

TRADE UNIONS IN SOVIET RUSSIA—2.

JOHN JAGGER'S

Notebook

"Soviet Russia is moving towards the purest democracy the world has known. . . . If rule by the Trade Unions as in Russia is dictatorship my blood refuses to run cold at the thought of it!"

This declaration was made at the recent Trades Union Congress by Mr. John Jagger, the President of N.U.D.A.W.

The following sketches, mainly of the social side of Soviet Trade Union activity, are taken with Mr. Jagger's permission from a diary he kept of his recent, and second, visit to the U.S.S.R.

AFTER visiting the rest and culture gardens belonging to the Commercial Workers' Union we had a meal and then went to see a famous Russian ballet in the Opera House which is situated in the middle of the Trade Union garden and surrounded by a circus, a comedy-theatre, a picture-house, sports ground and flower beds. Not a word was spoken during the whole performance, so we were on equal terms with our Ukrainian and Russian comrades. The staging and dresses were magnificent and the dancing incredibly good.

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WE attended a meeting of the Presidium of the All-Ukrainian Co-operative and State Workers' Union in the Hall of the Trade Unions. We had the usual explanations of how their union was constituted and how it carried on its affairs, and after we had questioned them they had their turn at us. . . .

From here we went to a rest camp belonging to the Ukrainian Section of the Co-operative and State Workers' Union. It was a journey of some 30 miles through very rich, well wooded and fertile country.

For the first few miles the roads were bad, and for the rest of the journey there were no roads at all, simply wide tracks cut across huge fields with giant crops of wheat, barley, rye, and potatoes.

At times the cars were at an angle of about 30 degrees, sometimes sideways and sometimes from bonnet and rear. At one place we had all to get out and walk while the cars ran empty over a particularly boggy section.

Finally we arrived at our destination—a number of summer houses very nicely situated on a hill which gave a very extensive view of the surrounding country. Here we saw the first evidences of the "shock brigades"—gangs of men and women who had come out from the surrounding towns on their day of rest to help the collective farmers to weed their land and harvest their hay.

It seemed to be a cross between a picnic and a big job of work, and it was obvious in many cases that whole families had come out to help. It was here that for the first time we saw bullock carts loaded with hay each drawn by two hefty bullocks.



John Jagger (third from right) with the factory committee of a textile mill in Kiev. —Special R.T.D. photo by Wm. Paul.

What a British T.U. Official Found In Russia

We were so late in arriving that the guests at the camp had sat down to dinner, and as all the tables were full we had to wait and have a second sitting. They were a jolly crowd of clerks and shop assistants, male and female, and some of them had children with them. All the lot, men, women and children, were comely and as brown as berries. They were full of happy laughter and made us all feel at home immediately.

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IT was 9.40 p.m. before we left, and one would have thought we had had a full day, but that is not the Russian way, so we started off to see the Kharkov Railwaymen's Club, and I am glad we did, for it is the finest workingmen's club in the U.S.S.R., and that means the finest in the world.

It cost 450,000 roubles, and the architect was a genius. I cannot hope to describe the place adequately. The lower storey and entrance hall are of black polished marble, the rest of the exterior glass and granite. From a long, broad flight of granite steps the entrance, which projects, rises in a series of sections of circles, and above the entrance are windows with long narrow panes, also in sections of circles, stretching unbroken right up to the roof.

Inside the building, the pillars and walls are all of polished marble in various colours and wide coloured marble staircases rise up on each side of the huge vestibule to the foyer of the theatre. Both the foyer and theatre are lined with polished marble; the painting is in cream and green, and there is not a note of decoration except that the plainness of the walls is broken by V-shape slits from which the artificial lighting comes.

The theatre seats about a thousand, and all the lighting is through long panels of opal glass running round the cornices of upper circle and

gallery. At the end of each row of seats there is a circular piece of opal glass on which are painted the numbers, let into the floor and lighted from beneath, so that you can go direct to your seat even in the dark.

The play was a Cossack revolutionary drama for which the dressing and stage effects were simply marvellous. It is the story of a Cossack ruler who murders his only son in a fit of passion because he has sided with the common people. The killing is carried out on the stage during a momentary blackout, and the stage is lighted again in an instant to show the dead boy lying at his grief-stricken father's feet.

After the play was finished the "director"—a railwayman—took us all over the club, where there were most comfortably and efficiently equipped rooms for every kind of purpose under the sun so far as transport is concerned. It was well past midnight when we finished inspecting the club, after which we passed out into the fine gardens which surround the club and watched a music-hall performance for a minute or two, besides listening to the band which was playing under a kind of crescent band stand.

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WE met Lozovsky (of the Red International of Labour Unions). . . . He gave us a summary of his recent speech, explaining the implications of the new policy with regard to Social Insurance, by which the State is handing over £450 millions for Social Insurance administration by the Trade Unions—an astronomical figure. (Note: an article on this appeared in the September issue of RUSSIA TO-DAY.)

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WE met Madame Pavlova, not of dancing fame but General Secretary of the Co-operative and State Workers' Union, who came by night train from Moscow. She is just "plain Jane" in appearance and 33 years of age, a product of the Revolution. She comes of a Muslim family in one of the small republics of the Soviet Union.

She is a widow with one son, and she is the chief executive officer of the biggest Trade Union in the world, with a million and a third of members. Soviet rule has made a veiled Mohammedan, destined, perhaps, for the harem, into a cosmopolitan woman of the world.