BREAD

by Joan Beauchamp

(Who is no casual visitor to the Soviet Union. She speaks Russian fluently, spent four summers in the result of

"KHLEB"—meaning both bread and grain—has been the most important word all down the ages in Russia—as indeed in all peasant countries. In the Soviet Union to-day one hears it on every side—in trains, trams, public parks, workers' clubs—wherever workers and peasants congregate everyone is talking joyfully about bread—about the splendid grain harvest.

This year the Soviet Union has a bumper harvest.

In spite of the gloomy prognostications of timid friends and hopeful enemies, in face of all the stories of famine and disorganisation, causing seed to be consumed and land to be left uncultivated, the spring and autumn savings of 1932-33 were better than ever before, the area cultivated was greater than ever, and the results have fully repaid the energy expended.

The advance this year upon last can best be shown in the following comparative figures. Whereas by September 10, 1932, only 85 per cent. of the entire (and smaller) harvest had been cut, by the same date this year cutting was completed on a much larger harvest.

Again, on September 10, 1932, only 122 million acres had been gathered in ; this year 130 million acres have been gathered.

An important feature of this year's harvest is the extension of crop area in what have hitherto been chiefly consuming and not growing areas. Moscow, Leningrad, practically the entire North-East and North-West have been accustomed to import their wheat from the traditional grain-growing areas like the Ukraine, Caucasus, etc. This year these consuming areas have grown well over a million acres of wheat alone as compared with about 400,000 acres in 1932.

The quality of the present harvest is also better. In the Ukraine, for example, where one hectare yielded 180 pounds of grain this year it has yielded 288 pounds.

This season's success has laid the basis for a successful winter sowing of grain crops. Over 20 million hectares have already been sown as against 18 million hectares this time last year.

The greatness of this achievement can only be fully understood when one considers the difficulties that have had to be overcome.

Last autumn many regions of the Soviet Union, the battle against the rampant individualism of the well-to-do peasants had still to be fought; many kulaks entered into the collective farms and tried to disorganise them, and it was only after a stern and implacable struggle that the sabotagers were turned out, and the farms that they had mined were reorganised.

The struggle with the kulaks, and the discontent and bitterness of those whose treachery was discovered, has been eagerly exploited by the capitalist press and made the basis of a colossal mountain of lies with regard to the breakdown of collectivisation, and the spread of famine over North Caucasus and the Ukraine.

A REPORT, reproduced in the *Manchester Guardian* of September 13, described the "famine at Kiev."

"People remain seated on the ground in the street . . . they remain thus for several days, not having the strength to get up, and end by dying where they are. In the market place every night eight or ten bodies are stripped of their clothes. . . . In the streets on the outskirts bodies remain until they are decomposed."

Mr. Wilfred Wellock, ex-M.P., wrote on the next day to say that he was in Kiev during the week following the original publication of this report in a Czecho-Slovakian newspaper on August 19.

He describes it as "fantastic and incredible."

"I made enquiries everywhere about the supposed famine" (in the Ukraine) he wrote, "but for the most part my inquiries were met with obvious surprise . . . I found no one who knew of any actual deaths from starvation."

In the Ukraine

I HAD heard these scare stories about the Ukraine before I left England, at the beginning of July, for my fourth visit to the Soviet Union and so I made up my mind that, whatever else I missed, I would not leave Russia without going down into the Ukraine and seeing as much as possible of the Soviet and collective farms, which are now responsible for the largest part of the food production of that region.

As soon as I was over the border into the Ukraine I began to look for signs of famine, and completely failed to find any.

I travelled "hard" class on the ordinary trains without an interpreter or guide, and talked to people of all sorts and conditions—peasants, workers, railway attendants, collective farmers, beggars—and nowhere did I find the word "famine" mentioned by the people themselves.

When asked about it, they laughed, and said: "Famine? What do you mean? We haven't had a famine since 1921." They told us they had had difficulties and temporary food shortages in some districts during the winter, but it was difficult to get them to talk about the past, they were so full of the present—so delighted at the marvellous harvest that was being gathered in on both sides of us as the train steamed through the farm lands.

WRITING to the *Manchester Guardian* of September 8, **Mr. Sherwood Eddy,** the world-known writer on social questions, gave his experiences when in search of alleged famine in Russia :

"Upon all my visits" (to the Soviet Union), he wrote, "including this year, when I left in August, I was never refused permission to visit any section I wanted. This year the authorities asked why I wanted to visit the backward region of Tambov, but they offered no further objection. There I heard rumours of the village of Gavrilovka, **where all the men but one were said to have died of famine.** We went at once to investigate and track down this rumour. We divided into four parties with four interpreters of our own choosing, and visited simultaneously the registry office of births and deaths, the cemetery, the village priest, the local Soviet, the judge, the schoolmaster, and every individual peasant we met. We found that among 1,100 **families** three **individuals** had died of typhus. They had immediately closed the school and church, inoculated the entire population and stamped out the epidemic without another case. **We could not discover a single death from hunger or starvation . . .**"

In the province of Dnepropetrovsk I visited many different types of farms—Soviet farms, collectives, communes, and an agricultural "prison colony." Wherever I went I was struck by the gaiety and good cheer of the workers and by the general atmosphere of well-being and security. The physique of the women and children is marvellous, and I could not help wondering, as I watched big, strapping wenches picking raspberries, or tying up the corn

has made a special study of Soviet agricultural policy, Soviet Union, and written an authoritative book as a her visits.)

sheaves, and admired the sturdiness and vitality of the children playing in the farm creches, whether even the most anti-Soviet observer would have been capable of believing that they were famine victims.

It is not only the grain harvest that is a success; fruit and vegetables are also doing remarkably well this year, and I saw acres and acres of raspberry canes, orchards and vineyards laden with fruit of first-rate quality; huge hot-houses, electrically heated, filled with tomatoes; vast fields of potatoes, cabbages, cucumbers, beets, radishes and many other plants which are necessary to produce a well-balanced dietary.

Enthusiasm Dominates All

THE story that all the livestock in the Ukraine has been destroyed provoked nothing but laughter in this district, and many of the farms showed me with pride healthy herds of cattle, and well-kept dairies with electrical milking machinery and careful milk records.

I was interested also to notice a great improvement in the horses, for in 1930 I had been very much shocked by the emaciated condition of the horses newly brought into the collectives of the Ukraine and the Northern Caucasus by erstwhile individual peasants. Now the horses are sleek and well-cared for, and in talking to the specialists at the head of the livestock departments, one finds that during the few years since collectivisation started their ideas on the proper care of animals have been completely revolutionised.

The chief criticism I have to offer is that some peasants do not seem yet to be very particular about their housing conditions, which are often rather primitive. I noticed, particularly in the Communes, that the spotless condition of the cowsheds compared favourably with that of the communal houses for grown-ups, although the children's quarters were much better kept. But this is evidently merely a matter of time—people who have discovered that children and animals thrive better in clean and bright rooms will soon begin to provide the same for themselves.

At the moment it is obvious that their enthusiasm for their work and their determination to make their farms a success is the one dominating factor in their lives. To this wholehearted effort on the part of the agricultural population of the Soviet Union I attribute the marvellous results that this harvest has shown.

Not only wheat but fruit and vegetables have done remarkably well this year.

NEW ARRIVALS mean more tasty morsels to this horde of cannibals. Or so some newspapers would have us believe. The new-comers who are being so heartily welcomed by these Ukrainian peasants are town-workers, sent specially by the factories to assist in gathering in Russia's greatest harvest

Canadian Editor Shows Up British Officials

Where Famine Lies Come From

WHERE do the lies about famine and cannibalism in Russia come from?

Two months ago we reviewed in these pages a sensational book by A. J. Cummings, Political Editor of the *News-Chronicle*, exposing the manner in which British Embassy officials in Moscow tried (in some cases apparently with success) to blackmail journalists into giving distorted and anti-Soviet accounts of the trial of the Metro-Vickers engineers.

He showed up, too, their interest in bringing Anglo-Soviet relations to an end.

These officials are still playing the same game; even more so now that to their political motives have been added personal bitterness at their humiliation in the Moscow trial.

We have before us a copy of the *Vancouver Sun*, containing a full page report of the visit this year to the Soviet Union of Mr. Robert Cromie, publisher and editor.

It contains the following interesting statement :

"In Leningrad one of our officials told me things were not too bad there but that down in Moscow conditions were terrible ; while down in the Ukraine there was such a shortage of harvest that they were practising cannibalism. **That story frightened me because it was told by a high British official. . . .**"

Mr. Cromie went off to investigate, but found that "conditions in Moscow were very much better than in Leningrad," and as for famine and cannibalism, he doesn't seem to have come across them.

He saw signs of difficulties, examples of inefficiencies, places where the crops had not been good ; but nowhere did he find anything to justify the sensational statements of that British official.

"I saw," he writes, "one or two per cent. of the sensational and dramatic in Russia. But to report that as indicative of Russian conditions would be as distorting as to brand Vancouver as over-ridden with bandits because there are a couple of street hold-ups."

Expecting to see destitution and savagery, he found "ordered discipline out of chaos."

"Don't worry about Russia," is his final word. "Russia is made ; she is by nature wealthy ; she has work and she is doing that reasonably well."

We have quoted Mr. Cromie, not because his impressions are exceptional these days, but because they are the direct results of an investigation stimulated by the lies spread by British officials in Soviet Russia.

The origin of some of the stories of Soviet peasants dying in the streets or turning to cannibalism, has been a mystery till now, for we know of no single case of any visitor to Russia having been a witness to these happenings.

Now we do know of one source at least. That is the British diplomatic service in Russia, which last February recommended to the British Government a complete breach of Anglo-Soviet relations.