest who lived there."

Elizaveta's tale of the priest's attempts to Christianize this young savage is amusing. "Four years I lived with this priest. He tried to make me a Christian. He showed me many holy pictures in the corner of the room and said: 'Pray, pray before you get food.' They were nice playthings; I would have liked to have them to play with; but why should I bow myself to little pictures? When people moved my hands to make crosses on me, I struck them.

"Then the Russians all said: 'She is a godless one. Let us christen her and maybe she will pray.' The priest's two children were only five and six years old but they prayed well;



yet I was eight years old and could not pray. It was a scandal. They said 'On Sunday we will christen you,' and I was afraid. I did not know what is 'christen,' but I thought it some awful punishment.

"There were many people in white robes and many candle lights and a great bowl of water. There was a godfather and godmother who said very solemn things; I thought they were going to kill me. I was a big girl of eight and they could not dip me in the water all over as they do with babies; so they lifted me and turned me upside down to stick my head under water. I screamed and kicked very hard; the priest wept and said it was the devil in me. They never got my head under water, so I wasn't properly christened, but my godmother lifted me and carried me around the bowl and they called me Elizaveta.

"Even after that I could not pray. I stayed with the priest till I was ten years old. The last years his mother came to live with him and set me to washing dishes. But I broke many dishes; I could do nothing properly. She began to hate and beat me; I could neither pray nor wash dishes. I ran away one summer night and slept on a bench in the street. The police found me and asked where I came from; I said I didn't know but they found out anyway. . . . I would not go back to the priest; the big police captain caressed me and I wanted to go home with him, but he refused: 'My little pigeon,' he said, 'I have half a dozen of my own.'

"So the police advertised for someone to take

me. A woman came and said: 'I am a German teacher. I will give you a little bed of your own. . . .' How I loved her; she was very gentle. She was better than parents to me. She made no difference between me and her own two children. My clothes were like theirs; my food was like theirs; when she bathed them, she bathed me also. She treated me better than anyone had ever treated me. . . ." The memory that still grips Elizaveta's mind after all these years was her first experience of equality!

But the little Tongushka savage was still only half civilized; she was a prey to many suspicions. So when her adored foster-mother went back to Germany and wanted to take her, she was afraid to go. Neighbors had told her that Germans were bad people; "also there are Americans and Poles, who are all strangers and will beat you." So I would not go with her. . . . I will meet her maybe in the next world, but not any more in this."

But now Elizaveta was fourteen years old, and able to work for her board. Her departing foster-mother got her a job in a Russian family; thence she passed from home to home. She got work at last in a doctor's family who let her work as an unpaid servant in the hospital, making bandages. The praise he gave when she grew skilled in making bandages was all the payment Elizaveta asked for; suddenly it filled her with a desire to learn. Here was a road at last to a place in the world where she might be welcomed and useful. Steadily a great passion for being welcomed

and useful arose in Elizaveta, who till then had been an outcast savage from the woods.

"Always since then I work in hospitals. I traveled much in the war. I was in the American Hospital in Cheliabinsk. I will always remember that hospital. Not only for the Americans, who are very nice people. But because it was there I joined the union, when the revolution came. The Union of Medical and Sanitary Workers. . . . So I became at last a worker, and not any more a servant!"

For this new dignity Elizaveta paid a heavy price. In the chaos and epidemics of war she had typhus and typhoid and relapsing fever in succession, sometimes in hospitals, sometimes on the railroads. She came again to the far north to work in a red hospital, when civil war arose in the district of the Lena Gold Mines. She went hungry; food was so scarce that the hospital nurses were given only five pounds of bread and five pounds of meat for a month. Otherwise they were paid with thread, nails, dishes, whatever goods the hospital had; and they traded these in the market for food. Half starving and still weak from her fevers, Elizaveta worked between the hospital and the front, convoying wounded for many days' journey when the temperature was forty degrees below zero.

It was from these conditions that she got tuberculosis. So now every summer they send her to a sanitarium of the Social Insurance. First to the local sanitarium in the north, and then to give her a longer rest they sent her to the Crimea. But Elizaveta cannot remain

quiet long; she wants to get back to work. "They would give me a pension if I wanted it, but if they gave pensions to all who got sick from the war, then how could they build up the country? I want to work and not be a burden on the Soviet Power. If one arm is gone, then one must work with the other." Such is today's creed of Elizaveta who was once an untamed savage of the north.

We took many walks together through the old park of the czar. It was a strange contrast, this dweller of northern forests, primitive, direct, set in the exquisite sophistication of the Livadia garden and marble-columned patios. She was quite unawed by the magnificence. She spoke of the czar as "old Nicky." When we visited his private chapel, she danced with child-like glee between the fluted pillars till she came to the end where formerly stood the altar and impishly pulled aside the curtain that hid the altar-paintings.

"Ho! ho!" she laughed. "Here is where God came to meet the czar. In the old days no woman could stand here. Women were sin; they could not go where God was. But now women can go everywhere."

One day as we strolled through the exquisite gardens I asked what she thought of the Crimea. "The gardens do not smell as good as our woods," she judged. "But that beauty"—here she gazed with adoration at the expanse of deep blue waters sparkling in the sun beneath her—"that beauty I will never forget!"

"It goes on and on as if to the end of the world," she added in tones of awe. "Yet they

say there are people beyond it. What sort of people? She turned to me. "Is it your America?"

"No," I said, "you come first to Turkey and Constantinople."

"Also a bourgeois government," she sighed. "They also would kill me if I went there."

I laughed. "Why should they kill you? They merely refuse you a visa."

"But surely they would kill me if I went to your America. They are all for the bourgeois. Besides, I know they lynch colored people."

Again she spoke of "Old Nicky" and of the past treatment of her people. "To Nicholas," she said, "we were just like dogs. And that Nicholas, who was he that made himself so high? A crazy man, I tell you, just a crazy man. I have seen his bathroom here in the palace. Would you believe it, he had ikons stuck in his bathroom. I ask you, can a man put God in his bathroom, when he has a hundred other rooms to put God in, and not be crazy? But this crazy man made of my people dogs.

"My people are a friendly people. The bourgeois sent our furs to all the world and made us drunk in return. They cheated our simplicity and then despised us. Even a little official made himself big among us. Our messengers came a thousand versts to Yakutsk City to complain or ask permission. After many weeks' journey the official maybe saw you, and maybe not. We were like dogs before him.

"But when the Soviet Power came to Ya-

kutsk City, they sent a delegate a thousand versts through the woods and called together the Tongushni to ask what kind of government we wanted. We said: 'Have what government you like in Yakutsk City, as long as it does not cheat and despise us.' . . . Then he said: 'Choose therefore your own delegates in this meeting to come to Yakutsk and sit in our government and tell the needs of your people.' Never was such a thing before. So we chose delegates in the meetings. Once I myself was a delegate to the government, because I can speak Russian as well as Tongushka.

"In Yakutsk City it is civilized. They have electricity and radio. The children are Pioneers or Octobrati. They opened a sewing-machine shop to teach the women to sew. There are fifteen reading-corners with books in all languages, Russian, Yakutsk, Tongushka, which was never printed before the revolution. They opened a sewing-machine shop and a dispensary. Soon we will have dispensaries everywhere. Also there are two sanitarium for tuberculosis. There are even schools in the Tongushka language; from the farthest tents they send children in winter to Yakutsk City to school. The Soviet Power gives food to the children, so that they may study and go back to teach their people."

Most hospitably she urged me to come to Yakutsk. "It is a fine country. Meat is only twenty kopeks a pound, so good, so tender. The meat in the south seems all dried up after our meat. Gold also comes from us; when I went

south on the Lena, they put 37 big black bags full of gold on the steamer. Three times every month the gold goes out to England and America. But first it goes to the Soviet Power to be weighed. We gave it to the English and Americans for thirty years because they brought machinery; no one but they had machinery enough for us. After thirty years the gold and machinery will both be ours." Thus she understood the Lena Gold Fields Concession. She urged me to come and be a teacher of English: "We pay teachers very well, one hundred and fifty rubles a month. Even if you have not a union card we would give you work; we are more kindly than in Central Russia. We say: 'Give her work anyway; then she will join the union.'

"In the old days Old Nicky sent political exiles among us. They walked with hands chained behind them for many weeks into our north. Now all that is no more. Now even women, dark, not knowing Russian, begin to organize and learn." Then her face darkened. "Eh, but all the same it is slow. I work in the villages and woods as interpreter and women's organizer. You must repeat and repeat every little thing. You get as tired as a dog. After you repeat and repeat for many months, maybe they remember a little, and maybe not. It is hard and slow for the people are dark. I talk and talk till my head goes round and my throat aches."

Thus is Elizaveta spending her strength in the northern woods for the dark, yet proud,

people out of whom she came, using up the remnants of life to give knowledge to the people, and unwilling to stop even long enough for her own health. I asked her once, as I have asked others: "What did you get from the Revolution?"

Elizaveta grinned happily and proudly. "I got sickness from the Revolution," she said. Then, perceiving that my question referred to benefits, her eyes flashed scorn. "What should I get from the Revolution?" she said disdainfully. "The Revolution is to work for, not to get things. If I wished, I could get a Red Order from the Revolution, if I cared to go and tell all that I lived through at the front. But if others do not remember it, why should I remind them? How many comrades did more, and died without a Red Order?"

I saw that I had phrased my question badly and I began again. "What makes you want to work for the Soviet Power?"

"Why should I not work for the Soviet Power when they come to meet my people? They make of me a worker in a trade-union instead of a servant. They work for the dark, deaf masses in the farthest village. When they prize us, must we not give all that we have to help?" Thus Elizaveta expressed in newer form the old tradition of her people, proudly unwilling to be outdone in generosity, giving a load of furs for a cup of tea offered in kindness. She was giving her life in return for fairness and equality.



She showed me her trade union book, written in Russian and Yakutsk. Smilingly she translated the Yakutsk mottoes, which differed somewhat from the Russian. "The Communist Party gave us the happy life." There was nothing here to remind one of class struggle and all the turmoil of modern civilization where the Marxist call to battle originated. It was as if she were reading a new evangel of knowledge and fulfillment of life. So had the message been transmuted to fit the forests and tundras in the northeast of Asia.

"Are there Communist Youth in America?" she asked me. When I told her there were, she nodded and remarked with solemnity: "Greet them from me." "Are there working women's organizations? Then greet them also from me and the Tongushki. Greet all the workers and Communists in America and in all the world, but none of the bourgeois. The bourgeois despised my people and left us in darkness. They stole our furs with vodka and sold them in America for much gold."

"How do you know you are not still cheated?" I asked her. "Do you know what your furs sell for in America today?"

She looked at me with scorn. "Of course the Soviet Power makes big profit from our furs. How else have they money for schools and to send us doctors? But if the Soviet Power wished to cheat us would they ask our delegates to sit in the government? Would they give us schools and co-operatives? Already our

co-operatives have many new wares, sugar and tea and cotton goods more than of old. When our people learn to read and to manage co-operatives, what hinders us from knowing all about our furs, or even sending our own representatives with them to America? We also are citizens of the Soviet Republic."

## JOHN THE SON OF JOHN

John, the son of John, is one of the new generation of peasants. He is thirty-three years old. But his brief life has covered changes that took the nations of western Europe five hundred years to accomplish. The story of his life is the "inside story" of the Russian Revolution, as it rose out of and affected a hundred million peasants.

There are, of course, no "typical" Russian peasants. Russia is a land more than twice the size of the United States, inhabited by some sixty different races. In the northern rim of Tundra, fronting the Arctic, and in the sub-Arctic forests which fringe it, live tribes which are not yet peasants, but primitive hunters and fishers. South of them come, in the sour little clearings of marsh-land, peasants unbelievably primitive. I have traveled among them, by the shores of the White Sea. I have seen there a province running a thousand miles northward, where in pre-war days only one farming family in seven had even a metal-tipped plow. The reason was simple; no railway reached them with its freight of iron goods; they tore up the soil, as their grandfathers did, with heavy, crooked pieces of wood. Their women lived farther back than the days of the spinning-wheel and tread-loom; they spun with a distaff, the sort of thing you used to read of in fairy-

tales, but never dreamed of seeing. They lived like Alaska Indians, even perhaps like Eskimos. And these also are peasants of the Soviet Republic.

In the other direction, down across the great plains of Central Asia, you find still other types of primitive people. There the nomad tribes, Kirghiz, Bashkir, move hundreds of miles northward and southward following the season of grass. Despised they were by even the lowliest of the Russian peasants, as unclean and unchristian peoples; the ignorant Russian peasant who could cheerfully drain a cup defiled by a syphilitic would disdain to drink after a healthy Bashkir. Until the "red father" Lenin appeared as their Messiah, to make them equal citizens in the Soviet Republic. Two or three score of languages and nations—Mongols, Armenians, Turks, Tartars, Georgians—the Soviet Union claims them all. So it is quite impossible to find one peasant who is representative of all his nation.

Even among the stock of the Great Russians, the lives of peasants show wide dissimilarities, following the ways of the earth on which they live. In the far north are the two-story log-houses, with cattle below and people above, convenient for the long, hard winter. Through the middle lands are the one-story cabins, joined with barns and out-buildings around a central yard. Farther south, as the timber lessens, are the houses of mud and straw, gaily painted in white, yellow, blue, lavender.

Yet in certain basic essentials, the life of

these people was a similar life, differing from each other far less than they all together differed from the farming populations of Europe and America. It was a life that went on with great endurance and only minor changes across many centuries. Of this life, and of the sudden changes that have today come upon it, the tale of John, the son of John, is typical.

I first met Ivan (Ivan is the Russian form of John), in the Peasants' House in Moscow, where he had come on business for his village. The little reception room was crowded. White-bearded old men waited patiently according to ancient custom, for the official at the desk to have leisure. Black-haired young peasants of the more demanding generation leaned over desks hurling questions. A bewildered peasant woman with a baby was asking how to get back to her husband in Poland. A ruddy-haired strong-jawed farmer was shouting to all who would listen about graft in his village. The Peasants' House is the living center for all peasants coming up to Moscow; it has over three hundred beds where peasants sleep for nothing or for a few cents' charge; it has exhibitions of agricultural machinery, a theater, club-rooms, reading-rooms, and an extensive legal aid department for connecting peasants with all branches of the government. Similar Peasants' Houses, but less elaborate, are in every provincial capital and many county-seats.

As I met each peasant, I learned where he came from, and a brief survey of his history. Then I met Ivan, from a few hundred miles

southwest of Moscow, on the edge of the black earth region, where the soil is not all good and not all bad. A medium sort of region, neither especially poor nor especially prosperous. The secretary of the Peasants' House introduced him. "Ivan," he said, "has come up to town to get books for the Reading Hut. He is one of the energetic younger generation. He went to War, and he made the Revolution."

Ivan was a stocky peasant of about thirty years. Brown hair, ragged from winds, face tanned by open air, short but rugged—he might have passed for a farmer from Kansas or Nebraska, except that he wore his farm clothes in the city and felt no shame in appearing in them before the President of the Republic. They were all the clothes he had, and they were good enough for any company in Russia; there were no holes in them, but many stains of earth. Trousers and Russian blouse of home-spun linen, worn to a neutral tan-gray. Ivan was pleasant but not effusive, hospitable but self-sufficient. Sitting in one of the smaller club-rooms of the Peasants' House, we talked through the afternoon while he told me the story of his life.

Ivan Ivanovich Reaboy was his name; John the son of John of the family of Reaboy. Born on the edge of the black earth region, thirty-three years ago when the village of Spiridonova Buda lay three hundred miles away from the railroad, a cluster of four hundred huts on the edge of a large estate.

Ivan was born into a large one-roomed cabin

in which lived sixteen people. All these sixteen were members of one family, as families were counted in Ivan's younger days. There was Grandpa and Grandma and Uncle and Aunt and Father and Mother; there were the six children of Uncle and Aunt and the four children of Father and Mother. Grandpa and Grandma, as befitted their dignity, slept on the great Russian oven, the place of warmth and honor. Uncle and Aunt, and Father and Mother had beds in corners. Along one wall of the room was a ten by six foot platform where the ten children slept in a row.

Grandpa, the Old One, was ruler of Ivan's world. He owned all, both land and huts and people. He decided who should plow and who should reap. He beat his wife and his grown sons as he chose. Neither Father nor Uncle had right to a kopek of his own. Aunt and Mother worked in the fields along with the men under Grandpa's orders; while Grandma, too old to work in the fields, looked after the house and the ten children, which was not considered much of a job. Thus Grandpa's standards were law and instruction in farming; while Grandma's standards ruled in home life. If Father conceived a new idea about farming, he could not test it out till he became a Grandpa. If Mother had some bright idea for the care of children, she must delay until age overtook her, making her conservative. Thus was preserved stability and order. -

Upon this sacred, ancient order the saints looked down in blessing. Eighteen saints, eigh-

teen holy pictures known as ikons, decorated one sacred corner and part of one long wall. Grandpa's patron saint, the Holy Nicholas, held the ruling center of the family's holy pictures. Every soul had his own special ikon, given to him by Grandpa during childhood. Also there were two special pictures for the cure of special diseases. There was "George on a Horse," "Christ Crucified," "Holy Trinity," "Three-Armed Mary"—this last being the Mother of God under some Buddhist influence, two arms holding the child while the third arm gave blessings to a waiting world. Ivan's special saint was "George on a Horse."

Except for the holy pictures, everything in the hut was the product of the Family. The big dining-table, the smaller kitchen-table, the still smaller toilet-table for the family comb—all these were hand-hewn out of local forests. Four large benches completed the furnishings. Outside the main house was a store-room, unheated, where each adult had his chest of personal belongings. Beyond this came the orchard of forty-eight trees, the barn for grain, the stable for cows and horses, and the bath-house. In Ivan's youth they still heated the bath-house "in black" without pipes to carry off the smoke; once each week great cauldrons of water were boiled here to steam; then with fire quenched the Family plunged into the mingled smoke and steam to bathe and sweat off the grime of farming.

Thirty acres of land the Family had, divided into seventy-two pieces. In the great division



of land after serfdom, every peasant claimed by justice his share of good land, bad land, near land, distant land. Grandpa's largest piece was an acre of sandy loam four miles away; his smallest a tiny twelfth-acre of rich black soil near the house; the other seventy pieces were scattered in all directions.

When Ivan was a boy, the Family was still paying for this land. Forty-six years they paid for it, through Grandpa's manhood and all of Father's life. Yet Ivan's family was reckoned well-to-do among peasants, having two horses, three cows, five sheep, three swine and twenty chickens, and two wooden plows of the days before metal plow-shares were known. They fed well; for breakfast, potatoes with salt or pickle; for lunch, cabbage soup, potatoes and porridge; for supper, fried potatoes. There was also black bread of rye, enough for the whole year. But there was neither tea nor coffee before the coming of the railroad.

In the long winter evenings, when other peasants sometimes gathered in the Reaboy hut, Grandpa told tales of the ancient days of serfdom. The gaping Ivan listened and learned of a world outside the Family, where the great Grandpa trembled before a greater Landlord. Gomziac was the bogey of Grandpa's youth; to Ivan he was already half a figure of legend. Gomziac, owner of serfs and land, of youths and maidens, without whose will no one might leave the village or get married. He paired the young folks as he chose like horses and cattle. After each wedding, he had the bride's first night if he fancied her.

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In the long dark nights, by the light of the home-dipped candles, Grandpa told how Gomziac was shot by a pleasant youth whose bride he had taken. All the wedding night the crazed bridegroom waited outside the great mansion, hearing from within the sobs of his girl bride. In the morning when Gomziac went to his bath-house, quite careless of anything a peasant might be feeling, the serf shot him. For this he was tracked down and beaten to death in the stables. . . . Justice—yes, it was justice; but something in Ivan's heart beat in rebellious sympathy with the unhappy bridegroom.

The next Landlord was Gerko, a husky brute who liked to beat his serfs with his own hands and watch how they hurried under the lash. But in Gerko's time the serfs were freed and allowed to buy land for themselves. Six thousand acres the Lord retained for himself; five thousand he sold on payments to the peasants. It was this land that Ivan's family was still paying for, forty-six years after. When Gerko died, the estate was sold to Germans, who were beginning to penetrate steadily upward into Russia from the west.

In Ivan's mind, the beginning of the revolution was the coming of the railroad. He lists thus the steady arrival of forces that broke the patriarchal family and set the young men free to build a nation. First the railroad came, and next the factory; next the war and last the revolution. The railroad approached from three hundred miles away to twenty miles, where it still remains. It was part of the czar's military

advance against the Germans; it was financed by French loans. Of all this international politics Ivan knew nothing; no newspapers came to his village. He only knew the tremendous new tale of a great Iron Horse that pulled many wagons with no living horses. He begged permission from Grandpa to go and see it and after a year this was granted.

When Ivan made the twenty-mile walk and saw the great locomotive come down the shining lines of steel, he tells me that something happened to his brain. Before that time his world was an unquestioned picture: it consisted of families in peasant huts, each ruled over by a Grandpa clustered into villages ruled over by Landlords. All the villages, on and on forever, were ruled by God and the czar. But now, suddenly, the world was a place that could make that locomotive! It was beyond the Landlord, as unknown as that other unknown world represented by the holy ikons, but more enthralling. And that, said Ivan to me, sitting in the Peasants' House in Moscow, was the beginning of the Revolution.

After the railways came schools and factories. The factories were three hundred miles away by railroad; but the land was growing too small for the needs of the hungry family, so every winter Grandpa sent Uncle away to get a job in the factory. Every spring Uncle returned with his winter's wages, and handed them dutifully over to Grandpa to spend for the Family. Year by year, however, Uncle grew more restless. He was beginning to talk now

of having some rights over his winter's wages. So the Revolution proceeded. First the railroad, then the factory.

Ivan's father remained a dutiful son, untouched by the factory. Grandpa got him a job as coachman on the Landlord's estates. Ivan himself now went to school, the new "modern" school brought by the railroad. Father and Uncle, as well-to-do peasants, had studied in their youth in the old priest's house and learned to read the psalter in old Church Slav. They never learned to read or write everyday Russian. Even the old priest wrote seldom, for there was neither paper nor steel pen in those days in the village; the priest wrote with a quill on birch-bark. But the railroad brought paper and pens and a "modern school" with slates and pencils.

Ivan grins today when he speaks of that "modern school" of his youth. It seems already very ancient. It was big enough for one boy in every five; of course it was not intended for girls at all. Nor was it necessary for boys whose fathers had plenty of land and small families; for they would stay on the land forever and learn its ways from Grandpa. But large families, like Ivan's, must send some sons away to town to factories, since their land was not enough to earn them bread. For these sons it was well to be able to read the street signs and to write home where they were, in letters which the priest would read to their family.

Ivan told me exactly what he learned in

school. In the first year he learned the alphabet and arithmetic up to ten. In the next year he read a primer and arithmetic up to one hundred. In the third year he learned to read the church responses and arithmetic up to one thousand, and all the "laws of God." He never knew till he was a grown man after the revolution, that numbers went higher than one thousand; the arithmetic of his youth was an exact science which went up just so high. The laws of God were also an exact science: how the world was made, the penalty for sins, why Christ died, what various saints were good for, and various festivals. Then school was over; he needed no more learning.

There is one vivid memory of Ivan's youth; the summer of 1905 when the peasants arose and seized land from the Landlord and were beaten down by Cossacks. The year before this happened, Ivan's Family had split into two groups, one under Uncle and one under Father. Father got ten acres of Grandpa's land, one horse, one cow, one calf, one sow, and one cart. Ivan, a boy of eleven, did all the family plowing, while his father worked continuously as the Landlord's coachman, and with wages of \$6 a month bought a house and finished paying for the land bought forty-six years before.

Clearly the land was not enough; all the other peasants were in like condition. To rent land from the Lord was impossibly costly. Ivan was only a boy; he does not know how the seizing of lands started. First many young men went away to fight the yellow men of the

east, at the orders of God and Czar. Then came hunger and uprising. In the next village but one, where the Landlords were much hated, the peasants burned his barns and seized his cattle.

Ivan's own village was more peaceful. They merely went to the big estate and borrowed horses and cattle, and formed a committee to divide these things among the needy. They also formed a land committee to take lands from the big estates. Were they not free men now, instead of serfs, for a generation? Yet how could a man be free, if the land was not also free to till? When the Cossacks came to put down this rebellion, they did not deal very harshly with Ivan's village; they merely arrested the land committee and took back the cattle. But in the next village but one, where had been the burnings—there the Cossacks slaughtered peasants recklessly to make an example, and imposed terrible taxes to pay for rebuilding the barns and stables.

But now Ivan's family, which for a generation had begun to be freemen, became again more dependent on the Landlord. Father broke his back in a run-away and came home crippled. The plowing devolved on Ivan's younger brother, a boy of eleven. Ivan himself, a sturdy youth of fourteen, went to work in the Landlord's orchard to earn the family bread. He got \$3 a month as a "black worker" (unskilled), but after two years he became a skilled worker and got \$6 a month like his father before him. Thus he worked till twenty, when the army took him. Before his service ended, there came the Great War.



Hunger and lice are what Ivan remembers of war. And thousands dying of typhus in that quiet, diseased sector on the Galician front. Ivan was glad that it was a quiet sector; he had no quarrel with Germans, and knew no reason for fighting. Death from disease is natural to man, but not death from shooting. Ivan did not like shooting; the less he saw of it, the better. As for hunger and lice and typhus—Life, it seems, was made to be endured.

The food gave out, the clothes gave out, the soap gave out. Soldiers came back from furloughs saying that the czar had fallen. Meetings began, committees, elections in the army, conflicts with officers, boiling life and free discussion. Anything could be discussed, even God and the czar. But through it all was more hunger, more desertions. Then folks called Bolsheviks, with slogans: "Peace, land and bread."

"Peace, land and bread" sounded very good to Ivan. Were they not all man needed, in place of this foolish war? Word came that the village was seizing the lands again, as in the days of his youth. But now there were neither czar nor Cossacks to stop them. Ivan was a soldier himself, as good as the next. Only, he knew he must hurry home for the land division. Other soldiers, hundreds of thousands, were also hurrying home. Some by orderly process of demobilization, but more by the shortest available personal route. They looted food as they went, sometimes from peasants, but by preference from the big estates.

Ivan came back to his village in December, 1918, in time for the first township meeting of peasants. He was put on the Land Committee, as an energetic young man who had seen the world.

The Land Committee began its duties conscientiously. They took land from the Landlord and gave to the poorer peasants, enough so that each should have two acres and a half for every "eater." They also divided the Landlord's tools and sold his poorest cattle at low rates to the poorest peasants, using the money to finance the new governmental expenses of the Township Committee. Thirty thousand acres from various estates were thus divided in the township; but a central core of five thousand acres was kept for a big State Farm, as a breeding center for all the district. On it they gathered 120 head of the best cattle from many Landlords.

Ivan and his crippled father and younger brother received eight acres of new land as their share. Promptly they planted it in the spring of the year. Almost as promptly the Landlord returned with the help of German troops. Ivan and the younger men who had made the Township Committee had to flee to the woods. There they formed a guerilla band of fighters under the name Red Guards, which at last became a part of the new national Red Army. Nine months of fighting passed over Ivan's village; the Germans, Petlura, the bandit Marusa, the other bandit Ongel; and between each of these the Red Guards took it.

In one of these forays the Landlord was caught with lists of names of suspects prepared in German for the enemy; he was promptly shot. In the end the Township Committee, loyal now to the Bolsheviki, took final possession. Ivan himself came home only two years later, after the Polish War. He was a red soldier now; he had made the Revolution. He was still averse to fighting and much preferred farming. But for the past four years he had not minded fighting so much; for he had known at last what he fought for—to keep for his father and brother and children the lands they had taken.

Ivan now lives in a house with his wife, his father and mother, his brother and brother's wife, and his own three children. They have two rooms in this house, in place of the one room of his youth, for standards improve with years. Eighteen acres of land, three horses, three cows, two calves, three swine, five sheep and eighteen chickens—it seems a mere repetition of the life of the older Ivan; John the son of John keeping up the ways of John forever. But when I tell this to Ivan he stares in amazement. "It is a different world now," he says with conviction.

"What is the chief difference?" I asked him.

Ivan thought for a moment and then a grin spread over his features. "I think," he said, "the chief difference is—you can't beat your wife any more."

I had expected something more political from this former red soldier. But Ivan went on. "And fathers can't beat sons any more—not

grown sons anyway. Everyone is a citizen; everyone can go to the magistrates. Everyone can vote in the village meetings, women and sons as well as the Old Ones. There is no more of this Old One ruling things. If I say to my wife: 'Obey, for I am master,' she will answer: 'But I also am mistress.'"

Ivan had seen the railroad and the factory and the World War and the Revolution; he had come home quite out of the habit of obeying the orders of the Old One. "How does the village like it?" I asked in amusement. He laughed. "The Old Ones don't like it at all. They say these Bolsheviki have destroyed the Family. But we young ones don't mind. I've a very clever wife. I don't see why she shouldn't run the home instead of obeying her mother-in-law. And if a man goes out in the world and learns new ways, why should he obey till death takes his father?" Such was the radical view of Ivan.

"This all came quickly in four years after the Civil War," he continued. "Till then we young ones fought and the Old Ones ruled the village. But we came back and the newspapers and propoganda came down from the Center. A meeting was called in our village to start a Reading Hut. All the young fellows joined it. We hold dances and lectures and charge admission to build up our library. They sent me all the way to Moscow to buy books.

"With the Reading Hut came everything. Post Office now. Three times a

...os at the Reading Hut, gets out his big  
... sets up a table and gives out letters and  
...ers, sells stamps and money orders just  
...e in a big town. We can do anything now  
...ut they do in the city. They asked me to  
...ik up the price of a radio for our club!

"We took the park of the old Lord for our  
...alks and picnics. The young folks give open  
...r plays there; sometimes the County Commit-  
...e for Spreading Culture sends us county ar-  
...sts. We do not have to pay them anything  
...or we are raising money for the Reading Hut,  
...nd this County Committee was formed to help  
...Reading Huts.

"At first there was a lot of trouble about  
taxes. Some say they are bigger than in the  
old days. For me they are not so big. It is  
this way: you pay a little tax for the first  
few acres, and a bigger tax for the next acres,  
and a very big tax for all the land you have  
more than the average peasant. It is counted  
by how many eaters you have in your family.  
I do not have more land per eater than the  
average. In the old days I had also to rent  
land and pay very high rent. But now I get  
this land from the government by paying taxes.  
So my taxes are much less than my rent and  
taxes used to be. But men who had much land  
in the old days and did not have to rent any,  
their taxes are higher now than before.

"Still, we get something now for our taxes.  
We have a school big enough for all the chil-  
dren. Half of them go in the morning and  
half in the afternoon. It is only a three-year

school; but we are taking the old church that has long been empty and making a nine-year school for our village. Our School Board has three adults and four children on it. Since the children are most concerned, we gave them the biggest representation. Everybody now takes part in life. Once the village meeting was for the rich and the Old Ones. Now all go and talk, the young as much as the others.

"In the school today, they do not learn the laws of God as I did. They learn about plants and politics and take excursions. If a father doesn't send his child, the president of the School Board comes round and says: 'Look out, citizen, or we'll fine you by making you haul wood for the school for nothing.'

"Also we opened a house for babies to be born in, just three miles from our village. When I was born there were sixteen people living in the room, and a village woman came in to help my mother. The hospital was only for fevers and was eighteen miles away. Now we have a regular midwife who serves three villages. Every seven days the doctor comes through. This was done two years ago by the County Health Department.

"We young folks also started a Day Nursery, every summer in working time. While the fathers and mothers work in the fields we have teachers to look after the children. We had two hundred children in our nursery from three months to five years of age. The grandmas of the village come to help the teachers with the children. The teachers tell

them new ways to care for babies, but the grandmas don't believe them. However, my wife believes them; she is all for the new ways."

I asked Ivan about the church that was taken for a school. "We had two churches," he said, "in our village. The priest of the old church went away when the czar stopped paying him. The people would never have paid him; they didn't like him. But the priest of the new church is a good enough fellow. People pay him for weddings and funerals. So he lives and folks go to his church. I don't go myself; I've quit religion."

He said it so definitely and yet so casually that I asked him further about religion in the village. "Most of the older folks are still religious," he answered. "My wife still has her ikon and so has my father and my brother. My oldest son has the ikon his grandpa gave him; but not my two youngest; giving ikons to children is going out of fashion. Besides it's hard to buy them any more; no one seems to make them. My brother has his ikon; in fact, he has two, because I gave him mine." Here Ivan grinned again, then added: "I have been to war and organized a Land Committee, and I don't see the use of Holy Georges." So casually he disposed of the "laws of God" he had learned in his youth. Not by iconoclasm; he broke no images. With peasant thrift he gave them away to those who would appreciate them. He himself was indifferent, being absorbed in the more thrilling new world that

had been growing upon him since those first days of the coming of the railroad.

"The old world," said Ivan, "was ruled by Grandpa. And beyond Grandpa, the Landlord. And beyond him, God and the czar. But now there is nobody beyond us. Even women come to Moscow for excursions. Even children talk in village meetings. And I, Ivan, walk right into President Kalenin, to tell him the demands of my village."



## DUNIA, A TEXTILE WORKER

Dunia Ivanovna Suchova is a very vital woman. She has had one husband, two children, one year of joy and many years of labor. Now, alone at forty, she feels like just beginning. For Dunia is going to school next year.

Dunia's tale is the tale of many million women, half-peasant, half-worker, in the newly developing industries of Russia. In a larger sense, it is the inside tale of all of Russia's workers, who have gone in less than forty years from the tiny peasant holding that would not support them into the barracks-life of the newly arising factories, and thence into the struggle for freedom and revolution. Dunia went into industry for the same reason they all went; her family could not live on the land they owned. Her father had only three acres and seven children; but he could not plow even the small three acres because—the horse died! Such were the short and tragic annals of the poor which cast Dunia into the factory. There was no way on earth for her father to get another horse. Without a horse there was no way to feed the family.

Dunia told me her tale as we sat in the factory lunch room in Pavlova where she works today. It is not much of a lunch-room. The basement windows let in a moderate amount of light, but no beauty of view; the tables are plain, unpainted wood; the crockery of the cheapest, thickest white. The knives, forks and spoons are of the tin-like variety. Yet to Dunia, as she looked lovingly around the lunch-room, or nodded across to friends who were arriving and leaving, this crude basement place was part of the new life, the new freedom. Only since the revolution has Dunia ever been able to sit down to meals with friends around a table, making of lunch a social function, and everyone having a plate, cup, knife, fork and spoon to herself. Before the Revolution—but that is the story.

"I was born," said Dunia, "in the village of Gzhel, fifty miles away from Pavlova where I am working now. After the horse died my father could not plow his three acres, for his health broke early. My mother died when I was four, of work and bearing seven children. My oldest brother married into the factory and left us. The youngest—when he grew up, they took him for a soldier. Five girls were left, but two died early; my oldest sister mar-

ried a peasant, but she came back in two years from her husband's death with small children. In all the families I knew people were always dying.

"The other two of us girls went to work. I was seven years old when I began working. I became nurse girl in the family of a factory worker eight miles from home. I slept in one corner of the floor; the room had two families. They gave me food, two dresses a year and a white kerchief stamped with the yellow crown of Nicholas. My underwear and shoes I must provide myself, but these wore out, so I lived without underwear and shoes. I got no wages nor any chance of schooling."

Then came the first tragedy of Dunia's life. "When I was nine and the baby had grown heavy, I tried to lift him and he fell in the hall with me on top of him. He yelled and my mistress came running. She shouted and cursed me and dragged me by the hair across the hall and threw me out of doors. So I went home for two years to my own people." Suddenly Dunia's eyes filled with tears and she wept in the lunchroom; the misery of that helpless child of nine is branded deeper than any of the sorrows of later years.

“When I was eleven, old enough for real hard work, they sent me to a vegetable garden twenty miles from home. On the long white summer nights I got up at two in the morning, and worked until nine at night. We had three periods off for meals during the day—half an hour each time. At nine we had supper and sleep. From April till snow I worked thus. They gave me my food, twelve dollars for the season and one dress. Never till the Revolution did the boss give me working shoes.

“At fourteen I got steady work in the Franco-Russian Textile Mills. There were many children there, even of eleven and twelve years. They paid eight cents for a nine-hour day. But the shifts of work were bad; either we worked from three in the morning till nine and then later from one to five; or else we worked from nine to one in the daytime and from five to ten at night. This made sleep bad and uneven. The owner of the factory was a Russian lady but the boss was an Englishman. Most factories were like that, with foreign managers.”

Dunia worked in the spinning room. If a thread broke they fined her eight cents, a whole day's pay. Many days she thus worked

for nothing. Her wages at first would not even pay for food. Potatoes and cabbage and eggs she got occasionally from home; she was the lucky one in her room. The other girls with whom she lived came from far Rezan, and received no home packages, but only the black bread for which a few cents a day sufficed. But Dunia shared her potatoes and cabbages with her room-mates, just as more fortunate girls in college share home packages of sweetmeats. "Food cannot be a private thing," says Dunia.

There were six girls in Dunia's room in the factory dormitory. There were three narrow wooden bunks for sleeping. Two girls to a bunk—they slept in turn, as they worked in turn at the factory. There were no mattresses at first, nor blankets nor pillows, just wooden planks to lift one off the cold cement floor. Dunia and her bed-mate saved money for a mattress. Ten cents the first month they managed to save together, and ten cents the second. Then they bought unbleached muslin and made a bag, filling it with straw from Dunia's home. The third month they had a straw pillow. After two years they had a real bed with two cotton blankets. Never any sheets; these did not figure in Dunia's scale of living. For the

first two years, being without blankets, they put their sheepskin coats together for the ones who were sleeping.

"There was no factory lunch in those days, and of course only rich bourgeois could pay for restaurant meals. We must eat in our room but we had no dishes. One family down the hall had a tea-pot and another had two glasses. These we all borrowed. Another family loaned a tin-pail for cooking to anyone lucky enough to have potatoes from home. Sometimes we had sugar for our tea; the tea itself, of course, was not real tea, but made of dried wheat grains. Often when there were many fines, there would be a month without sugar." . . . Dunia smiled down at the white cups and tin spoons of the factory lunch-room; she took a new lump of sugar for the real tea she was drinking. Yes, all this was of the Revolution.

Dunia remembers the year of the big strike—1905. All over Russia there was unrest and uprising. The 7000 workers in Dunia's factory came out also, making demands for a decent life as human beings. More wages and fewer fines and a bath-house in the barracks. The simplest peasant village has its bath-house, but this factory had none. They asked for a hos-

pital room—nothing elaborate with doctors and nurses, but merely a room with hard plank beds where sick people could stay lying down. In the factory dormitories they had to get up with the change of working shifts. "Sick or well, you had to get up when the other girl needed the bed," said Dunia. "That was the hardest part about sharing beds.

"Also we asked for wooden floors in the dormitory; for the factory babies died very fast on the cold cement. They had no shoes and hardly any clothing; there was not much heat in winter, so the cement floors killed them. We also asked that married families should have a whole room to themselves; in our factory they put two families to a room.

"Three days later students came from the big city to talk to the workers. The strike became political. They began crying: 'Freedom! Down with the czar!' I had heard about these students before; all the workers had heard something about revolutionary students, but we never saw them before in our factory. But now of course came Cossacks and shot and arrested many people. All the workers we elected in our strike assemblies were arrested; some of them stayed in jail twelve years till the great Revolution.

"After the strike we did not get the bath-house we asked for, nor the hospital, nor anything at all except the wooden floors. But the boss built a church in the barracks, instead of the things we begged for. 'Pray to God and avoid politics,' he told us. 'Then there will be peace and no more strikes,' he said. At the same time that he built a church they started the Black Hundreds and the boss joined it. This was an organization to spy among the workers. Scattered among our own ranks were secret members, to tell tales on us. But the boss was openly a member and wore the badge.

"The boss did not pray in our church; he was English and had a church of his own. But he came at first to our services and took off his hat to show respect to our God. Then he went back to his villa in the park by the lake, where there were soft, beautiful ladies in silks, with music. There were scandals whispered among us about these women, but no one dared speak openly. He lived as he chose in his villa while we went to our strawheaps and crowded rooms, where even decent married families had to share their room with others. Yet we had crossed ourselves and bowed many times before God, while he only took off his hat. So I began to doubt religion.



"In our factory rules it was written that any worker who missed church was fined five kopeks. Three kopeks went to the pious ones who informed on their fellow workers. We began to hate pious ones. Lists were made of those absent from church; they were dangerous ones, radicals, atheists, maybe revolutionists, to be fired as soon as convenient. But for all that, politics began to go on more and more; we began to believe it more than church."

Dunia was not one of those who had called "Down with the czar" in the strike. But she began for the first time to wonder "if one could live without any czar." The girls in Dunia's section were more personal in their grievances; they shouted: "Down with Ivanoff." He was the worst foreman, who was very bad with fines. Later Ivanoff was fired; that was a gain from the strike. And about this time Dunia also became a skilled spinner, getting twenty-five cents a day. With this she bought a cheerful weave of cotton goods and made herself a new dress.

"I stood at my work in my new dress and the English manager, Guy, came by. For the first time he stopped beside me to observe carefully. He passed his hand slowly across

my shoulders. 'Fine Russian hussy,' he said. 'Come to my office at ten this evening after work.' But I knew that girls who went to his office alone came out different; he used them as women. So I didn't go. Next day he asked me why.

"'You have day-time office hours for receiving,' I answered. 'I will come then.'

"He knew that I understood and was unwilling. 'Ah, you have a betrothed,' he said. 'You want a fine husband.' He thought this was the reason I would not go to him. So I told him 'yes,' that I had a betrothed, though it was a lie. I said it only to escape him. 'I will throw you out of the factory,' he threatened.

"'That is your right as boss,' I answered, 'but this other is not your right.' After that he did not bother me.

"Other girls went to him sometimes. The prettiest girl in the factory went. He bought her a watch. But she could not resist showing the watch; for no one in our factory had ever had one. So the boss fired both her and her father. "That," said Dunia's practical, peasant mind, "was worse, I think, even than taking her."

And now the period of Dunia's own romance drew near. It came in the normal peasant way.

"A chum of mine got married and we danced all night. There I met Sergei. He and I danced together all night long. After that we went walking every evening for two weeks. Then we got married. We went to live with his mother two miles away from the factory. He drank; he went out much; it was not very happy.

"One morning I had risen at two to go to my work in the factory, which started at three in the morning. I met a priest on the dark road; he was drunk, driving back from a gambling hall. 'Sit in with me,' he said. 'I'll drive you.' 'We go different ways; you to church, I to the factory,' I answered.

"'No, we both go to the bath-house and take a private room,' he said. . . . I was frightened and ran away, but he ran after me. He was too drunk to catch me. . . . That was the end of my religion. . . . After this I was afraid to go at night to the factory; so often Sergei walked with me.

"For two years we lived, Sergei and I and his mother, neither very well nor very badly. Then a spy of the Black Hundreds reported against my man and he lost his job; he was a dyer. It was very hard to get new jobs; one must stand at dawn before the house of the boss and wait for hours till he came out, and

bow and beg his pardon. Sometimes a hundred days one must stand, till he sees that one is submissive. Sergei would not do this, for he was a skilled worker and not afraid to try his luck away from his home factory. So we went to another town and lived like other working families, in half a room in the factory dormitory. By that time I had two children; the other family had three; we were nine souls in that room. Thus we lived till war came, the Great War of the czar and the Germans.

"They took my husband for the war of the czar. By this time I was a skilled weaver on four looms; I got good wages, \$9 a month. I took a nurse girl into my room to care for my children, just as I myself once was a nurse girl."

The days of the war dragged out; the economic life of Russia was shaken; the ruble fell. Dunia knew only that the price of bread rose fast. The babies were hungry; all the women's babies were hungry. In desperation they struck but were easily beaten. "We were all women with children; our men were at war. It was easy to beat our strikes." . . . To fight the falling ruble, the factory began buying bread wholesale for its workers, and distributing it as rations. But they rationed only the

workers, not the hungry children. "I had four to feed, and only bread for one. The women were all upset; they said I should go to the boss and talk for all of them."

"Tell me," said the boss, "just what you need personally for your own children. I'll help your babies myself if you'll keep quiet."

"I can't agree," said Dunia, "for all the women's babies need bread."

"What, you dare to argue with me?"

"Life is up to our throats choking us. What more can you do to us?"

"I'll throw you out of the factory and out of your room."

"The burning house doesn't worry the home less," quoted Dunia.

"Be silent!" shouted the manager. "Porter, call the police."

The police began to take Dunia, but she turned on them. . . . "I said to them: 'Aren't you ashamed? My man fights at the front, while you skulk here arresting women who want bread for their babies.' . . . Even the police didn't dare to take me."

That talk of Dunia's with the boss was a stage of revolution, though she herself hardly appreciates the fact to this day. The hungry children driving women to defy managers; the

fellow feeling of a worker refusing to be bribed for her own babies alone; the police who failed to arrest her at the orders of the boss;—in all of these one feels the pressure arising, unconscious, ready to break its bonds when the moment comes.

“Then suddenly the czar was gone and we were all shouting: ‘Down with war! Give back our men!’ Students came and talked; we began having meetings, unions, committees, delegates, everything that was forbidden. Even women were elected as delegates. The students were Mensheviks, but little by little the workers began to be Bolsheviks.

“For with all this talking, nothing happened at all. Our men did not come back; there was no food. Nothing but talking, talking, till the Bolsheviks came. Then how life went boiling! Everything all at once! The English manager left and we took his house and made it a children’s home for those whose fathers were at the front. The factory rations we gave to everybody in the factory, beginning with the children. We had a factory lunch-room, putting all the food together; we made a hospital room and a day-nursery. The English assistant manager stayed and worked with us till the fac-

tory was nationalized and they gave him his visa home.

"Twelve children's homes we made in our district for those whose fathers were at war or dead. We threw the monks out of a big monastery and put in 250 children. We also took many managers' houses for this purpose. I was head of the children's home in our factory. We were all women; our men at the front; yet no one opposed us. We took rugs and blankets and sheets from the homes of the bourgeois to furnish the children's homes.

"Then at last my man came back. The year 1919," said Dunia, "was my year of great joy!"

Now everyone who knows the Russian Revolution knows that 1919 was a year of hunger and chaos and civil war and epidemics. I marveled when Dunia called it her year of joy. I asked her: "Wasn't that the hungry year, Dunia?"

"Oh, yes," said Dunia, as an after-thought. "It's true. We never had enough to eat all that year."

"Wasn't it the typhus year, Dunia?" And Dunia answered: "Yes, there was lots of disease at our factory; I think four hundred sick."

"How then was it your year of joy?" I asked

her. And Dunia's answer revealed the ultimate sources of human happiness.

"That was the year, the only year, when my husband and two children and I had a whole room to ourselves. Always before we roomed with his mother or in half a room in the factory. And there was no vodka; and my man was too excited by the revolution to want any. And I learned to read and write; and my husband respected me as a citizen." . . . These were the joys that made Dunia forget the fact that there was not enough to eat all year.

"Not all had such good husbands," continued Dunia. "Many men didn't want their wives to learn things. My sister's husband forbade her to go to classes or to factory meetings. One day he held a chair over his head and stood in the door of the room to prevent her going. But she took the other chair, and held it over her head and cried: 'You didn't kill me under Nicholas and now I'm free!' . . . She went to the meeting. Yet that man was a good revolutionist himself," mused Dunia, "only he didn't want his wife to be one.

"One year of peace and joy I had; it is something. Then came the Polish War and my man went to the front. But when he came back he



had got spoiled by other women at the front; he didn't want me any more.

"I said: 'Live as you must at the front, but when you come back, be peaceful with me and the children.' But he was restless and could not be contented with me. Yet for all that he was lonesome too. So he asked to live with me and the children as a boarder, not a husband. For eight months we lived thus in the room together, only as friends, not married people."

Dunia's nerves could not stand the strain of this unmarried marriage she broke down and the doctor sent her way, and removed her from her job in the children's home, sending her back to the loom. Her husband lived by himself now, but still came to her as a boarder for meals. Two years like that, then he married a younger woman. But though his passion was for the younger wife, the habits of domesticity were for Dunia. He could not refrain from visiting her and the children, sitting with them every evening. This was a strain on both women. Dunia resolved to cut the knot by going away to school.

She spoke in hard practical terms about her husband. "He gives me thirty rubles a month for the children. By law I could have fifty

rubles, half his wages. But I will not go to law. Even thirty rubles is as much as he gave me when he was boarding with me, when I washed and cooked for him as well as for the children. Now I have only the children to cook for and the same thirty rubles. Now that I have a chance to go to school, I say he must look after the children himself for a year. That is only fair. I shall not go to law about it; if he hesitates or his new wife hesitates, the factory committee will make him." . . . Under her matter-of-fact speech was an undertone of defiant aching. When we passed through the factory later and she introduced me to her former husband, I could tell from her strained tones and glances that a tragic personal hurt was still alive in Dunia's heart.

But Dunia, though forty years old, is of the new generation of workers in Russia, who do not allow personal tragedies to ruin their lives. The factory offers her a scholarship in a school for "party and trade union workers": board and bed and teaching for a year, and after it, the job of women's organizer in the plant. So, leaving her children for her former husband to care for, she goes, at the age of forty, to school. "This life is not enough; I must know

more; I must be useful to other women," says Dunia.

"Life now is not the old life," she told me later. "It is not even in the same world. It is not merely that I once got \$9 a month on four machines and now get \$25 a month on three. It is not merely that we get working clothes, and a lunch-room and hospital and nursery and bath-house. It is not merely that we talk at our work which was never permitted. It is not even the Social Insurance, with vacations on pay, and care of babies, and sanitarium. It is not even the Workers' Club, with its good times and dramatics.

"But all life is ours now. Men and women are equal, and equally build the nation. Once life went on without us workers, still more without us women. The father gave the girl to her husband; she was slave to her man and her factory. Now I am slave to no one. The road is open to all life.

"Only one more thing is needed—that we and all the world should be one together. Now we are on the one side, and the whole western world is against us. That is wrong; we should all be one family." . . . Such were the words

of Dunia, who until 1919 was an unlettered textile worker; who has had a husband, children, a year of joy and many years of labor; and who, turning her back on personal tragedies, is going away to school.

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