

## **From Russia With Love by Pat Freeland**

This is a tale of love, cold, adventure, hardship, fear, and happy endings. It is the story of a member of the management team of the Bethlehem Steel (BS) operations in Cornwall, PA and his wife. It starts as far away from Cornwall as one can get, however, and starts before he appears in the tale.

Margherita (Rita) Tritschler Steffensen was born in 1909 in Moscow, Russia. This tale is based on four documents written by Mrs. Steffensen titled "Earliest Recollections", "The Great Russians", "Moscow, November 1917", and "Honeymoon Trip to Kazakhstan", in all 64 typewritten pages.

Her Husband, Percy Lea (Jack) Steffensen, was born in 1904 in Winchester, Wisconsin. After graduation from Michigan College of Mining and Technology he joined Bethlehem Steel in the management training program. In addition to his professional accomplishments which included membership in the team that created the pelletizing process for lower grade ore, he was a true polymath. His hobbies included fine carpentry, photography, cars, and mycology (mushrooms).

They were married on December 2, 1930. After much adventure they settled on Pine Street in the Toytown section of Cornwall with two sons, Bob and Dick. Jack joined the BS Lebanon Concentrator as an engineer, then became successively the assistant superintendent, superintendent and raw materials research engineer.

### **Earliest Recollections**

Rita's earliest recollections reflect a privileged childhood on Pokrovka Street in Moscow, of being sent to stay with Aunt Lyalya (a nickname) when her brother had diphtheria, and of being frightened of Uncle Bruno who looked like Tsar Nicholas II. Fear permeated her family with the outbreak of WWI because of their German name. Anti-German crowds roamed the streets, and once a mob approached the doorman of their apartment house asking whether any Germans lived there. Remembering her father's many kindnesses, the doorman staunchly announced that there were none. A mob did enter the mansion of Aunt Lyalya, destroyed everything in their path and even ripped the bathrobe off her grandmother. The mob was calmed when Aunt Lyalya showed pictures of Uncle Bruno in the uniform of a Tsar's officer and explained that they were in fact of Swiss, not German extraction.

Despite the occasional demonstrations of angry mobs, and several invasions of their "dacha" (summer cottage) by burglars, there were times of great joy and excitement. On Christmas Eve, for example, the children were sent out with a nursemaid in the late afternoon to walk in the park in the dark (the sun sets at 3 PM in the winter). When they returned, they were told to close their eyes and enter the house. The adults had decorated the tree with candles and ornaments and spread presents under it. Afterwards they were visited by Grandfather Frost.

### **The Great Russians**

Despite not being a native Russian, she was a keen observer of those in her environment and displays respect and admiration for them. She describes their appearance, not as many expect them to look – like dark ferocious beasts - but as fair-haired, blue-eyed, and broad-faced, friendly and hospitable.

Peasant houses in rural Russia were built of logs and were arranged in two rows facing each other over a dirt street. In Siberia houses were in clusters along with outbuildings where animals were kept. Most houses had one room, some had two, rarely three.

The interior of peasant houses was very consistent across the land. To the right of the door was a big Russian stove made of bricks or stones. Opposite the entrance, if the people had not given up religion, were icons with a permanently burning little oil lamp. Under the icons were the table and several benches large enough for people to sleep on. There was one bed in the house which was occupied by the head of the house and his wife. All others slept on benches or the floor on and under their old clothes.

A decoratively painted chest held all the precious possessions of all the inhabitants. There might also be a few incidental possessions like a mirror, a few chairs or possibly a sewing machine. The latter was second only in importance to the Russian Samovar, found in almost all peasant houses. In the samovar a central pipe held charcoal which heated water in the outer container to boiling.

One common outbuilding was the bath house, heated every Saturday, the day when the peasants changed the clothes they had been wearing all week (including to bed) and bathed. They lathered with soap, poured buckets of water over themselves then sat on an upper bench for an hour or more, much like users of saunas, contemplating, sweating, and lashing themselves with bundles of birch twigs.

The diet of the peasants was largely determined by the seasons. In summer there was much more variety, including soups, meats, potatoes, cereals, noodles, milk and wheat and rye bread. Cabbage, carrots and beets were common in winter. Tea was the most common drink for all ages, next was vodka (Russian for "little water"). Very strong tea was served in cups for the women, glasses for men. To that strong tea they added boiling water from the samovar. They drank the tea with a lump of very hard sugar held in their mouth or between their teeth.

Until outlawed by the communists, saints' days marked the beginning of all agricultural tasks. The church holidays, which could last from one to seven days, involved much drinking, eating, singing, dancing to accordion music, and as the days progressed, fighting.

### **Moscow, November 1917**

Little good came from the victory of the Bolsheviks. Everyone's world was turned upside down. In her own words:

Streets were barricaded, rifle shots filled the air, soldiers and armed laborers roamed the streets, Cossacks on horseback galloped by – the masses were fighting for the freedom that the communist agitators had promised them in case of success. Officers and cadets, faithful to their Tsar, were doing their best to suppress the raging millions, but the latter were overpowering. Half of the population was passive, waiting for the outcome, locked up in their houses, not daring to go out into the streets where death lurked behind every corner, behind every window and fence. Cold and hungry, terrified and perplexed they sat, crowded together in their homes.

But it was only when the officers and cadets were defeated and the country was at the mercy of the surging, infuriated masses of semi-barbaric people, when all the private property was confiscated and everything was proclaimed to be under state control, only then did people realize what had happened. The masses ruled. The middle class as well as the higher classes had to pay heavily for their comfort and security they had enjoyed under the old regime; they paid with their property and their lives. House searches took place at every hour of day and night, people frantically hid their valuables under floor boards, concealed them in brick walls, buried them in cellars or in the ground near their houses. Arrests and executions followed one another

in quick succession. Houses, stores and churches were plundered and set afire, violence of every kind prevailed – the liberated masses expressed their victorious spirit by destroying everything that came in their way. The nation's old customs and morals, the strict discipline and firmly established routine of the complicated machinery of governing a vast empire were wiped out in no time. But a new one could not be set up in a hurry, and the country went wild. Even school children and students, knowing they no longer had to obey their teachers, tore inkstands out of the desks, defaced the walls and broke the equipment in the laboratories, while in the back yards and cellars of the departments (of the secret service police) thousands of people were tried, tortured and shot to death.

The capital was moved from St. Petersburg to Moscow, commercial buildings were taken by the government, and departments were staffed by incompetents which resulted in the staffs being enlarged from the crowds pouring into the city. Small houses were torn up for firewood thus forcing one or more families to crowd into one room apartments.

Hunger spread, as did diseases, typhoid fever and typhus. Dragging sleds to distant parts of the city and standing in line at all hours and in all weather, citizens bought or bartered for frozen potatoes, firewood and anything else when it was available. Often, they went home empty handed. Ration cards were issued for which one could buy ¼ to ½ pound of bread made from rye flour, sand, potatoes, oats, sawdust and anything else that happened to be around. Horse meat taken from frozen starved carcasses were available in small quantities. It was good only for making soup because of its toughness. “Coffee” was made from roasted rye and saccharine,

In the apartment buildings, many apartments shared a common kitchen so there were not only disagreements, there was spying and scheming to make the others miserable. There was no privacy, which in some cases led to insanity among the residents.

Chaos ruled in the schools, especially because co-education was introduced. Totally unfamiliar it led to predictably undesirable results. One result was that large numbers of young teen girls became pregnant. Gangs of children, known as Homeless Children, aged 4 to 14 roamed the streets. They engaged in the lowest vices, murdered and robbed with abandon, but took care of each other and did not starve as the rest of the population did. Finally, the government recognized the problem and set up schools and housing and by the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution the gangs were largely gone.

Slowly the country emerged from the starvation and deprivation, life became more livable. Then Lenin devised a clever move “to step back in order to jump forward with greater force.” Stalin at the head of the movement, and in a blow that landed heavily on the population, land and animals were confiscated from the peasants who were often exiled to Siberia. Citizens in the cities were forced to render foreign money, gold, silver and jewelry. Those that had nothing were exiled to Siberia or shot. And it was back to rationing and extreme food shortages. In “the workers' paradise”.

In the next edition of the Ledger, Honeymoon in Kazakhstan.



Rita and Jack sometime in the 1950s



Rita and her mother



**The Steffensen Family at home, 1955. Rita, Jack, Bob top and Dick in front.**

## From Russia With Love – Part Two

### Honeymoon in Kazakhstan

This is a continuation of an article included in the September 2020 edition of *The Ledger*. Part one contains the earliest recollections of the author of the original documents, her description of the Russian people, and a description of post-Revolution life in Moscow. An electric copy of Part One and the four original documents written by Rita Steffensen are on line at XXX. They contain a great deal of information beyond this brief précis.

Rita tantalizes us in not explaining her meeting, being courted by, and marrying her American engineer husband. She writes, “I was married with proverbial American speed...we were engaged and married within a week.” The need for speed resulted from her husband’s orders to report immediately to a mining district in the foothills of the Altai Mountains in southwestern Siberia.

Their first week of marriage was hectic. There was the need to procure all manner of supplies: extra warm clothing, “valenki” (Russian felt boots), and a sufficient supply of food to last them during a long cross-country trek. In addition, she had to sort through her possessions for that which she would need on the trip. Everything else, regardless of sentimental value had to be given away or discarded. Compounding the difficulty of shopping was the need to procure permits which involved much red tape and waiting.

They were married on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1930, and told on the 10<sup>th</sup> to be ready to leave the next day. Then they were told to wait till the 13<sup>th</sup>. With difficulty they arrived at the Yaroslavsky Northern Terminal, joined a couple they knew and combined their baggage; the other couple had sixteen pieces of luggage, Rita and Jack had eight. Rita’s whole family was there to see them off and her mother gave her a tin kettle. She almost rejected the gift but decided to keep it.

They sped along toward the Ural Mountains. The train car was heated by a stove at one end, and gave little comfort. A fellow traveler assured the couple that winter was just getting started, that the temperature would soon be in the minus 50–60 degree range. Eventually they left the taiga, the immense virgin forests of Siberia and entered the vast monotonous steppes occasionally passing sparse woods, frozen lakes and swamps, and rarely peasant villages or sleighs pulled by sturdy Siberian horses.

The climate of Siberia is inclement, to say the least, with bitterly cold winters and great heat in the summer. The reason is that Siberia is very far from the influence of the sea which could moderate the climate. Quite characteristic of Siberia is its bright, deep-blue sky summer and winter.

They passed through Sverdlovsk (formerly called Ekaterinberg, site of the execution of the royal family) and entered Siberia. Later they crossed the Irtysh river, passed through Omsk, and continued to Novosibirsk, the Siberian capital. As they needed to change to a different train in Novosibirsk they were forced to sit up all night on the train to be sure to be ready to leave the train. More than twelve hours late, the train passed lines of peasant sleighs indicating that they were near the city. Crossing the river Ob, the largest river in Siberia, they arrived in the Siberian capital in the welcoming warmth of a late winter morning at minus 55.

The sleigh ride to the hotel was a mile and a half to the center of the city. They were not at all surprised to find that there were no rooms at the hotel but discovered that a good friend of Rita, an English

interpreter and the American engineer she was accompanying, had a room. They were warmly welcomed by her friend and treated to hot American coffee. (Again and again she writes of small treats being cause for great celebration and appreciation.) When the couple left the room for work Jack and Rita were able to get some sleep before heading out to buy tickets to Semipalatinsk. After a rest they went to the train terminal to buy tickets. That involved presenting papers and orders to numerous officials, waiting in lines, being told to come back tomorrow and finally getting the tickets.

“To anyone not familiar with travel in the USSR, buying tickets mean stepping to the ticket window, naming the destination and counting out the money. But not so in Russia – there it is a tedious task and a nerve-wracking experience of waiting in long lines, of being turned down and told to come back tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and for many more days to come.” Eventually, after waving Jack's American passport and assuring the officials that Jack was a real “foreign specialist” traveling for the government, they were able to obtain two tickets in the “soft car”, the best accommodations the train could boast of. Their room consisted not of a table but a combination step-ladder and table and narrow berths covered with much used but little washed gray canvas.

Owing to the Soviet government's oppression, inefficiency and prosecution of intellectuals, the supply of experts in every field was severely depleted, necessitating the hiring of foreign engineers and other professionals. Largely American or German, the ranks of foreigners became frustrated by the everyday difficulties they encountered and resulted in a flood of protests and outspoken disgust with the Soviet system. To retain their services the government ordered the O.G.P.U., the secret police, to render assistance to “foreign specialists” in every way possible.

The train moved along at an easy pace with many prolonged stops and they became very thirsty. That is when they realized how indispensable their tin tea kettle was. At every station they could get off and run along the platform to a sign announcing “boiling water”. Tea and sandwich meals made from their stale and dwindling supply of bread, and naps, helped to while away the endless hours.

Staring out at the “overpowering vastness” of the steppes, they heard from the next compartment heart rending singing and occasional dancing from the occupants. They decided to repay their neighbors with entertainment of their own. They brought out the record player they had packed and a dozen records. The effect was extraordinary; a great commotion ensued and soon all the passengers were clustered outside their room, fascinated by the magical music box.

After the long journey they arrived in Semipalatinsk (The City of Seven Tents) and emerged on the platform surrounded by their eight heavy pieces of baggage. Though they could find no porter, an old Kirgiz hoping to earn a few rubles emerged and carried their bags to a sleigh he had secured. The sleigh ride from the station to the hotel in center city was numbingly cold and they were glad to enter the small waiting room and its warmth and not glad when the assistant manager said “No rooms today”. She largely ignored them, and busied herself munching on a hunk of bread with a herring lying on it. She wiped her mouth and hands with the end of the woolen scarf wound round her head and neck.

Having eaten, she seemed to be in a better mood and began eyeing them with less disdain. Then she noticed Jack's laced up boots, and deemed them entirely inappropriate for sub-zero weather. With that she took pity on them and assigned them to a room from which she evicted the current guest, a disgruntled man who was given a cot in the large public room.

After a largely sleepless night on a very hard cot in a barely warm room, they set out to find the office of the agent of the company Jack was to work for. The agent told them he had a room for them which was welcome news. Not so welcome was the news that they had to supply their own meals. They found an open air market (at 50 below) where peasants sold meager necessities at exorbitant prices, including milk frozen solid and sold in chunks wrapped in newspaper.

The time had come to leave Semipalatinsk and report to their ultimate destination, Gloobokoye. (The name means “deep”, as the village was located in a deep hollow near a bend in the Irtysh river.) It was first necessary to find a pair of valenki to replace Jack’s laced boots. Valenki are made from coarse felt shaped to fit without seams, knee-high and very warm, without which one cannot stay outside for very long. It took two days for the agent to get the necessary permits and find valenki. Meanwhile they were able to buy a goose at the market which their landlady roasted for them along with a loaf of bread she baked.

By the afternoon of the third day they were ready. A peasant driver with an open sleigh and a pair of sturdy Siberian horses had been hired to take them on the three-day journey to Gloobokoye. They put on every article of clothing they owned under their overcoats, then were given big sheepskin coats. When slender Rita was wrapped in the sheepskin she could not move at all and had to be lifted into the sleigh. Their piled luggage made seats for them, a blanket was spread over them, and they were off.

Amazed at the endurance of the horses, they asked the driver how they survived. He told them a diet of oats rather than hay was the essential secret. Periodically they had to stop to dig ice out of the horses’ hooves. The driver said they could not use the horses below minus 65, their lungs freeze.

Going was difficult, the banked snow along the side of the road often put the sleigh into a perilous tilt and several times they had to throw their weight to the uphill side of the sleigh to prevent the whole thing from tipping over. A 5:00 PM sunset sent the temperature plummeting, and by 7:00 they were approaching a village. The driver picked one of the better houses in the village, one having two rooms, a kitchen and a living room. Jack and Rita were greeted warmly by the couple and were given the living room, and soon the samovar was boiling on the table.

They awoke the next morning at 8:00 in total darkness, the sun finally rose at 9:00, and soon they were on their way. After a long cold ride they arrived in another village around 7:00 but were unable to find lodging for more than an hour. Finally they were welcomed into another two-room house and were warmed by the fire in the large Russian stove and the humming of the samovar. An early departure the next morning began the last day of their journey and well before dark they arrived in Gloobokoye.

They were dropped at a guest house and welcomed by a friendly old lady. They were assigned to a disappointingly bare room but were quickly informed that their apartment had been vacated and was ready for them. They quickly took possession, scattered their luggage around their one large room and in the smaller kitchen prepared their first meal using the provisions Jack had procured in Germany, canned, condensed and dehydrated food. Subsequent meals also included butter, ham, smoked fish and cheese kept in a pantry where it was frozen solid.

In subsequent days Rita hung oil paintings she had brought, made the apartment into a home, and hired the younger daughter of their driver as a maid, and her mother to bake their bread. One day Rita was

out shopping but having trouble breathing. She was told that it was not surprising, the temperature was minus 70.

They received monthly rations of flour, sugar, sunflower seed oil, coarse salt, Siberian brick tea, hard candy, dry goods and kerosene which they retrieved from the local store in the village. With each successive month the rations became smaller and by spring it was a struggle to get any rations at all. One month the ration was just cheap candy. Rita made the rounds of the local officials, using the term "foreign specialist" at every opportunity and rations were back on schedule. One month they received as a bonus a bunch of radishes. Rita wrote, "For two meals they were our pièce-de-resistance". It is another example of how something so simple can become a celebration given the normal deprivations.

The summer arrived with intense relentless heat, and Jack became seriously ill with yellow fever. As there was no facility in the region to treat him they were given permission to return to Moscow by river boat to Semipalatinsk and then rail to Moscow. This is where the story ends.

Many questions remain unanswered: What was the outcome of Jack's illness, how was it treated? What did Jack, Rita and her mother experience trying to leave Russia? On the sleigh ride across Kazakhstan, dressed in layer upon layer of clothes and relentlessly drinking tea, how did they go to the bathroom? What were Jack's responsibilities at the mine? What did they mine?

**The following texts are from the writings of Rita Steffensen.**

**The Great Russians** outnumber all other nationalities living in the Soviet Union. And naturally, their language and habits are predominating.

It seems to be the general belief in America, that Russians have black hair, aquiline noses and a very ferocious appearance. This belief is as absurd as it is ridiculous. The Russians, belonging to the Slavic race, are, as a rule, fair-haired, blue-eyed, broad-faced, and with a short and wide nose. In general, they are good-natured, big hearted, very hospitable and love to be photographed. Traits and appearances differ in any nationality and there are, of course, Russians with dark hair and, maybe, an aquiline nose, but that cannot be considered as typical, as it is a result of inter-marriage with gypsies, tartars and other non-Slavic races. The Russians, as a whole, are not mechanically minded - they are far more inclined towards the artistic.

Since 83% of the population are peasants, it is necessary to get acquainted with their mode of life and their habits, in order to form an idea of Russia as a country.

Until a few years ago, when most of the peasants were made to join collective farms, they had, for centuries, lived in villages, situated on a hill, near a lake, along a river or by a highway, with rows of log houses, surrounded by farm buildings in such a way, that they form an inner yard, with a wide gate opening into the street. The entrance to the house is, usually, from the inner yard.

The log houses are built very solid; each log is cut down straight on top and on the bottom, providing a perfect fit and between the logs, to insure the tightness of the fit, is put a layer of tow (coarse part of flax), which is later pushed in as far as it will go, until it looks like a rope between the logs.

The roofs of the houses vary, depending on the prosperity of the peasants, as well as on the physical characteristics of the country. They are covered either with straw, wooden planks, shingles or tin. In the Ukraine, where timber is scarce, the houses are

built of wooden frames plastered with clay and mud and then whitewashed inside and out; and they invariably have their roofs covered with straw. Thus a Ukrainian village with snow-white houses, covered with yellow straw and surrounded by green foliage, makes a pretty picture. The Ukrainian housewife takes great pride in keeping her house snowy white; to achieve that she whitewashes it every Saturday. The same can be said about the Siberian peasant woman, although she has to whitewash only the interior of her house, as the Siberian peasant houses are built of logs and plastered on the inside for extra warmth.

As a rule Russian villages are built in two rows, one facing the other, with a street between them, which usually has several public wells - the gathering place for all gossip loving folk. In spring and fall as well as at other rainy times the village street is transformed into a river of deep and sticky mud, an ideal place for the village pigs, but a serious impediment for traffic.

Siberian villages, however, are built in a cluster, with many winding streets and alleys. The inner yards are small and the farm buildings are made of sun-dried bricks and covered with straw (I have in mind the villages of Southern Siberia, where timber is scarce). The barns are so small, that the animals are kept there only at night, in the daytime, whether it is 40 or 70 degrees below zero, they are allowed to roam the village streets. In adapting themselves to such low temperatures, they grow in fall long and shaggy hair, which makes them look very strange indeed to the unaccustomed eye.

The interior of the peasant house is almost alike throughout the entire country. The more prosperous peasant has two or, at most, three rooms, but usually it is just a one room house. As it was mentioned before, the entrance is from the inner yard. On the right of the entrance door there is the big Russian stove; in the corner opposite the door are, or were, that depends on whether or not the people had given up religion since the revolution, the icons with a little oil lamp hanging before them, which is kept burning all the time. Under the icons is the table and wide benches run along two walls. These

benches are wide enough for people to sleep on. By the wall opposite the stove is a bed and as a matter of fact, the only bed in the house. It is occupied by the head of the family and his wife. At the foot of the bed is a cradle, suspended from the ceiling, with a string attached to it, so that the baby could be rocked from any place in the house, by pulling at the string. A very necessary part of the peasant household is the family chest: a large, wooden box, heavily built, covered with metal strips and gaily painted. In it all the treasured possessions of all the members of the family are kept securely under lock and key. A sewing machine can be found in the remotest villages, it is an article in importance second only to the famous Russian Samovar - a self-boiling tea urn where charcoal is put in a pipe passing through the middle of it, cold water is poured in the space all around it and when the charcoal gets red-hot, it heats the water to the boiling point. Then the tin pipe that connects it with the chimney is removed and the samovar is covered. As there is no more draught, the charcoal burns slowly, keeping the water in the samovar near the boiling point for an hour or more. There is nothing quite as cozy as sitting at a table and listening to a samovar singing softly to the general drone of voices; nor is there anything more welcome than a purring samovar on the table, when entering a house on a cold winter's night. Aside from a few chairs and a small cupboard, one can seldom find any more furniture in a peasant house, unless it happens to be a larger house, where they may have in their best room a sofa or some over-stuffed chairs, a big house plant, a mirror or similar luxuries, which are, of course, the envy of the village. Otherwise, some dishes on a home-made shelf, a small mirror and an old alarm or kitchen clock is all, that an average peasant family can boast of. But there is always a samovar - only the very poorest do not have one. A samovar is the last thing a peasant will part with and the first thing he will buy. The walls are usually profusely decorated with "instant" photographs, taken in the nearest town or at the county fair, with pictures cut out of magazines and Soviet propaganda posters, no matter whether they believe in Communism or not.

The Russian stove is a unique and a very efficient contrivance. It is built of bricks and, occasionally, of stones where bricks are not available, taking up sometimes as much as one quarter of the living space of the house, but providing it with ample heat throughout the whole day, after it had been fired in the morning. The bricks are laid in a kind of checkerboard pattern, the heat circulating back and forth among them so much, that it is completely absorbed by the bricks before it reaches the chimney. Only cold air is allowed to escape through the chimney. For summer use of the stove there is a special damper, that shuts off the complicated system of heat circulation, and allows the hot air to escape directly from the oven. The fire is built in a spacious oven, where it burns for several hours, gradually heating the whole stove. When at last, the pile of logs has been reduced to glowing charcoal, it is shoved back into a corner and the food to be cooked or baked is pushed in by means of an oven fork, called "ookhvat." This kind of stove is very good for cooking and baking (frying, of course, is out of the question), as food is cooked at an even heat in heavy cast-iron pots. Milk thus cooked, acquires a delicious taste - it does not actually boil, it evaporates slowly to 2/3 of the amount put in; it is light ochre in color, with a skin brown and crisp. The chimney is above the oven, which comprises the front part of the stove. The back part of the stove does not reach the ceiling by a yard or more, it is flat and even as a floor and it is here where the oldest and the youngest members of the family sleep in winter. It is also a place for the sick. The rest of family sleep either on the floor or on the benches along the two walls, that make that corner of the house, where the table stands and where the icons hang, or used to hang, whichever the case may be. As already mentioned, the head of the family and his wife enjoy the privilege and, one may say, the luxury of sleeping in a bed, even though it might only be a crude home-made affair. Most of the peasants do not use mattresses or sheets to sleep on, they simply spread their old clothes, where they are planning on lying down for the night. A big bag stuffed with either straw or hay, serves as a mattress for the master's bed. And most of them do not undress for the night, either. They usually change their

clothes once a week (on Saturdays, as a rule), when they take a bath. Russian bath houses are very important adjuncts to the farmsteads; they are built either of logs or mud, depending on the locality as well as the prosperity of the peasants; those built of logs are quite roomy with one or two small windows, a brick or stone stove for heating both the bath water and the place itself, and two benches - one above the other, the lower one for washing on and the upper one for steaming oneself. The bath-house has to be very hot before anybody considers taking a bath in it. The usual way of taking a Russian bath is to rub oneself good with soap, using a small tub or washbasin for the warm water and then wash the soap off by throwing several buckets of clean water over oneself. Next comes the steaming; the upper bench is used for that purpose; the Russians enjoy it tremendously and like to sit there, relaxed and contemplative, for an hour or more, as the steam seems to penetrate to the very bones and the perspiration streaming down in great abundance, cleans out every pore. To stimulate circulation even more, they lash themselves with bunches of birch twigs. They use steam baths as a cure for every ill and especially for driving out the common cold.

Where timber is scarce they use tiny mud huts for bath-houses; these have no windows and the crudely erected stove has no chimney - the smoke is allowed to escape through a crack between the door and the lintel. When the mud hut is in the process of heating, they would run in to add more wood and then rush out with even greater speed, as the heavy smoke chokes them and makes their eyes water and smart. When thoroughly heated, the fire having been reduced to glowing charcoal and the smoke all gone, the mud bath house is ready for use.

Peasant families are very large as a rule. By the time the last child is born, the oldest is married and, probably, has children of his or her own. The mother, of course, is unable to take care of all her children. As soon as the oldest daughter is strong enough to carry a baby, and that is anywhere from the age of five, she is entrusted with it. In rural Russia it is a common sight to see a little girl, whether at play or on an errand, carrying

or leading a baby with her. When the baby begins to speak, it will call that sister "Nurse", as all the elders have been referring to that girl as that baby's "Nurse." So it happens, that when the growth of a peasant family has reached its climax, there may be several "nurses" in it.

In helping with the housework the little peasant girls have to start very early too, at about the same age as the nursing. I have often seen little girls, not more than six years old, carrying water from the village well, or the near-by river, in the same pails, as those used by the grown-ups. The Russian peasant children learn early how to take care of themselves, for when the elders are away at work in some distant field and are unable to come back until the work has been done, the younger children, as well as those, that are too old or too sick to work, are left at home to shift for themselves. When harvest time comes - "the time of suffering", as the peasants call it - everyone who is strong enough to lift a sickle goes out into the fields and works from sunrise till sunset under the scorching sun. There is no time to go home for dinner, a cold lunch is brought along, usually consisting of rye bread, cold meat, cucumber pickles; or boiled potatoes, if meat is not available, and "kvas", a thirst-quenching, sour drink made at home of stale black (rye) bread, sugar and other ingredients, that cause light fermenting; it is a great favorite among the Russian people. Nursing mothers bring their babies along and leave them in some shady place. There is no such thing as taking it easy for the expectant mothers, either. There have been many cases, where babies were born right in the field. The Russian peasant woman, sturdy, enduring and resigned to her fate, silently takes everything in her stride - hard work, privation, sickness, the ever-coming children and abuse from a drunken husband.

In a life as hard and as primitive as that of the Russian peasants, a natural selection of the fittest takes place - the weakest die and the strongest survive. They can stand extreme cold and heat, starvation and destitution.

The peasant's food is simple, but nourishing; soup, meat, potatoes, cereals,

noodles, milk, and bread, both wheat and rye, consumed in large quantities. Cabbage, carrots and beets are the most popular vegetables since they can be kept over winter. Sauerkraut and cucumber pickles are put up every fall in large quantities in big, wooden barrels to last throughout the whole year and to lend variety to the otherwise simple meals. In times of want or when traveling, they can live almost entirely on bread. And at all times, whenever hungry, they cut a hunk of bread (they do not slice bread) and munch away with many a satisfied smack of the lips. They never use butter on the bread. In the remotest parts of Russia and Siberia, mothers make pacifiers for their babies by placing a piece of bread in a small rag, tying it with a string and saturating it with their own saliva, before putting it in the baby's mouth.

In baked food “piroghee” and “piroshky” are great favorites throughout Russia and Siberia. The “piroghee” are about two feet long by one foot wide and 3 or 4 inches high, made of bread dough or slightly richer, with a filling, at least one inch thick. There are several kinds of fillings: ground, boiled beef, mixed with chopped up onions and hard boiled eggs, or chopped up cabbage. or boiled rice with the same addition of onions and eggs. The “piroshky” are miniature reproductions of the just described "piroghee" - they are made either round or oval and usually of much richer dough. At party dinners, to give them class and distinction, they are made extremely tiny and of very light and fluffy dough; they are, really, very delicious that way, but that, of course, is in the cities. “Vareniky” in Russia and "pelmeny" in Siberia are very much enjoyed by country and city people alike. They are prepared as follows: noodle dough, rolled out thin is cut out with a water tumbler, or anything else of the same diameter, a teaspoon full of well-seasoned, ground, beef, pork and mutton is put on one half of the cut out disks, the other half folded over and the edges tightly pressed together. They are boiled in water and eaten with melted butter and "smetana", Russian sour cream, which is delicious, as it is allowed to sour right on the milk, which is kept in earthen-ware jugs, covered with cheesecloth. In winter a large number of these "pelmeny" or "vareniky" can be made and

put away in a cold place; when frozen solid, they will keep fresh as long as the cold weather lasts; and that is why they invariably find their way into the food baskets of people traveling in Siberia. "Pelmeny" and "Sshee" (cabbage soup) are taken along on a trip frozen solid and heated up at mealtimes, without any apparent loss in flavor. In the Ukraine the Small Russians fill the "pelmeny" with cottage cheese and call them "galushky."

The two typically Russian soups are "Sshee" and "Borsh"; a great many peasants will eat no other kind of soup. "Sshee" is cabbage soup and "Borsh" is red beet soup; the flavor of each soup is greatly improved by adding a spoonful of sour cream to each serving.

The two most widely used cereals are millet and buckwheat; they are baked in a slow oven to the consistency of rice pudding and are called "Kasha." Millet kasha tastes best, when cooked with milk. At the table some milk is poured over the "kasha."

And last, but not least, comes the herring - for generations it has held the place of honor on the humble tables of the poor, as well as on the choicest dinner tables of Tsarist Russia. The herring is also vodka's inseparable companion. When served, it is usually garnished with onions, hard-boiled eggs, red beets, cucumbers or cucumber pickles.

In peasant houses food is served in a large bowl, which is set in the middle of the table and everyone picks up his wooden spoon and dips in, and mindful of not spilling a drop, holds a piece of bread under the spoon, while carrying it from the bowl to the mouth.

Black tea is THE drink in Russia. It is made very strong in a small teapot, out of which only a small quantity is poured into each cup and glass, the rest being filled with boiling water from a samovar; in this way tea can be made of any desired strength to please every individual taste. Tea is enjoyed by both young and old, and consequently consumed in large quantities. It helps to while away the time; and when it happens, that all sources of conversation at the table have been exhausted, the contemplative sipping of

the tea makes the otherwise awkward silence unnoticeable. Besides pastry it is customary to serve jam with the tea; the jam, or rather jams, as it is a good custom to serve several varieties, is eaten a little at a time, out of very small dishes, called "jam saucers." Indeed, tea drinking is a great pastime in Russia - it a symbol of hospitality and cordiality, which is truly Russian.

The proper way to serve tea to the ladies is in cups, and to the men in glasses, which are served either on saucers or in special metal holders.

Peasants always use lump sugar (the kind that is made in sugar loaves), as they do not put the sugar in their tea, but prefer to suck at a small piece as they sip the tea; in this way they do not use much sugar, as this type of sugar is very hard. It is a custom, grown out of necessity, at a time when the price of sugar was too high for the meager income of the average peasant to afford the consumption of a sufficient amount of sugar.

When a peasant desires to indicate, that he had enough tea (after drinking from 4 to 6 glasses of it), he turns his glass upside down on the saucer and if he happens to have a piece of sugar left in his mouth he puts it on top, or rather bottom, of the glass, since it had been turned bottom side up.

The peasant costumes, typical of their district and nationality are disappearing fast, if they have not already disappeared. And yet the peasant garb, as worn at the present time, is quite different from that of city people. Women wear wide skirts, reaching down to the ankles, loose blouses, with long or elbow sleeves and rather high at the neck; aprons and kerchiefs are very important accessories. The kerchiefs are worn either tied under the chin (grandmother style) or at the back of the neck, which is more becoming. All these articles of clothing are made mostly of bright and gaily figured cotton; they never wear any woolen clothes, with the exception of woolen kerchiefs, which they wear in winter and which are made either of woolen cloth or knitted of woolen yarn. In cold weather girls and younger women wear short, black jackets and older women long overcoats, heavily inter-lined with quilted cotton batting. But for really cold weather they

have sheepskin coats, worn with the fur inside and the outside skin is dyed either bright orange or black. The sheepskin coat is made in such a way, that the upper part fits tight around the figure and the lower part, from the waist down, is very wide and forms many folds at the waistline. Men wear the same type of sheepskin coat. There are some sheepskin coats that are cut straight and loose, but those are usually worn over an ordinary winter coat for extra warmth, when exposed to the cold for many hours at a time.

The unique and indispensable winter footwear throughout the whole country are the "valenky" ("peemy" or "katanky" in Siberia) - they are knee-high, felt boots, rolled into shape out of coarse felt without a single seam. They are extremely warm and comfortable. In spring and fall the peasants have to wear high, leather boots to wade through the knee-deep mud of the village streets. "Lapty" are shoes woven out of strips of bass tree bark and are worn by those, who are too poor to buy leather footwear for everyday use. The poorest peasants even wear them in winter. "Onoochy" are wide strips of coarse cotton material, which the peasants wrap around their feet and legs instead of stockings.

All footwear, mentioned above, is worn by men, women and children alike. In summer everybody prefers to go barefooted. In winter inside the house they often go barefooted too, as the "valenky" are really too warm for indoors. So it happens sometimes, that when in a particular hurry to go out, they run out barefooted into the frost and snow and do not seem to suffer any great discomfort from it. Men wear the loose fitting Russian shirt, with straight, cuffless sleeves, a narrow, upright collar, that fits snug around the neck and opens to one side. The better shirts are made of linen with cross-stitch embroidery. A cord with tassels is tied around the waist. For special occasions the more prosperous peasants wear a vest and, sometimes, coat over the Russian shirt.

The trousers are tucked into the high boots, which, according to the best peasant style, should squeak and form several deep creases at the ankles, resembling an

accordion; due to the latter peculiarity, a boot is often used as a bellows to blow the smoldering charcoal in a samovar to the point of glowing.

In order to keep the leather of the boots pliable and waterproof, it is rubbed with tar; this fact partly accounts for the strong odor that fills the air of the immediate vicinity of a peasant or soldier; “makhorka,” a very inferior kind of tobacco, smoked by them, also contributes a good share to the maintenance of that strong Russian odor. Children are dressed the same as grown-ups.

Before the revolution, the Greek-Orthodox Church, which was the dominating religion of Imperial Russia, played a very important and decisive part in every community. The pope (priest), being one of the few literate persons in the village and by far the most important one, had a great influence over the peasants. However, it is necessary to point out here, that the average Russian priest, being literate enough to read and write, was not cultured enough to use his power fairly, and refrain from taking advantage of the peasants' ignorance and superstitions. He was noted for his greed. But apart from that, the church, with the richness and color of its decoration, its solemn rituals and deep, soul-stirring bass choir, contributed greatly to the spiritual life of the peasantry, gave them faith and hope, helped them bear hardships, misfortunes and oppression, and added light and beauty to the emptiness and darkness of their primitive existence. In the absence of calendars, saints' days marked the beginning of all agricultural tasks. Church holydays were numerous, and were eagerly looked forward to and celebrated to the utmost: first, solemnly at church, where clouds of incense floated in the air and a great many wax candles flickered gaily, while the priest, dressed in a rich and colorful garb, repeated the words of God in a half-droning, half-singing voice, which was both soothing and awe-inspiring to the listeners. And the voices of the choir thundered, rolled and melted away in the lofty dome. The rhythmic chimes of many different-sized bells announced the end of the service and the peasants, in a festive mood, hurried to their

homes, where the tables were set for a big meal. A boiling samovar and bottles of vodka stood guard over “piroghee,” herring, pickles and other dishes, tempting to the Russian palate. After profuse eating and drinking they would be in the right mood for singing and dancing to the accompaniment of the accordion, that much abused, but very popular musical instrument of Russia's lower class. This divertissement would be followed by some more drinking and eating, after which the men are ready to start some fights among themselves. When night comes, the wives would go out in search of their husbands, persuading them to go home, leading them staggering and half-conscious, or dragging them out of a ditch or from under some fence, where they had passed out, or where they had lost their equilibrium and unable to get up, lay there, either in a state of perfect bliss, singing themselves hoarse, or in a state of perfect gloom and swearing, as only Russians know how.

Festivities used to last from one to seven days, depending on the importance of the occasion; the hilarity and enjoyment of them being judged by the amount of broken bones, window-panes and household belongings, as well as beaten wives.

After the revolution, with the elimination of all church holidays and the closing of many churches, the first and spiritual phase of peasant festivities largely disappeared and only the second and rather savage phase has remained and seems to be more violent than ever.

Now, if a peasant wants some divertissement from his daily drudgery, he is encouraged to go to the local Communist Club, which usually occupies a house, confiscated from some rich peasant and is decorated with cheap portraits of Communist leaders, red cotton cloth and propaganda placards. On the table, also covered with red cloth, are some typical Soviet magazines, imbued with propaganda and an old radio hoarsely proclaiming the supposed achievements of the Soviet and the dreadful plight of the working masses of the outside world. Is it surprising then, that the peasant, and the worker too, turns to vodka to seek, at least, temporary oblivion from the dire reality of an

empty, hungry life?

And yet, in spite of their outward rudeness and their outbursts of violence, poetry and romance, love of beauty and of nature are not altogether unknown to the peasants - old Russian songs, legends, fairy-tales and other folklore prove that only too vividly. It is true that years of hard toil will coarsen many of them, but youth, with its ardor and vigor, is more responsive to the finer aspirations of the human soul; and some are able to retain it through life. And the young peasants of Russia love, woo and languish with as deep a feeling and as consuming a passion, as youth is capable of, anywhere else in the world.

When the day's work has been done, all the villagers emerge from their homes to relax and gossip in the oncoming darkness of a warm summer evening. The older people sit on benches, built along the front fence or by the house. The young people congregate in groups, the girls start singing songs, while the boys saunter up and down the street, singing to the accompaniment of an accordion. In passing the group of girls, they exchange jokes until a conversation is started and the whole crowd moves on to some open space where they sing, dance and play together. In recent years the more modern dances, such as the waltz, polka, vengerka, are gaining popularity over the native dances - russkaya, kazachok, hopak, tsiganochka, lesginka. The old Russian "khorovod," dancing in a large ring to the accompaniment of songs and sometimes involving a play - has, largely, become a thing of the past.

When darkness has completely enveloped the village and the older generation has retired, the young crowd (unless the get-together has proved to be a great success and then the party may last throughout the night) breaks up into pairs, that seek out secluded corners, where they can await the coming of dawn undisturbed.

And thus it goes on as long as the weather is favorable and the summer lasts. The fact, that they can keep it up throughout the summer and still be capable of accomplishing the hardest tasks, gives sufficient prove of the amazing endurance and vitality of the

Russian peasants. Of course, in winter they have ample time to catch up with their sleep, as the nights are long and the weather too severe to lounge outside. And the possibility of getting together inside does not offer itself very often, because the houses are small and the families large and, consequently, a crowd of merry-makers would not be welcome, as it means no sleep for the rest of the family and, besides, the burning up of kerosene, which is a valuable item for the peasants.

It is hard to say in what a predicament Russian peasants and workers would find themselves, if they were deprived, all of a sudden, of sunflower seeds - when idle, they eat them almost constantly, the seeds entering the mouth from one side, while the shells come flying out of the other in a steady stream. The sunflower seeds seem to possess a soothing and entertaining quality, they help disperse the boredom of many hours of waiting, waiting for something or other, as one always has to in Russia. Guests and sweethearts are treated with them. They just help to while away the time under any circumstances.

## Honeymoon Trip to Kazakhstan

In December 1930 I surprised the Soviets by doing the least expected, that is, by marrying an American engineer, working for the Soviet Government. In any other country it would not have seemed so out of place, but in Soviet Russia it was: the government did not expect the young girls, that were brought up and educated under Soviet conditions and were, therefore, useful in helping build a Communist Paradise, to turn their backs on them and marry men from capitalist countries. However, I was greeted with the best of wishes and enjoyed all the privileges accorded a wife of a foreign specialist, as long as I stayed within the Soviet Union, but when my husband's contract was drawing to an end and I expressed the desire to leave Russia, my hardships began - but that is another story.

Well, anyway, I was married and married with proverbial American speed, although maybe, not according to the best American, as well as European, customs, for we were engaged and married within a week, as my husband received orders to leave for work in a mining district in the foothills of the Altai Mountains in Southwestern Siberia. It would have been absurd to postpone the marriage and let a foreigner go alone to the wilds of Siberia, where there was not a soul that could speak English and where the procuring of food is a job in itself and housekeeping is in a primitive stage. We did not have much time to ourselves in that first week of married life; we were urged to leave as soon as possible, but there was so much to be accomplished before we could do so; first, we had to get extra warm clothing; second, to get a sufficient supply of food to carry us over, in case there was a severe shortage of food (at that time the Soviet government was pushing through its first Five Year Plan and entering upon its second period of privation since the October Revolution), and besides, we needed food for the trip, for dining cars on Russian trains are not the rule, but the exception and restaurants in railroad stations were, usually, devoid of food. Only the express trains have dining cars attached to them, but they do not always carry food in them, either. Third, I had to sort out my own belongings, and when a person had been living in one and the same place ever since childhood, it is not so easy to decide on short notice, which things to discard, which to leave behind and which to take along. The hardest of all was to decide what to take along and how much, for, although we were told that we were to stay in Siberia for six months, from experience I knew, that the statement could not be relied upon, as once they get a capable man into an out of the way place, they keep him there as long as possible, for skilled men are rare in Russia and prefer to live in bigger cities, where living conditions are more up to date. Next I had to suppress any sentimental feelings attached to some childhood things and give them away, as I could leave behind only a small amount, for there was going to be no place to store them, as I knew I would lose the right to my "living space" (one does not always have a whole room to oneself in Russia), as one can be absent from it only for three months and I could not crowd my parents' living space with my belongings, they did not have any too much room themselves.

In doing our shopping we discovered, that in Moscow, a city of three million, we could not find any "valenky" - Russian felt boots - without which it is almost impossible to be outdoors in winter for any length of time. Also, there were no men's handkerchiefs, I had to buy some trimmed with lace. When trying on sweaters, I could not get one small enough, so the obliging clerk assured me that it would shrink; and when my husband could not find one big enough, she assured him as convincingly that it would stretch. All this extra shopping, which far exceeded our monthly rations, required many special

permits, the procuring of which was a difficult and tedious task, involving a lot of red tape and much waiting.

We were married on the 2nd of December, and on the 10th we were informed by the State Mining Trust, that we were to be ready to leave on the 11th. We packed till 3 o'clock in the morning. The tickets were supposed to be delivered to us at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and the Trans-Siberian Express used to leave Moscow at 6:45 P.M. It was already 3:30 pm in the afternoon, when we found out, that there were no tickets to be had for that day, and that we had to wait till the 13th, since the Trans-Siberian Express ran only three days a week. After the intensive packing of the night before, we decided to take it easy and relaxed, as well as we could, amid steamer trunks, suitcases, grips and boxes, piled about our room in the Hotel Europa.

On the 13th from 2 o'clock in the afternoon we kept calling up the office every half hour or so. At first they had nothing to tell us, then they began to assure us that the tickets would be there, but when, nobody knew. At 4:30 we were positively assured that the tickets would be procured, and that somebody would deliver them to us at the railroad station. An American geologist and his wife, who were very good friends of ours, were also leaving for Siberia on the same train, but the company had only one automobile to spare for all of us, a Ford coach, and taxicabs being very scarce in Moscow, could not be found at all during the rush hour, so we started moving our baggage at about 5 PM. Our friends had 16 pieces of luggage and we had 8. By the time we ourselves and our baggage had been safely transported to the Yaroslavsky Northern Terminal, there was about a quarter of an hour left before the train was scheduled to leave. Everybody was there to see us off; my mother brought a tin kettle along, which she insisted we take with us, as it might come in very handy - no one traveling in Russia would think of scoffing at a tin kettle, but I, being married to an American, felt as if I were already surrounded by American conveniences and thought it out of place to travel with an American husband and a tin kettle!

Meanwhile it was 6:45 PM the time for the train's departure, but there were neither the train nor the tickets. The excitement was growing with every minute; half an hour later, when we were about ready to take our baggage and leave, our tickets arrived, and five minutes after that, the train. We had a two-berth compartment in the International Sleeping Car (WagonLits), which is the most comfortable sleeper not only in Russia, but also in most European countries. The tin kettle found its way into the compartment, too, and four days later we found out how very indispensable it was.

We sped along towards the Ural Mountains, across the endless, snow-covered plains of Russia, with villages scattered here and there, small towns and large cities, with stretches of forests and winding, ice-bound rivers, while the temperature was falling slowly, but steadily.

Since the Northern Railroad, by which we were traveling, was built on a higher level than the Kazan or Southern Railroad, we did not get a good view of the Ural Mountains - they seemed to be small and insignificant and I felt quite disappointed after all I had heard and read about them. But on our return trip to Moscow we traveled on the Kazan Railroad, which ran along the base of the mountains, past deep valleys with streams hastening along and steep, forest-clad mountainsides, through long tunnels and past

upright, weather-worn rocks. Having crossed the Ural Mountains, we arrived at Sverdlovsk, formerly Ekaterinburg, famous as the center of the Ural mining district and infamous as the place, where the last Tsar of all the Russias and his family were executed.

Geographically we had just entered Siberia; however, we did not have to look at the map to know it, the intense cold assured us of it. During our first night in Siberia the mercury dropped to 40 below zero Fahrenheit and the ceiling around the ventilator as well as the outside wall of our compartment were covered with frost. The furnace at the end of the car was kept red hot, but the frost and the icy cold wind penetrated the car nevertheless and made us shiver pitifully. A snow storm was raging that night, and since at the last stopping place a freight locomotive had been assigned to pull our Express train, we were making very poor progress and losing time considerably. A fellow-traveler, on seeing me shiver, comforted me by saying, that the winter was only setting in and that 50 - 60 below zero was the usual temperature. If he thought he had cheered me up, he was greatly mistaken.

Leaving the great and mysterious taiga - those immense virgin forests of Siberia - north of us, we were speeding through the monotonous, boundless steppes, occasionally interspersed with sparse, foliate woods, frozen lakes and swamps. Villages, or any other kind of human habitation, were scarce; only once in a while we would see one or several peasant sleighs, gliding along on the hard-frozen snow, pulled by sturdy Siberian horses. But mostly, for miles and miles, we would see no sign of life.

The Siberian climate is extremely continental, with severe cold in winter and great heat in summer, which is due to the fact that the greater part of Siberia is very far from the influence of the sea, which could temper its climatic conditions. Quite characteristic of Siberia is its bright, deep-blue sky, prevalent both summer and winter.

Crossing the Irtysh river, we passed Omsk, an important commercial city of the steppe belt, and were traveling towards Novosibirsk, the capital of Siberia. It was formerly called Novo-Nikolaevsk and was founded in 1893 by railroad men, during the construction of a bridge across the river Ob for the Trans-Siberian Railroad. In two decades Novosibirsk grew to be the commercial center of Siberia, for here the river traffic of Siberia's largest river (the Ob) met its only railroad. At the time the population of Novosibirsk was about 121,000. We had to change trains in Novosibirsk and take the Southern Branch to Semipalatinsk. However, that last night on the Trans-Siberian Express, we knew neither how far we were from Novosibirsk, nor how many hours we were overdue, until the time our train pulled into the railroad station of Novosibirsk. Then we found out that we were twelve hours late. We had to sit up all that night, waiting for Novosibirsk to turn up. Every time the conductor would go by, we would look at him inquiringly and he would say: "Oh, it won't be long now!" And another hour would drag by. At last, in the bluish-gray light of a Siberian winter morning, we saw a long caravan of sleighs and horses, drawn out in single file, creeping along a road that was leading in the same direction as our train: now we knew we were not very far from Novosibirsk, for those frost-covered men, trudging alongside their sleighs, were peasants from the neighboring villages, bringing, what they could spare of their own farm produce, to the market of Novosibirsk.

I must point out that the peasant villages that we encountered on our trip were populated exclusively by Russian peasants who had settled there after the Trans-Siberian Railroad was built. The Kazaks, or Kirghiz, were nomads and did not cultivate the land. Later the Soviet government forced them to give up their nomadic life.

Crossing the mighty Ob, we finally arrived at Novosibirsk, where the bleak dawn of a late winter morning gave us a chilly greeting. We could still feel that frosty welcome (it was 55 below zero), while driving the mile and a half from the railroad station to the hotel, which was located in the center of the city. However, the presence of a hotel in a Russian city does not at all mean that there are rooms to be had. Therefore we were not in the least surprised when we were told that there were no rooms available. Luckily I remembered that two days before our departure from Moscow, a good friend of mine, an English interpreter, had left Moscow to accompany an American engineer to Novo-Sibirsk. I inquired at the desk and was told that my friend and her American engineer did have rooms at that hotel. We went up to her room and were accorded a hearty welcome and treated to some hot American coffee. My friend introduced us to the American engineer, and curiously enough, in the course of the conversation, it came out that this man was of Danish descent and was born and raised in the same town as my husband's father. When they left for work their rooms were at our disposal and we were able to snatch some sleep before we went out to buy tickets to Semipalatinsk, as we were determined to leave Novo-Sibirsk that very same day. To anyone not familiar with travel in the USSR, buying tickets means stepping to the ticket window, naming the destination and counting out the money. But not so in Soviet Russia -there it is a tedious task and a nerve-racking experience of waiting in long lines, of being turned down and told to come tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and for many more days to come. If you are traveling for the government, you have some papers to show and you make the rounds of all the officials, whose positions might be influential. After hours of waiting in ante-rooms and several desperate attempts of locating the elusive manager, and after a most persistent waving of my husband's American passport before every person of importance in the railroad office, we finally convinced all the necessary officials of the significance of my husband's status as a foreign specialist, and were given tickets for a two berth compartment in a "soft" car - the best accommodations that train could boast of. Railroad cars in Soviet Russia are not divided into classes, as is the case in most European countries; but they are called either hard or soft, with the exception of the International Sleeper (Wagon Lits), mentioned in the beginning of this article, which could be termed as super soft. But due to the fact that most of the soft cars date back from Tsarist Russia, when they were divided into first and second classes, you never know what sort of accommodations you are to get - soft or nearly so. When we boarded the train we knew we had the latter subdivision: instead of a built-in table, we had a combination step-ladder and table, the top board of which threatened to break off any time, the narrow berths were covered with much used, but little washed, gray canvas. In answer to our timid question of whether we could get any bedding, we received a surprised and perplexed stare from the conductor.

As the train moved along at an easy pace, making many prolonged stops and the hours wore on, we began to get thirsty; then we realized how indispensable our tin tea kettle was: for at every railroad station we could get off the train, rush along the platform towards the ever welcome sign of "boiling water", scramble up the mound of ice beneath the tap and fill up the kettle with that precious liquid. Precious indeed is the hot water when you find yourself on a train without any facilities for cooking food and are crossing a vast and sparsely inhabited country. Nothing can break the monotony of traveling so much as a pot of tea. Our supply of bread that we carried all the way from Moscow, was disappearing

fast and what there was of it was getting stale. Tea and sandwiches constituted our meals and numerous naps during the day helped us to while away the seemingly endless hours.

The overpowering vastness of the steppes was strangely intensified by our fellow-travelers, a woman and two men, who occupied the compartment next to ours, and who spent the day singing Russian and Siberian folk songs, which are so full of the plaintive half Asiatic, half Slavonic emotions, expressing the vague longings of the fathomless Russian Soul for love, freedom and heroism, born on the great expanses of the Russian Land. And every so often, these stirring songs that seemed to draw at your very heartstrings, were followed by dance songs and folk ditties, the gay rhythm of which was expressive of the carefree joys of crowds on holidays. And these sudden bursts of gaiety were like the little hills, dotted with a few fir trees that we saw now and then rise on the silent steppes.

Towards evening when the train had pulled into a bigger station and we had all the evidence of a prolonged stop, we decided to repay our neighbors for their entertainment and give them some West-European and American music - we had a portable phonograph with us and a dozen records. We started one of the records, an organ solo, and presently a great commotion took place in the car: all the passengers got out of their compartments, some were crowded in the aisle, while others rushed out on the platform thinking they had heard a radio and were only too anxious to locate it. But soon they all gathered near our door, standing in awed silence, entranced and bewildered. We had to play all our repertoire, and one by one they would come in to look at the wonderful music box. The phonograph that could be found in almost any home in the outside world created a sensation on a Siberian train and won the admiration of many. Russians, by nature, are quick to appreciate good music.

The trains are scheduled to cover the distance between Novo-Sibirsk and Semipalatinsk in 24 hours, but we were losing time and were supposed to arrive at Semipalatinsk five hours late. When we remarked about it to the natives, they said we were lucky for ordinarily the trains were eight hours late and sometimes more.

As we were nearing Semipalatinsk we could see that everywhere the Kirghiz Kazaks outnumbered the Russians: we knew then that we had entered Kazakstan, the largest Autonomous Republic of the Soviet Union. The Kirghiz, or Kazaks, as they have been called since the Revolution, have highly pronounced Mongol features and belong to the Turco-Tartar tribe. From times immemorial they have led a nomadic life, roaming the steppes from the Irtysh river to the Caspian Sea with their herds of sheep and goats, horses and camels, living in summer in round, felt tents, called "Yurtas", and in winter in low, square clay huts. The Soviet Government, in their ruthless efforts at stamping out all forms of private enterprise and their eagerness at collectivization, have succeeded in forcing some of the Kazaks in the less outlying districts to settle down, or, at least, lead a semi-nomadic life. But the Kazaks make very poor workers, as for centuries they have done nothing but herd cattle and hunt (mostly with the falcon), thus spending the greater part of their lives in the saddle, while the women did all the work, attending both to household duties and cattle-breeding. Therefore the prosperity of the man depended largely on the number of wives he had. In the lives of the Kazaks horses do double duty - they furnish means of transportation as well as food. The mare takes the place of the cow in a Kirghiz household, although it takes expert handling to milk a mare. Mare's milk, called "koumyss", after it had been

allowed to ferment, becomes slightly intoxicating, but due to the fact that it contains anti-toxic bacilli, it possesses a great curative power in combating anemia and tuberculosis.

We arrived in Semipalatinsk (The City of Seven Tents) in the afternoon, and with our eight heavy pieces of baggage piled about us on the platform of the railroad station, we were helplessly looking around for a porter. But it so happened that there were no porters, which is usually the case in most of the smaller towns in Russia, but you would not think of a city like Semipalatinsk with a population of 58,000 to be small, only there seemed to be no need for porters since the people took care of themselves, being mostly peasants and Kazaks, and quite unfamiliar with the accommodations of big city life. However, after a while, our helpless figures were spotted by a friendly old Kirghiz, anxious to earn a few rubles, who carried our baggage outside the station and then raced and fought to a victorious end a crowd that rushed to meet a few approaching sleighs, thus securing for us the only means of transportation to the hotel.

As it is often the case throughout Russia and Siberia, the railroad station was located several miles from the city proper, and during that drive we were chilled to the bone. It was bitter cold. When the driver finally stopped at the hotel, we were more than glad to plunge into the warmth of the little ante-room, where a woman, the assistant manager, greeted us with the all too familiar phrase, "No rooms to-day." But we were too cold to go away. We just sat there by the stove and looked at the woman and she looked at us. She wore big felt boots, a heavy black overcoat and a woolen scarf wrapped around her head and neck, with the ends hanging in front; it was not warm enough inside for her to take off her overcoat. She was having her supper - on the table she had spread a newspaper and had a hunk of bread and a herring lying on it. After tearing off the head and skinning the herring she took it in both hands and proceeded to annihilate it, occasionally wiping off her fingers on the loose ends of her woolen scarf that were so conveniently hanging in front of her, in order to have a bite of the bread. From the rising sounds of luscious munching we could hear that she was enjoying her meal thoroughly. And presently it put her into a better mood. Also, she was gradually succumbing to the all-powerful presence of a foreigner whose outlandish appearance and mannerisms, as well as the inability to speak the Russian language, have often proven irresistible to the Russians. But it was really my husband's leather boots that turned the tide: they were the type that lace all the way up, which is quite uncommon in Russia. First, they interested her; then they struck her as being utterly unsuitable for sub-zero weather. She said she felt it would be too cruel to send a man away into the cold with nothing but laced shoes on his feet. She was going to give us a room, but this generous gesture resulted in a little scrap with another man to whom a room had been promised the day before. However, with the true hospitality of a Siberian, she managed to keep that room for us. We took possession of it the minute it was vacated, to the greatest consternation of the other man, who was given a cot in the big community sleeping room instead. When our baggage had been placed in our room, the furniture of which consisted of a single and very hard bed, a small table, two chairs and an improvised washstand, there was just enough space left for us to squeeze through in order to get from one end of the room to the other. However, it was comparatively warm as there had been a fire built in the stove that same day; but we heard our next door neighbors complaining about the low temperature in their room - it turned out to be that the hotel's ration of fire-wood was sufficient only if the rooms were heated every other day. At last we had a chance to get a hot meal. We had with us a supply of dehydrated and canned foods, which my husband had purchased in Germany during his vacation there the preceding fall. We had a small cooking outfit with us, consisting of an alcohol stove, two aluminum pots and one cover, which could also be used as a frying pan. Out of our supply of German dried soups we selected the oxtail soup. Then we fried some smoked ham; as dried onions were the only vegetable we had with us, we

boiled a few for the main course. And we had tea for dessert - a meal that any Russian would have envied us. We got up the following morning tired from trying to get some rest and sleep on that hard and narrow cot. After another warm home-cooked meal we set out in search of the agent of the company my husband was sent to work for. After several tours of the city we finally located the agent and his office. He was surprised to hear that we were staying at the hotel - he had a room ready for us - hadn't anybody at the Moscow office told us to send him a wire so that he could have met us at the railroad station? But the officials at the State Mining Trust in Moscow had apparently forgotten all about it, for all we were told was the name of the agent.

We lost no time in moving into the room so thoughtfully provided for us. At that time the company for which my husband was going to work had not been completely taken over by the Soviet Government, but was still operated by the same men that were there when it had been an English concession, and this fact accounted for the courtesy and consideration shown us while in Semipalatinsk. This concession, "the Lena-gold-fields", had a guest-house in Semipalatinsk for the employees to stop at while on company business.

Our room was fairly large and had two metal cots in it, besides some other simple furniture. And a roaring fire in the stove was more than a welcome to us. We still had to provide our own meals, as there were no such luxuries as restaurants in Semipalatinsk, a city of 57,000 inhabitants; and even the most common types of public eating places, the so-called "stolovki", were closed for lack of food. But there was a market where you could buy a few necessities from the peasants, if you had enough money to meet the exorbitant prices. Since it was an open air market and the temperature was around 50 below zero, the milk was frozen into a solid mass and had to be sold by the pound, with the customers carrying chunks of it home wrapped in newspaper.

While in Semipalatinsk, my husband urgently needed some dental work to be done, and after extensive inquiries we set forth to locate the dentist. The driver must have misunderstood my directions for he pulled up in front of the local government dental clinic. We went inside: the small, dimly lighted waiting room was packed solid with patients, mostly Kirghiz, the air heavy with body odors of unwashed natives swathed in well-worn sheepskins. A long line waited to be registered. One more look and we were out again in the fresh, crisp air on the way to the private dentist. Most Russian dentists are women, for when at the close of the 19th century higher education was made possible for women, the course in dentistry was the first to which women students were admitted in medical schools - since then dentistry has been considered a "sissy" profession for men. We found the dentist at home. She was middle-aged and a fine type of the old Russian intellectual class. Of course, her equipment was antiquated, but that could not be held against her as she was lucky to possess what she had. Her drill was of the type that had to be operated by foot, but she knew what she was doing and did it well. In the course of conversation we found out that she owned her home and, therefore, was not entitled to food cards and other means of distribution of daily necessities. She was pressed hard by taxes on her home and super-taxes on her private practice of dentistry and had to buy her food and other necessities at the market through underground channels. Her case, however, was not exceptional, it was typical of the plight of thousands of such people.

The last part of our trip had to be accomplished by horse and sleigh. A peasant driver with an open sleigh and a pair of small, but sturdy Siberian horses had been sent to Semipalatinsk to drive us to Glibokoye, our ultimate destination. But we could not leave right away as we had no felt boots -the famous Russian "valenki", rolled out of coarse felt and shaped to fit without a single seam, usually knee-high and very warm, without which a human being could not stay outdoors in the heavy frost for more than an hour.

It took the agent two days to get the necessary permits and to locate and buy the "valenki" for us, which, by the way, are called "peemi" or "katanki" in Siberia. Meanwhile, we bought some flour and a goose at the market and our landlady roasted the goose and baked bread for us. In the afternoon of the third day we were ready to start on our three-day sleigh ride across the hard-frozen, wind-blown steppe. We put on everything that we could get under our overcoats. On top of that we received big sheepskin coats, large enough to fit a big man; but when my very slender self was wrapped in it, I could not move at all and had to be lifted into the sleigh. The high collar was towering over my fur hat and a scarf was tied around the collar to keep it in place, leaving a small opening for the eyes and the tip of the nose, which very soon became just as red as my scarf and the two could hardly be told apart. My three pairs of gloves disappeared in the long sleeves and the clumsy "valenki" became entangled in the endless skirts of the sheepskin coat. Our trunks had been piled against the high back of the sleigh and thus formed a seat for us. A rug was spread over our knees to keep the wind away, the driver climbed on his seat and pulled on the reins. The two little horses needed no encouragement - off we started, gliding smoothly along the wide streets of Semipalatinsk, where traffic regulations were unheard of and people drove on whatever side of the street it pleased them best. When crossing the railroad tracks we were almost thrown out into a huge snow drift, for the horses heard the whistle of an approaching locomotive and, frightened out of their wits by a sound so foreign to them, reared and dashed to the opposite side of the road making a very sharp turn. But luckily for us, behind the snow drift rose a fence which prevented further progress.

The last log house, old and weatherworn, waved us good-bye with a few puffs of smoke. Now we were alone on the snow-covered steppe. Wherever the eye turned there was the same straight line of the horizon, the same whiteness, flatness, loneliness. Not a tree, not a bush. Only an occasional stalk of coarse steppe grass, only an occasional undulation of the ground. The horses kept a steady pace, the runners squeaked merrily, gliding along hard-frozen snow. The sun was shining brightly and the sky was a cold deep blue. The sharp wind was trying to get through all the layers of our numerous clothes.

In places the hard-packed snow did not cover the road evenly, but sloped towards one side of it; and our sleigh, going full speed, would start sliding at a perilous angle to the horses, and we would hang on to it tightly and pray that we would get through that experience safe and sound. In other places, however, the snow on one side of the road was cut into deeply by the passing of many sleighs and a sort of barrier was formed against which the sleigh would slide; and the runners, striking it, would throw the sleigh out of balance, with the opposite side of the sleigh raised off the ground. We would then throw all our weight in that direction to keep the sleigh from turning over. On several occasions it was a very narrow escape indeed.

As soon as the sun had set, it started getting noticeably colder. By seven o'clock we were approaching a village, the dim, twinkling lights of which had been luring us irresistibly. We decided to

spend the night there. Only a traveler in a lonely country knows the powerful attraction of those specks of light, shining in the frosty mist of a cold, moonless night: there is comfort, warmth, security in them.

We drove into the village. The sight of human habitation, however humble, was most welcome to us. The driver picked out a house; it was one of the better houses, having two rooms - a kitchen and a living room. Also there were no small children in the family; the thoughtfulness of our driver was really touching, he even arranged that we get the living room to ourselves. The people were friendly in a quiet, unobtrusive way. Presently, there was a samovar boiling on the table. We made tea and ate some of our hard-frozen food, and, as it seemed, provided ample entertainment for our hosts - the whole family were gathered in the back of the room watching us intently.

At bedtime we were asked whether we wanted to sleep on the floor or the sofa, and we surprised them by choosing the latter. So a wooden bench was brought in to make the sofa wider and our sheepskin coats were spread on top of this makeshift bedstead, one to serve as a mattress, the other as a blanket and the bed was ready.

Next morning we woke up at about eight o'clock and could hardly distinguish the objects in the room. It got light at 9:00 A.M. The rays of the rising sun were filtering through the frosty haze as we drove out into the lonely steppe again. The horses, after spending the night in the open, for the overhanging roof of the house, supported by several posts on the outer edge, could hardly be called a shelter, and kept warm only by some blankets thrown over them, were galloping along fresh and frisky as the day before.

From time to time we met whole caravans of peasant sleighs, contracted by some State Trust, that were hauling freight. Stretched out in single file with one driver for several sleighs, each drawn by a single horse, tied to the sleigh preceding it, they moved slowly but steadily with their heavy loads.

At about one o'clock in the afternoon we entered a village and stopped at a roadside inn to eat our lunch. The place was filled with traveling peasants, mostly women and children, that were sitting or lying on the benches and on the big brick stove. We selected a vacant table and bench in the far end of the room, and turning our backs on the curious crowd, hastily consumed our lunch. As usual, boiling water was provided for the travelers and we drank a lot of hot tea to warm up our stiffened limbs.

We did not stay long enough to have the horses unharnessed to give them a good rest, but that apparently did not have a bad effect on them for, presently, they were again rushing us over the steppe. We remarked to the driver that we were amazed at the endurance of his horses and he told us that so long as he had enough oats to feed the horses he had nothing to worry about, but that they could not be expected to work so hard on hay alone. The horses were no bigger than American ponies. In winter they grew long, shaggy hair. From time to time our driver had to stop the horses, get out of the sleigh, and break the icicles off the horses' nostrils and off his own mustaches. The most annoying thing, though, was when hard-packed snow turned into ice inside the horses' shoes and had to be chopped out. Our driver

told us that when the temperature dropped to 65 below zero, horses could not be used - their lungs froze. Passing occasional bushes, we frightened away some birds, similar to quails, and heard the driver regret the fact that he did not have a rifle with him to shoot a few.

Darkness fell between five and six o'clock in the afternoon. Shortly after seven we were approaching the beckoning lights of a village. But luck was not with us this time. For a whole hour we were driving from house to house in search of lodging. In one house the master was away and the wife was afraid to let strangers in; in another they were out of kerosene and therefore had no light in the house; in a third they were having a party and were all drunk; and other houses had only one room and lots of children besides. As a last resort we decided to drive to the chairman of the village council and ask help of him. When on our way there we chanced upon a house that had two rooms and only three in the family. It was a godsend indeed. We were getting so cold that we were barely able to stir and had to summon all our strength to climb out of the sleigh and limp into the house. Our new hosts welcomed us into their humble dwelling, more charcoal was added to the samovar and soon it was bubbling and purring on the table. The people were very poor, but clean. Their clothes had big patches all over. The furniture consisted of a few homemade benches, a table and a bed. The bed, on which the master of the house and his wife slept, was a crude, table-like affair on high legs and with rough planks laid over the frame. Siberian peasants know nothing of sheets and very little of pillows. When our hosts vacated their bed for us we could see them carry away pieces of coarse, homemade felt, old clothing and sheepskins, which they spread on the floor of the kitchen, where they and our driver were to sleep that night. The conventional ideas of the civilized world had not yet affected the peasants and therefore they were not at all bothered when they had to sleep men, women and children, whether relatives or strangers, all in one room. The fact that they did not take off their clothes when they retire for the night helped a lot in this case. As a rule they change their clothes once a week after they had taken a "bath" in a mud hut called the "bath-house". These "bath-houses", typical of the steppe country, are very small in size, have neither windows nor chimneys, and when a fire had been built there, the smoke has to escape through a crack above the door. Naturally, the "bathing", or rather scrubbing, takes place after the fire has burnt down to charcoal.

The following morning we did not fall victims to the misleading darkness of Siberia's belated daybreak, and before the rising sun had taken the biting frostiness out of an early winter morning, we were off on the last stage of our trip. We left our hosts happy over a package of tea, which they had not been able to get for a long time, and instead of which they drank a beverage brewed from some kind of weeds picked from the bottom of the Irtysh River. We also gave them a can of goose liver paste, as they claimed never to have seen or tasted canned goods. The monotony of the steppe was broken by a forest of tall pine trees that stretched for several miles. We enjoyed driving through it: the tall, graceful pines were gently swaying in the wind that murmured and rustled through their bushy tops, blew the snow off them and let the sunshine glide down their trunks and play on the ground.

The country was getting hillier too, and presently we saw a snow-clad mountain peak arise on the far horizon, then another and another. Those were the Altai Mountains towering in the distance. The villages were situated in hollows now, thus being partially protected from the frequent strong winds that swept the steppes at all seasons causing blinding snowstorms in winter and raising the hot piercing sand in summer.

For lunch we stopped at some relatives of the driver and were treated with warm hospitality, so characteristic of the Siberian peasants. The family seemed to be prosperous and could boast of having all the features necessary to make them fine types of Russian peasantry. It was a two-room house: the big Russian stove occupied the larger part of the kitchen; in the right-hand corner stood a table with benches running along those two walls and icons hanging above it. The living room had a small brick stove and a wide bench that ran under the windows facing the street. On this bench under the front windows sat two girls spinning busily away on some old-fashioned spinning wheels. The girls were large and husky, broad-faced and rosy-cheeked, with flaxen hair and blue eyes. They seemed to glow with health, vitality and sheer joy of existence. As I was looking at these two well-built girls, laughing and singing at their spinning wheels, bare-footed, dressed in wide, cotton skirts, gaily colored blouses and aprons, with braided hair and bright kerchiefs, I felt as if I had stepped down the decades and found myself in Tsarist Russia of serfdom days. Here in the wilderness of Siberia the peasants had preserved the native traits that had characterized their forefathers for centuries. Thus we were brought in touch with something that had been an integral part of Russia once, but is now only revealed in art and is highly treasured by those who understand and love Old Russia.

It was with a feeling of regret that we parted with these people and resumed our journey which was to end that very afternoon. The snow was sparkling in the bright sunshine and the sky was beautifully clear and blue. The two small, shaggy Siberian horses, (closely resembling the American pony), that were pulling our low wicker-basket sleigh, seemed to have lost none of their vigor since the time of our start three days ago. For hours they had kept up a steady trot and in the late afternoon, rounding a hill in a merry gallop, they brought us into Gloobokoye.

At the foot of the hill was the new settlement; to the left arose the large metal structure of the partially completed (?) mill, and a little further two log buildings - a dispensary and the doctor's and nurse's home. But no doctor or nurse was available. To the right, closer to the Irtysh river, there were three rows of log houses; in the first row there were two two-room apartment houses and one three-room apartment house; in the second row there were the guest house and foundations for two apartment houses; and in the third, there were the office and a double house, one-half of which was occupied by the manager and the other by the chief engineer. All houses, except the office, were one story high.

Beyond, in a hollow, along the bend of the Irtysh River, lay the village of Gloobokoye, an irregular, sprawling mass of peasant huts. An electric power plant stood nearby. The lowlands of the opposite bank of the Irtysh stretched on and on until the glistening snow of the steppes met the cold blue of the sky.

The driver stopped at the guest house; a friendly old lady welcomed us in and showed us to our room which contained two metal cots, a table and some chairs. Though the warmth of the house was comforting, the bareness of the room was discouraging - there was not even a washstand there; the guests were expected to wash up in the kitchen. The washstand of rural Russia and Siberia is a unique contraption: it consists of a small metal tank with a tapering, four-inch long plunger protruding through a hole in its bottom. The tank is attached to the wall and a receptacle for dirty water is placed underneath.

When you want to get some water you cup your hands, push in the plunger and the water will come out of the hole in the bottom of the tank and fill your cupped hands. With a little practice one can soon master the co-ordination of movements necessary in performing one's daily ablutions. But the guest room was devoid of even this simple luxury. Also, there were no cooking facilities available for the guests, and tired as we were from our trip, we longed for those few homey touches that spell comfort to the weary traveler.

However, before the day was over, we were informed that the apartment assigned to us had been vacated, and that we could move in immediately. We lost no time in taking possession of our new home; and, leaving our baggage scattered all over the place, proceeded to concoct a meal from our supply of canned, condensed and dehydrated food, most of which my husband had brought from Berlin, where he had spent his first vacation.

Our apartment consisted of one fairly large room, a small kitchen, a tiny closet, containing the above-mentioned wash-stand, and a diminutive storage room in which we kept our supply of butter, ham, smoked fish and cheese, frozen solid throughout the winter without the aid of artificial refrigeration.

Our one and only room had two large windows and a big, white-washed, brick stove, which extended into the kitchen, where it formed the cook-stove, with a large oven deep in its center. Fired in the morning, it radiated ample and steady heat throughout the day and most of the night. There were two metal beds, a chest of drawers, a cupboard, several chairs and a long table, half of which we used as a dining-table and the other half as a desk. A small shelf, painted white, hung on the wall. I also hung some oil paintings that I had brought along to brighten up the room. To give the place another homey touch, I made window curtains out of some of the cotton print material that we managed to buy in Moscow to trade with the peasants who did not want money for their farm produce, since the village co-operatives were devoid of goods. The peasants would walk miles in sub-zero weather to trade their produce.

On one occasion we did visit the village co-operative in Gloobokoye, which was supposed to supply the needs of the peasants, but its shelves were empty except for some earthenware containers resembling vases.

In our kitchen there were a table and some shelves and a large container for water, which was delivered fresh every day. But there were no pots and pans, dishes and cutlery, which the officials in Moscow had assured us, would be provided for us.

When, on the following morning we went to the office to meet the manager, we had to start the battle of existence right away - we needed food and we needed dishes. Promises came quick and easy, but not the food and dishes. Finally, they decided to give us special dinners at the public eating place until some dishes could be found. We were served really tasty meals, as the chef was very good and glad at a chance to test his skill. The slop served to the general public was of a very dubious quality.

When our kitchen utensils arrived they consisted of a one burner, portable kerosene stove, one enormous and one small choogoon (cast-iron pots suitable for cooking in the oven of the Russian stove), some frying pans and a very scant assortment of dishes and cutlery. Then we got our food; the beef was so tough that no matter how we cooked it, it refused to become tender. For weeks I had been asking for a tongue, and when I did get one, it had several white spots on it. Naturally, we did not dare eat it. Eventually, the truth leaked out: all the cattle slaughtered had been suffering from the dreaded hoof and mouth disease; and to keep the consumers unaware of it, the carcasses were delivered minus the heads and hoofs!

At first we had such vegetables as carrots, beets, cabbage and onions, but the supply soon ran out and for the rest of our stay there we had potatoes, turnips, sauerkraut and cucumber pickles as our regular fare, occasionally supplemented with hard frozen eggs, cottage cheese or a chicken traded from the peasants. Gradually our slices of ham, smoked fish and cheese that we had brought along, became thinner and thinner until there was nothing left to slice - that was in the spring.

Although we were living on the bank of a large river, we had fresh fish only once, when the manager sent us a nelma as a gift. The nelma belongs to the sturgeon family, has firm, snowy-white meat and is found only in Siberian rivers. It is considered a great delicacy whether cooked or smoked. We feasted on it for several days. The peasants did not fish more than what they needed themselves, for the surplus, if they had any, had to be given to the village co-operative.

We hired our driver's younger daughter as a maid. Her mother baked our bread. Through her efforts we were lucky to buy a pint of milk a day. The girl proved to be loyal, conscientious and willing to work. She must have been 15 years old, but neither she nor her parents knew her exact age -there were so many in the family and all of them illiterate. After she had been with us for a while she learned to count up to 25, but I was unable to teach her to tell time by the clock. Tonya's favorite pastime was washing floors. Unlike those of the peasant huts the floors in our apartment were painted, which greatly simplified the procedure, eliminating the actual scrubbing, which fact delighted Tonya so much that she was washing them every day until, finally, to save the finish, I had to curtail it to three times a week. Tonya also learned to slice bread, at home they simply broke it into hunks. I had to show her how to make beds, as she had never seen sheets or blankets and very little of quilts - they just use their old clothes for bedding. She enjoyed ironing and, when she had learned how to put in pleats, she spent hours ironing them in her voluminous cotton skirts.

When Tonya was indoors, she took off her valenki and went about her business barefoot. When water was delivered to us in a large wooden barrel set on top of a peasant cart, she thought nothing of running out into the snow in sub-zero cold barefooted and carrying in bucketfuls of water to fill our water barrel in the kitchen. When Tonya did our wash, she hung it up in the attic where it remained frozen stiff for weeks - we used to bring it in a few pieces at a time and dry them in the house. The peasant women did their wash in the river summer or winter. No matter what the temperature, they would chop a hole in the ice, rub and beat the wash till their hands were red as boiled lobsters. They used no soap. I asked one woman how she stood it as it seemed to me that the intense cold would make her hands ache, but she said she did not mind it at all - it just made them tingle!

Tonya refused to eat cheese, saying that its odor was most revolting to her - Siberian peasants, due to the lack of proper transportation, do not go into dairy farming. Tonya's cooking ability was confined to making noodles, a very popular dish with the peasants. The cheese that we had brought from Moscow froze solid during the trip and remained hard and dry, fit only for cooking, so we used it to flavor the noodles. The butter froze so hard in our storage room that when we tried to cut a piece off the chips flew in all directions as if it were a block of ice.

One day Tonya asked permission to stay overnight. I told her we had no facilities for sleeping a third person, but that presented no problem to Tonya; she would sleep on the floor of our tiny kitchen, using her long quilted winter overcoat as both mattress and cover. The reason for her overnight stay was a gathering of young folks at some house in the village near our settlement and her mother would not let her go, considering her too young for all-night parties. Since peasant huts are small and overcrowded, it is not often that the young people in the villages have an opportunity to gather in the wintertime; so I let Tonya get away with her scheme that time, but did not encourage any more adventures. No doubt, she had told her mother that I had extra work for her to do that night.

Our log apartment house had no basement except for a small dirt cellar dug out under the kitchen floor to store vegetables and the like, but the big, brick stove kept even the floors warm. Only when the March borans (snow storms) began to blow, with their piercing winds penetrating the tiniest cracks, did we fire our stove twice a day.

One morning when I started on an errand it was so cold that I tried to walk faster to keep warm, but found out I could not as the intense cold was drying up my nostrils and making breathing slow and painful. There seemed to be a haze in the usually clear air as if the whole atmosphere were frozen, which it might very well have been - for when I finally reached the office, I was told that it was 70 degrees below zero. All outdoor activities were suspended.

Our neighbors on one side were a young married couple with a four year old daughter. Both husband and wife worked in the office. They were a friendly and congenial couple who seemed to enjoy unusual popularity among their co-workers, as every night their tiny apartment was jammed with people. However, later on we found out that it was not so much their personal charm that attracted the people as the fact that every night we played our phonograph - the only source of entertainment in Gloobokoye. Although the walls were also made of thick logs, the wood was very dry, possessing excellent sound conductivity. Incidentally, these neighbors had a cow which presented them with a calf early in the spring. The weather being still too cold, the calf was kept in the kitchen, already shared by a cat and a maid. The neighbors on the other side kept chickens in the little cellar under the kitchen floor and let them out once a day for air and light.

Towards spring we ourselves managed to trade a few live chickens from the peasants, but we did not keep them in the kitchen. They all laid eggs, so we let them live. It was the maid's job to catch them every night and lock them in a shed. It was a strenuous job, so one day Tonya had a bright idea: she tied

the chickens together, two chickens on one length of string. From then on it was a circus to watch those chickens, for no two chickens wanted to go in the same direction; they hopped on one leg, pulled in all directions, but the right one, and cackled frantically. However, that was the chickens' worry; Tonya's problems of the nightly chase were solved.

There were no luxuries and a few conveniences in Gloobokoye, but any time we needed the services of a barber, all we had to do was to send Tonya to the village for him. He was not rushed for business and was glad to oblige. He cut my husband's hair and marcelled mine. He knew how to wield the shears and the curling irons, but he had only one set way of hairstyling; so after he had carefully marcelled my hair, I just as carefully combed it out and coaxed it into the type of hairdo I was wearing at the time. The climate was so dry that the waves lasted from one shampoo to another.

We had two American cookbooks that we used to study diligently every day in hopes of discovering some recipe that called for the least amount of ingredients. We had butter only in small quantities, and when we did get eggs, they were usually frozen. A frozen egg has hardly any egg-white and the yolk remains firm as though it were hard-boiled - when we tried to fry the eggs, the yolks stood like balls in the pan; and if creamed with sugar for baking, the yolks stayed lumpy and did not mix with the dough.

On one occasion when we happened to have butter, eggs, and sugar all at the same time and in sufficient quantities, we baked a cake (we had some baking powder with us that an American friend had given us when we were leaving Moscow). We decorated the cake with canned cherries from Germany. Such a momentous occasion called for a celebration, so we had a party - the cake was beautiful and tasted wonderful after a steady diet of potatoes and turnips. To vary our menu, we used to have mashed potatoes and diced turnips one day and diced potatoes and mashed turnips the next.

Sometime during the winter while we still had some cabbage in our vegetable cellar under the kitchen floor, one of the cabbages began to sprout and form a growth that very closely resembled a rose. We carefully removed it from the stalk and put it in water, and set the dish on the table. For weeks afterwards we had a lovely pale green cabbage rose, which was truly a cabbage rose, gracing our dining table.

Sometime in spring, after several weeks without any meat, two wild ducks, brought by some peasants, seemed like a godsend to us - it took some shrewd bargaining before we could reach any agreement on the number of meters of cotton print material that the ducks were worth.

Tonya's people were very anxious to have us visit them. So, one Sunday afternoon, we set out for the village of Gloobokoye. "Gloobokoye" - means "deep" in Russian, and the peasant village of Gloobokoye was situated in a deep hollow along a bend of the Irtysh river. It consisted of many winding streets and alleys, so unlike the peasant villages that I had seen near Moscow: those were, usually, built along one wide, main street with the peasant homesteads lining both sides of it. The peasant house faces

the street with its two front windows, next to it is a fence with a large gate leading into the yard which is surrounded by farm buildings. The entrance to the house is from this yard. The peasant house is called an "izba" and is made of heavy logs, which are cut down straight on top and bottom to provide a close fit; and between the logs, to insure the tightness of the fit, is put a layer of tow (the coarse part of flax), which is later forced in as far as it will go until it looks like rope between the logs. Both Russian and Siberian peasants build such homes, the Ukrainian peasants make theirs of wooden frames plastered with clay and white-washed inside and out. The Ukrainian peasant home is called a "hata". In Gloobokoye, as well as in other villages of Southern Siberia, where timber is scarce, the inner yards of the peasant homesteads were small and the farm buildings were made of sun-dried bricks and covered with straw. The barns were so small that the animals were kept there only during the night; in the daytime, regardless of the weather, they were allowed to roam the village streets. To protect themselves from the rigors of Siberian winters, cows grew long and shaggy hair, which made them look more like bears than cows, producing a rather startling effect at first glance. Siberian pigs, however, were skinny and long-legged, and looked very much like dogs as they foraged for food in the village streets.

The house in which Tonya and her family lived was a typical peasant "izba": the entrance was from the inner yard; on the right of the entrance door was the big Russian brick stove; in the corner opposite the door were some icons, with a little oil lamp hanging before them that was kept burning at all times. Under the icons was a table with wide benches running along the two walls. At mealtime an honored guest was usually seated in the corner, under the icons, a place of honor. The benches were wide enough for people to sleep on. On the left of the entrance door stood the family chest: a large wooden box, criss-crossed with diagonal strips of metal and gaily painted; in it all the treasured possessions of the family were securely kept under lock and key. Opposite the stove was the only bed of the house, used by Tonya's parents. At the foot of the bed, suspended from the ceiling, was a cradle - a square frame with some material loosely stretched over it - a string was attached to it so that the baby could be rocked from any place in the house. A small cupboard and a few chairs completed the furnishings of their "izba". The walls were decorated with snapshots of the family taken in the nearest town or at a county fair; and propaganda posters, which were hung not because they believed what the posters said, but because they added color to the interior of their "izba". Their proudest possession was a sewing machine - incongruous as it may sound, sewing machines may be found in the remotest and most primitive of villages. But their most useful possession was the samovar, it is the first thing a Russian peasant will buy and the last thing he will part with. Before long there was a boiling samovar on the table for us, with the tea pot on top of it, where the tea was brewing till it got so strong that only a little of it was needed for each glass of tea, the rest being filled with hot water from the samovar. In Siberia they use "brick tea" - it is low grade, powdered tea, pressed into large slabs that are divided into one-quarter pound squares resembling huge chocolate bars; no doubt the tea is held together with some sort of sticky substance. For brewing, small pieces are broken off and dropped into the tea pot: it tastes like tea, but lacks its delicate fragrance. But it is more compact and concentrated that way, thus better suited for travel or shipping over long distances.

Tonya's mother put some homemade preserves and pastries on the table. We sat around the table sipping hot tea out of glasses (a trick in itself), helping ourselves to spoonfuls of jam, which took the place of sugar and was to be eaten a little at a time as one was drinking the tea. Meanwhile the samovar was purring softly, bits of conversation were exchanged, the pastry was being consumed, and numerous glasses of tea emptied. After the repast, my husband took pictures of the interior of their "izba"; they were quite flattered by that. Then somebody dashed in to announce that gypsies were passing through Gloobokoye and were doing some dancing and singing in one of the village streets. Our Tonya grabbed a

woolen shawl, slipped into her "valenki" and dashed off, not hearing her mother's admonitions to put on more clothes (it was a typical Siberian winter day). She was gone for close to an hour, returning thoroughly chilled, but happy. After the table had been cleared, a bowl of roasted sunflower seeds appeared on it - sunflower seeds are the peanuts of Russia; it is hard to say in what a predicament Russian peasants and workers would find themselves if, by some chance, they were deprived of them - when idle they eat them almost constantly, the seeds entering the mouth from one side while the shells come flying out of the other in a steady stream. Of course, it takes a bit of practice to achieve such proficiency. The sunflower seeds seem to possess a soothing and entertaining quality, they help disperse the boredom of many hours of waiting, waiting for something or other, as one always has to in Russia. Guests and sweethearts are treated with them. They just help to while away the time under any circumstances. The food value of sunflower seeds is very high - the protein content of sunflower seeds is 52% (all of it available for human nutrition), while the protein content of soy beans is only 40%.

Tonya's baby sister called her "nurse", for when Tonya was home it was her duty to look after that child - it is an old peasant custom. Tonya's oldest sister lived at home for she had lost her husband and her first child; her second child, born after the husband had died, was about the same age as Tonya's youngest sister. Since infant mortality is high in Russia and accepted by the peasants as the inevitable, Tonya's widowed sister was very anxious to have a picture of her baby, so that in case it died too, she would have something to remember her marriage by.

Tonya's mother was a large woman who seemed to rule her roost quite efficiently. Tonya's father was a small, friendly man. In recounting his life's experiences, the biggest of which was his participation in World War I and subsequent capture by the Germans, he deeply regretted the fact that he had returned to Russia after the war was over - he would have preferred life in a German prisoners-of-war camp to that in Soviet Russia. Since he possessed two horses instead of the customary one, he was frowned upon by the authorities, and the stigma of "kulack" (the rich peasant who supposedly got that way by exploiting his poor, or maybe lazy, neighbors), was in the offing. Besides the two horses, they had a cow, some pigs and chickens, but they never had enough grain to last them from one harvest to another.

My mother sent me two packages of old clothing, but it took several months for them to be delivered. Nevertheless, we considered ourselves fortunate at that, for packages do not always reach their destination in Soviet Russia. We also received several bundles of magazines from the United States, one of which arrived partly soaked in mud as it was carried in a peasant cart during the spring thaw. As spring comes suddenly in Siberia and the sun shines every day, the snow melts very rapidly and the roads, whether highways or by-ways, become veritable rivers of mud, with travel of any kind made impossible for days and sometimes even weeks. Cows were known to drown in market squares of small towns, while in the village streets men lost their knee-high leather boots in the mud. My maid Tonya was unable to come to work one day as she had misjudged the width of a mud-hole while trying to jump over it and landed waist-deep in mud. She spent the rest of the day washing the mud off herself and her clothes and drying her boots. However, with the Siberian sun increasing daily in its intensity, the earth dries rapidly and, alas, some years stays dry until fall, when, all of a sudden, it is covered with snow again.

Since the number of American magazines that reached us was limited, we read every one of them from cover to cover, studying every advertisement and pausing the longest at food advertisements, and

with our mouths watering, relished every tempting morsel depicted. Since foreign publications were taboo in Soviet Russia, the American magazines were a constant source of wonder to me - from them I learned a great deal about the American way of life.

We had one unforgettable experience in connection with mail service in Gloobokoye. There had been a delay, due to bad weather, and for several days no mail was brought to Gloobokoye. When it finally came, one obliging clerk in the office, knowing how glad we would be to have our mail, sent it over with a messenger first thing in the morning. The messenger, a local peasant girl, opened our front door without knocking, entered the kitchen, exchanged a few words with our maid, who informed her that we were not up yet, and then, also without knocking, opened the door to our room and handed us the mail while we were still in bed! Her attitude was most unconcerned and matter of fact, as among her people, knocking on doors that are not locked, is considered entirely unnecessary.

The laborers in Gloobokoye, consisting of local peasants and semi-nomadic Kirghiz, received much more meager rations than the office force: the flour that they received was dark, coarse and of uncertain ingredients; and the salt was rock salt in its natural, unrefined state, with much of the earth still clinging to it. The laborer's lunch usually consisted of dry black bread and water. When an American engineer, who had learned to speak Russian, told some of these workers that jobless men in the United States could get free coffee and doughnuts, the Russians wondered then why the American workers wanted to work at all.

We received monthly rations of flour, sugar, sunflower seed oil, coarse salt, Siberian brick tea, hard candy, dry goods and kerosene at the local store in the village. With every month the rations grew smaller. In spring it became a struggle to get one's rations at all. On one memorable occasion, I came into the store and was handed a half pound of cheap candy as our only monthly ration. As a Soviet citizen I would have taken it, as a Soviet citizen is expected to--with gratitude, but as the wife of an American, I refused to. I made the rounds of the officials and told them in no uncertain terms as to how they were supposed to treat a foreign specialist. I wove the Soviet made title of "foreign specialist" into every sentence, and, in the end, we got what we needed out of a supply salted away by the higher officials. One day they even sent us a bunch of radishes - real radishes, crisp and bright red, with fresh green leaves: For two meals they were our *pièce-de-resistance*. They had been grown in somebody's makeshift hothouse. They proved such a treat to us that we started looking for some seeds to make a little vegetable garden of our own. We worked every evening, using as much water as we could spare from our daily supply; although the river was close by, the bank was steep and hard to climb without the added burden of balancing buckets of water. After all the work we put in our garden, our entire crop consisted of half a dozen tiny radishes.

Mr. Kubash, the Chief Engineer, and his family were German, but their openhearted hospitality matched that of the Siberians. They welcomed us into their family circle. They had already spent several years in the Altai Mining District and had learned how to make the most of the primitive living conditions. From their vacations in Germany they brought back rugs, linens, dishes, pictures, stacks of phonograph records and last, but not least, trunkloads of old clothing to trade with the peasants, which enabled them to keep their larder well stocked with most of the essentials. They also had a horse, a buggy

and a sleigh, and often went out riding in the open country - their only outside diversions. In summer their horse was also useful in hauling water from the river to water their vegetable garden.

Three Russian engineers were also frequent callers at the Kubash home. Thus we formed a heterogeneous, but very friendly group. Only one of the Russian engineers could speak German, while none spoke English. Our host had picked up enough Russian to make conversation, but Mrs. Kubash was less successful and relied on her two older daughters, aged 19 and 12, to interpret for her, as the girls could make themselves understood not only in Russian, but also in English; the latter they had learned at another mining community, the Ridder Deposits, where there were several American families. As for myself, I had to change constantly from one language into another, until it finally got to the point that when I thought of anything connected with the Kubashes, I thought of it in German; if I had my husband in mind, my thoughts expressed themselves in English, and everything else took form in the Russian language.

The Kubashes had another daughter with them, a darling little girl about five years old, but their two sons were left in Germany to complete their education.

One of the Russian engineers, a man in his forties, of Polish descent, rotund, entirely bald-headed, with a bristling mustache and a merry twinkle in his keen, black eyes, was a natural born comedian. When he was present at any of our gatherings, there was never a dull moment. One did not have to speak Russian to appreciate his antics, for his pantomime was superb.

If it was not a regular party, of which there were several, we usually sat at the dining room table with a samovar purring on it and, in true Russian style, had tea and a light evening meal. If it was a party, then the supper was more elaborate, inasmuch as the circumstances permitted, and there was dancing to the phonograph. Sometimes we played games, but more often than not, the entertainment was provided by the jovial engineer, as well as Mr. Kubash, who loved a good time and who did a lot of clowning of his own; and invariably his daughters upbraided him with a half shocked, half delighted - "Ach, Vater!"

But the biggest and most lavish party that we attended in Gloobokoye was given by the manager on New Year's Eve, shortly after our arrival there (we arrived in Gloobokoye two days before Christmas and naturally spent the holidays very quietly). As mentioned before, the mining enterprise at Gloobokoye had been part of a British concession, called "Lena Gold Fields", and at the time of our arrival was in the process of being confiscated by the Soviet Government, but had not yet been taken over by Soviet officials and was run as a private business; therefore, there was more efficiency, more food and a little social activity on a pre-revolutionary scale. The manager engaged the local chef who had at one time worked in an exclusive restaurant. The two masterpieces were a jellied suckling pig and a baked fish. A jellied suckling pig is a typical Russian dish and one of the best ways of preparing so young a pig, as the meat is rather tasteless and lacks in firmness. The pig is boiled and gelatin dissolved in the well-seasoned broth - a simple enough procedure; but the next step calls for an expert to produce striking results, that is, the final arrangement and decoration of the pig before the gelatin is allowed to set. Slices of lemon and

vegetables, cut to resemble flowers, are generally used to embellish gelatin molds of meat or fish. Jellied pig is always served with horseradish, which improves its flavor.

The other dish to dominate the supper table was a baked nelma - during the course of its preparation the fish had been completely removed from its skin, its meat picked off its bones, then mashed, seasoned and stuffed back into its own skin which remained intact under skillful handling. It was then baked and trimmed with vegetable rosettes. Needless to say, it was a delectable dish. The dessert was also very good, a sort of sponge cake drenched with a delicious sauce. And, of course, vodka flowed unrestrained; since there was no wine available, it was also served to the ladies. A portable phonograph provided the music for the dancing.

Once, when calling on one of the Russian engineers, we were treated to a most unusual dish - whole, ripe tomatoes preserved in brine. The sight of juicy, bright red tomatoes in the middle of winter in the heart of Siberia was a thrill never to be forgotten. Not only did they look tantalizing, but they also tasted very good, having a flavor all their own. Our host explained to us that they were procured by his housekeeper from some friends of hers at Ustkamennogorsk, who were quite expert in the tricky process of preserving ripe tomatoes. Briefly, it is accomplished by placing rows of tomatoes between layers of sauerkraut, but there must be a great deal more to it, for very few meet with success. I made extensive inquiries among the peasants, but all I could get were some green or slightly ripe tomatoes which did not in the least compare with the ripe ones.

When we went visiting during the winter months, we wore our valenki and carried our shoes under our arms; then, on arriving at our destination, we took off the valenki and put on the shoes.

In spite of the loneliness of the place, I was never bored: planning and preparing meals, mending clothes, keeping up a voluminous correspondence, interpreting for my husband and foraging for food, were enough to keep me busy during the day; and the evenings we spent reading, listening to the phonograph, developing and printing pictures, or visiting our friends, the Kubashes.

Since our apartment lacked all modern conveniences, the matter of taking a bath presented a problem until our German friends came to our rescue and put their bathroom facilities at our disposal. It was a great treat - not only were we able to enjoy the luxuries of a tub bath, but afterwards we were asked to join the family circle for the evening tea and listen to their phonograph. The relaxing qualities of a hot bath, pleasant music and congenial company, do tend to create a feeling of contentment, especially in a country where people expect little of life, but know how to enjoy the little they get.

Towards spring we were able to move into the house next door, where the apartments consisted of two rooms, a fairly large kitchen and an almost modern bathroom. We had to share the use of the bath tub with the occupants of the adjoining apartment; the tub was short, narrow and high, made of galvanized iron, and the water was heated in an iron tank set on top of a small brick stove - a truly homemade affair. Also, there was not always enough water for the bath. There was a bunk in the kitchen

for the maid; however, Tonya did not sleep in. She reported for work very early, long before we got up, not because there was so much work for her to do, but because her mother sent her out at daybreak to make sure she would not be late, as they had no way of telling time; so Tonya used to curl up on the bed and sleep till it was time to help with breakfast.

I shall never forget the thrill I felt at the sight of the Irtysh, when its ice first broke, or as a Russian poet had once said, "When the river broke its icy fetters." In breathless excitement we had climbed the high, rocky bank to see tons of ice heave, break and spin in the mad rush of muddy, churning water. In spite of the hot sun, an icy wind was blowing from the water and the river was rumbling menacingly. There was a festive feeling in the air, welcoming this triumphant act of nature. I had seen ice break on rivers before, but not in the majestic wilderness of Siberia, and I was profoundly impressed.

While the waters of the Irtysh were still swelling and flooding the lowlands of the opposite bank, everybody in Gloobokoye was talking about the first steamboat, and there were rumors a-plenty about the probable date of its arrival. For weeks wistful glances were cast upstream, but the boat was not coming - there had been a huge ice jam some 30 miles upstream at Ustkamennogorsk, blocking all traffic.

And then one morning, just before breakfast, I happened to look out of the window, and there it was slowly rounding a bend of the river! Peering into the distance, I could hardly believe my eyes; but there it was, our one visible link with the outside world. We rushed out of the house and ran all the way to the landing place, as we were expecting a bundle of books from the Ridder Mines. Panting, we reached the river only to see the steamboat glide past, without stopping at Gloobokoye. Later on we were informed that the boat was overloaded and unable to take on any more passengers. Our books arrived on the following boat.

Since there was no definite timetable, the arrival of a steamboat was always more or less a surprise and a cause for excitement. I remember so well one warm summer night when a group of us went down to the river to watch a boat come in. Out there, in that remote corner of the world, there was something reassuring about the sight of a steamboat all lit up, emerging out of the blackness of the night. The light from the portholes reflected on the water and danced with the waves. And, as the whistle blew, one's heart beat faster; or, maybe, a lump rose in one's throat - those lighted portholes brought forth memories of another world, far, far, away; and that brightly lighted boat, that came out of the darkness only to disappear in it again, was the only connecting link with that world.

Summer came and the sun beat relentlessly out of a sky that was always clear and a deep blue. There was no escape from the heat, as there was no shade. In June the grass was burnt brown. Since nobody ever heard of window screens in the Soviet Union, and windows have to be kept open for fresh air, flies can be most aggravating, and they really were in that scorching heat. We used to spend our evenings on the bank of the Irtysh, enjoying its refreshing coolness, watching the sun go down and listening to the cuckoos that abounded in the lowlands across the river.

One hot Sunday afternoon a group of us decided to have a picnic on an island in the Irtysh river across from the village of Gloobokoye, where the river made a sharp bend, forming a sort of bay, with a mountain for a backdrop. The island was the only spot for miles around that stayed green through the summer, but it had acquired a most unattractive name: "Sapnoy or Glanders Island", because sometime in the past the villagers used to bury horses there that had died from the highly contagious glanders disease, to which humans are not immune; the disease is mostly fatal and horses transmit it through mucus, which is profusely discharged from their nostrils. I do not know if the virus or bacilli causing it has been isolated within recent years and a cure developed, but from time immemorial it has been a dreaded disease in Russia. Even though we were assured that no horses had been buried there lately, I approached the island with a sort of apprehension. Our party was rowed over in two makeshift boats, and it was delightful to set foot again on soft, cool ground. Tall, coarse grass and scrubby saplings covered the island, with a few trees scattered here and there. The coolness of vegetation and the refreshing breezes off the water contributed to a very pleasant setting for a picnic, but we did not stay as long as we would have liked to for there were a great many mosquitoes - they had a picnic, too!

Soon after our picnic on the island, my husband came down with what we thought was malaria, complicated by jaundice; but when we, later on, related his symptoms to a doctor, he diagnosed it as yellow fever. Anyway, my husband was very ill, had to be kept on a strict diet, but there was no food for a soft diet, no medicine, and no doctor in Gloobokoye at the time. As his health did not improve and he was not able to work, we received permission to return to Moscow.

The first thing to do was to find out when the next boat downstream was due, then pack our belongings and wait. And we waited, but then, one day, the boat did come.

Tonya, our maid, was on hand to see us off, and, as we said good-by to her, tears began to stream down her face. Poor kid! She had become attached to us: working for us had been a novel experience for her, one which afforded her an insight into a world utterly unknown to her. Her whole family had been friendly to us and, true to a peasant custom, brought us, as a farewell gift, some eggs, which we appreciated immensely as getting provisions for our return trip was quite a problem.

When we boarded the boat, I lost no time in announcing to the officers that my husband was a "foreign specialist", and that they had better provide proper accommodations. There was one second class cabin vacant, but they could not unlock it - the boat was so crowded with third and fourth class passengers that it had bent slightly under an excessive load, unevenly distributed. However, they were sufficiently impressed with the "foreign specialist", that they gave us one of their service cabins containing just two bunks. It was really a blessing in disguise, for, when we passed some of the cabins and saw their occupants, we were glad to have our tiny cabin with just two narrow, wooden bunks, knowing that no more passengers could be legally moved in with us. Passenger cabins have four berths, the tickets are sold separately and one never knows who the other occupants might be.

I shall never forget the scene one of those cabins presented: it was filled with Kirghiz munching hunks of mutton that they had cut off a leg of mutton that lay on the bare table by the cabin window; the

window was open, inviting flies which swarmed over the mutton like a dark cloud, and the breeze that came in the window and out the cabin door picked up the strong odor of the well aged mutton and of the unwashed, sweating Kirghiz. I thought with horror of a possibility of having to travel in the same cabin with them and their mutton.

First class cabins were rather comfortable on that boat, but, of course, they were all occupied by the elite of the Soviet Union. Second class accommodations were quite modest, but the third and fourth classes were really shocking: they were in the space below deck, divided only by some pillars and pipes, with bunks along the walls - third class passengers occupied the bunks, fourth class sprawled on the floor - men, women and children herded together like cattle, and the foul air that arose from those quarters was overpowering.

There were two passengers on that boat that we were glad to meet, an English mining engineer who had completed his contract at the Ridder Mines, and a young Russian woman from the same place, who was going to Moscow to spend her vacation. We spent the night on the boat and arrived in Semipalatinsk in the forenoon. Semipalatinsk looked so different in summer: the wide streets, which the winter before, had been covered with thick layers of hard-packed snow, over which the sleighs used to glide along so merrily, were now revealing their true character - they were entirely unpaved, with a surface of fine, ankle-deep sand. Children sat in the middle of the street, playing in the sand as if they were on a beach, while the traffic went on around them. Many of the droshky drivers were wearing goggles, as sandstorms were frequent, sudden and severe, with dense clouds of dust rising over the city, obliterating everything in sight and penetrating through every crack in the house.

We stopped at the company guest-house. The landlady had a samovar boiling for us in no time. Hot tea, a clean table and neat surroundings were so refreshing after the heavy atmosphere of the river boat. In the afternoon we sat on the bench by the front gate in the shade of a large tree - it was so nice to be able to sit under a tree again.

Then somebody came and said that a pound of cocoa per person could be purchased at one of the co-operative stores downtown and, obeying the instinct, that is part of every Soviet citizen that had known privation and rationing, I went along and got my pound of cocoa, although somewhere in the back of my mind I knew I did not have to do it, for once back in Moscow, my husband would receive a special food book providing generous rations at a well-stocked government store for foreigners. But instinct is stronger than reasoning. However, on that trip downtown, I got quite a thrill by walking alongside a camel that was placidly shuffling through the sand, with matted bunches of its shaggy, winter fur dangling down its sides.

We were determined to get to Moscow as soon as possible; so when we were told that only third class accommodations were available, we decided to take them rather than wait several days and, maybe, get the same accommodations in the end. When we arrived at the Semipalatinsk Railroad Station, the square in front of it was occupied by hundreds of peasants, lying or sitting in the sand, surrounded by their children and their meager belongings. Such scenes met the traveler at almost every railroad station -

those were homeless peasants driven out of their villages because they had been better off than the average, and now forced to wander from place to place in search of a livelihood - for days they waited to get railroad tickets to go some place else, where work and food were supposedly more plentiful, but, when they finally got there, they found the same deplorable conditions and more people waiting to go somewhere else. The situation got so bad by 1932 that the government prohibited the sale of railroad tickets to persons unable to give definite reasons for travel.

With the coming of spring, the same type of peasants and semi-nomadic Kirghiz, also deprived of their stock because they had prospered, were flocking to Gloobokoye by the hundreds, looking for work and camping around their wagons. In bad weather they found shelter under their wagons or in shabby lean-tos.

Our third-class accommodations were a passenger car with hard wooden shelves for berths. But that was not the worst form of travel on the Soviet trains - there was fourth class, that is, when the wooden berths were not reserved and the passengers were allowed to swarm to the train and fight their way into the cars until they were packed tighter than sardines in a can. That was the worst form of travel for regular passengers, while political offenders and other socially undesirable element were transported in freight cars, with no regard for space, age or sex.

Since there were four of us traveling together, we were able to get berths facing each other, which gave us a little seclusion from the rest of the passengers. At night, when a single candle lighted the car, we took turns watching our baggage, since Russian railroad thieves are accomplished masters of their trade. There have been cases when high leather boots were removed from the feet of sleeping passengers. Windows must be kept shut tight during the night, as pieces of baggage have been removed only too frequently from baggage shelves by means of hooks suspended from the roof of the car. An acquaintance of mine arrived at a resort in the Crimea dressed in a kimono and holding a towel and a soapdish, the rest of her things having been stolen when she had left her berth to wash up in the morning.

We arrived in Novosibirsk the following afternoon. When a porter stepped up to help us with our baggage, I asked him to take me to the ticket office; we fought our way through a seething, sweating, swearing mass of humanity that packed the waiting room of the Novosibirsk Railroad Station, and by dint of high pressure persuasion, and exploitation of the all-powerful term of "foreign specialist", I procured four tickets in the soft, or second-class, cars the Trans-Siberian Express, due to leave Novosibirsk in a few minutes.

We were astounded at our good luck, and not until we were actually seated in our private compartment did we, really, believe in it. At last we were traveling with a certain amount of comfort. We had a fairly large compartment with four comfortable berths. The English engineer and the Russian girl were still with us. At bedtime the men stepped out of the compartment, while we got ready for bed; then we turned our backs on them while they undressed. Of course, there was no diner on the train, and we still had to dash out of the car with our tin tea kettle and look for the sign of "Boiling water" every time we wanted some tea.

The train was speeding us across the sun parched steppes. The water in the washroom got so hot that it was actually too hot for the men to shave; the water tank was situated under the roof of the car. One hot afternoon we remarked to the porter how nice it would be to have a cake of ice, and a short time later we were astounded to see him carrying a piece of ice. We were taken so completely by surprise that, when he handed it to us, we held it in our hands, passing it from one to the other until it melted away. Like little children we were marveling at its delightful coolness and its unexpected presence, for the sight of ice in the middle of summer in the Soviet Union is a rare thing indeed.

Leaving the Siberian steppe country, we entered the Ural Mountains; this time we were traveling on the Southern or Kazansky Railroad which had been laid on a lower level and we were able to appreciate the scenic beauty of the Urals - luxuriant stands of timber covered some of the mountainsides, while others were carpeted with velvety grass and wild flowers; mountain streams tumbled gaily over rocks and stones, and, now and then, rose forbidding, precipitous crags. Several times long tunnels engulfed us in total darkness.

Back in Russia proper again we passed Kazan, the former stronghold of the Tartars of the Golden Horde and capital of the present day Tartar S.S.R. Kazan boasts a Kremlin second only to the one in Moscow; it loomed in the distance as we passed the city.

Two days out of Moscow I sent one telegram home informing my parents of our arrival, and one to the office asking them to meet us with a car at the Kazansky Terminal. But, when we arrived in Moscow, nobody met us, and the expression of utter confusion on my mother's face clearly showed that she still thought us to be in Siberia. The telegrams arrived several days later, a very common occurrence in Soviet Russia. Our heavy baggage was delivered a week later, with one large suitcase missing - it was never recovered - another common occurrence in the U.S.S.R.

## **APPENDIX**

### **“Foreign Specialist”**

Since it had been so self-evident to me, I have failed to explain the reason for the magic power of the term “foreign specialist”: the sudden influx of foreign - principally American and German - engineers and other technically trained men, who were constantly confronted with everyday difficulties of the Soviet economic setup, resulted in such a flood of protests and outspoken disgust of the inefficiency of the Soviet system, that the government, in order to retain their services, was forced to

issue an order to its secret police (O.G.P.U.) to render assistance to the foreign specialists in every possible way.

### **Semipalatinsk in the 1970's**

(Excerpt from an article from the Magazine "Connoisseur" , August 1984, about a former Soviet free-lance photographer, Edward Gorn, who visited Semipalatinsk as part of his project to photograph all the places connected with Dostoyevsky's life. Dostoyevsky spent four years in Semipalatinsk while serving his compulsory term in the army. 1981 marked the hundredth anniversary of Dostoyevsky's death.

From Gorn's reading of 19th century descriptions of Semipalatinsk, Gorn expected to find a dry, arid town, - "something like a Sahara Desert with buildings." In fact, the city lies only a few hundred miles northwest of the Gobi Desert, but instead of a desert, Gorn saw lush greenery everywhere. In restaurants he found another surprise in the form of fruits and vegetables rarely available outside the southernmost portions of the Soviet Union. Finally Gorn asked an old woman to explain the conspicuous vegetation. "We saw the mushrooms," she told him, " and then everything started to grow as it never had before. Huge tomatoes! Beautiful grapes!"

Gorn was baffled. "I kept asking what she was talking about. Then she said that the mushrooms were in the sky, and I realized there must have been atomic tests done somewhere nearby that had changed the nature of the plant life in the area." (Reports of similar phenomena have been coming from the Chernobyl area.)

In fact, northern Kazakhstan--where Semipalatinsk is located--and the Gobi Desert where the sites of many soviet atomic and hydrogen bomb tests before the 1963 American-Soviet agreement banning above-ground nuclear explosions. Mutations in plants (and animals) are widely known effects of prolonged exposure to radiation. In the flat regions of the Siberian steppes and the Mongolian desert, it would be easy for residents of a city to see a mushroom cloud rising from a nuclear explosion hundreds of miles away. Such matters are never mentioned in the soviet press, and Russians from other areas acquire information only by accident--as Gorn did when he arrived in Semipalatinsk to photograph the Dostoyevsky museum.

Semipalatinsk is closed to both foreigners and ordinary Soviet citizens. As a photographer on official assignment, Gorn had a permit.

## **Moscow, November 1917**

Streets were barricaded, rifle shots filled the air, soldiers and armed laborers roamed the streets, Cossacks on horseback galloped by - the masses were fighting for the freedom that the communist agitators had promised them in case of success. Officers and cadets, faithful to their Tsar, were doing their best to suppress the raging millions, but the latter were overpowering. Half of the population was passive, waiting for the outcome, locked up in their houses, not daring to go out into the streets where death lurked behind every corner, behind every window and fence. Cold and hungry, terrified and perplexed they sat, crowded together in their homes. But it was only when the officers and cadets were defeated and the country was at the mercy of the surging, infuriated masses of semi-barbaric people, when all the private property was confiscated and everything was proclaimed to be under state control, - only then did people realize what had happened. The masses ruled. The middle class as well as the higher classes had to pay heavily for the comfort and security they had enjoyed under the old regime; they paid with their property and their lives. House searches took place at every hour of day and night; people frantically hid their valuables under floor boards, concealed them in brick walls, buried them in cellars or in the ground near their houses. Arrests and executions followed one another in quick succession. Houses, stores and churches were plundered and set afire, violence of every kind prevailed - the liberated masses expressed their victorious spirit by destroying everything that came in their way. The nation's old customs and morals, the strict discipline and firmly established routine of the complicated machinery of governing a vast empire were wiped out in no time. But a new one could not be set up in a hurry, and the country went wild. Even school children and students, knowing they no longer had to obey their teachers, tore inkstands out of the desks, defaced the walls and broke the equipment in the laboratories, while in the backyards and cellars of the departments (of the secret service police) thousands of people were tried, tortured and shot to death.

The seat of the government was moved from St. Petersburg to Moscow. The newly organized commissariats and their numerous departments took possession of the business buildings of the city; but running under very inexperienced management they were being constantly enlarged in an effort to be efficient and employed enormous staffs, which were drawn

from the crowds that were coming to Moscow in a constant stream from the provinces, that were being demolished by civil war and were suffering severe privation. Families were crowded into one or two rooms, for instead of building new houses for the ever increasing population, authorities tolerated that small, wooden houses, which had miraculously escaped the great fire of 1812, were taken apart for fuel by the nearby inhabitants.

Hunger was slowly but surely approaching Moscow, and with it came the cold and the epidemics (typhoid fever and typhus). Hungry, cold and crowded together, we were in constant fear for our lives and our few belongings; standing in line for hours and even days to get a little half-spoilt food, hauling frozen potatoes or an armful of fire wood on a home-made little sled from some distant part of Moscow; burning one's own furniture and even doors to keep our rooms reasonably warm and when possible bartering with the peasants by giving them clothes and household articles in exchange for their farm produce, and all the time hoping for a miracle to happen that would wipe from the face of the earth the much hated Bolsheviks. However these hopes were not to be realized - we starved, froze and suffered as the years went on.

During those years of famine (1919 - 1922) food and a few other bare necessities of life, were rationed out on food cards, free of charge, as the peasants had to give up their produce without compensation, too; besides there was no currency, the devaluation of the ruble was so great it was practically worthless. The rations were very small and very hard to get; the whole family had to take turns standing in lines; those who were employed stood in line after work and long into the night. Quite often too, after standing in line for hours in any kind of weather one had to go home empty-handed, as the supply had run out before your turn came - a new supply may come tomorrow or any other day in the near future, you just kept coming.

And when you did get your rations they consisted of 1/4 to 1/2 lb. of black bread, that contained, besides coarsely ground rye flour, some sand, frozen potatoes, oats and everything else that happened to be around when the dough was mixed; 1/4 - 1/2 lb. horsemeat, which was very tough, as most of it came from horses that had died of starvation, and the only way to make it edible and also to make the most of it, was to use it for soup, with plenty of water, some frozen

potatoes, that had also been part of our ration, and some wormy, dried vegetables, containing mostly - aside from the worms, which we skimmed off when the soup came to a boil - tasteless, colorless sugar beets. Frozen potatoes, by the way, have a peculiar sickeningly sweet taste, aside being almost black in color. We also received millet and unrefined salt; and for very special occasions, such as Soviet holidays, we were given somewhat rotten, rusty looking herrings. Once a month or so we were entitled to take our rations of black bread in rye flour.

The usual menu for the day was soup, horse meat and black bread for dinner; soup and black bread for supper. For breakfast we had "coffee" which was made' from roasted rye, and sweetened with saccharine, also bread or some cold, boiled potatoes. On such days when there was no soup we had either millet gruel, cooked with water and salt and quite tasteless, or we had fried potatoes, which had been first boiled and then peeled so that there would be the least amount of waste, then sliced into the frying pan and fried in crude cod liver oil, which however tasted more like crude oil. The potato peelings were not thrown away, but ground up fine in a sausage grinder, mixed with coffee grounds from the rye coffee, sweetened with saccharin and baked as drop cookies for dessert

When visiting each other people would bring with them whatever food they had, as nobody expected to be treated to anything more than hot water and saccharine.

Since the fuel shortage was very acute, too, the houses were not heated and with the first hard frost the plumbing froze and stayed frozen through the winter - both the water supply pipes and the sewer water could only be drawn from a faucet in the basement and most of the apartment houses are 4 - 5 stories high. And as to how the three million population of Moscow solved, with individual ingenuity, the problem of sewage disposal beggars description.

Whole families were crowded together in one room, which they were able to keep warm by means of tiny, iron stoves (a foot high and less than a foot in diameter), which got red hot in no time and could be fired even with paper.

School buildings were not heated either; we wore our street clothes in class, used gloves with cut-off finger tips for writing, but put our mittens on when the hands were idle. I remember so well doing gymnastics bundled in a winter overcoat, that I had outgrown years before, with sleeves so tight, that they would not bend at the elbows, with a muff, dangling in front of me, and wearing on my feet the product of an ingenious friend of ours, made of carpeting and resembling a cross between grandfather's bedroom slippers and galoshes. At school we received hot lunches - they consisted of soup, in which we could usually find a few strings of corned beef and some millet; a slice of black bread and "tea", the latter being a greatly diluted brew of rye coffee and sweetened with saccharine.

Life in the crowded apartments, with one common kitchen and many housewives, with neighbors spying on one another and maliciously scheming so as to make the other's life a misery and a burden, continuous friction and maliciousness - in other words, no private life of any kind, which is not much better than prison life, can be only truly understood by those, who had the misfortune to go through that dreadful experience, which exhausts both body and mind. Numerous cases of insanity and suicide have proved it to be so.

Chaos reigned in the Soviet schools: the authority of the teachers was greatly restricted. The children were told to rule themselves, which they did to their own liking, but not for their own good. The new Commissariat of People's Education experimented in school systems to such an extent, that the systems were changed every few months, with the result, that the children got nothing out of school in the line of knowledge, but quickly absorbed the new Communist doctrines that taught them to disregard filial obligations and the sanctity of home.

Russian children were not used to co-education and it brought about extremely undesirable results both in the morality and the psychology of the children, on whose young minds the crude realities of life had been deeply impressed due to the gruesome developments of the revolution. Free love, so ardently advocated by the "liberal minded" Bolsheviki, was enthusiastically welcomed by thousands of girls of all classes of society -in Moscow alone there were hundreds of cases of babies being born of thirteen and fourteen-year-old girls. And boys

became fathers at the same age. Girls attended school until about one or two weeks before **the** arrival of the baby.

Crop failure, and consequently famine, struck the fertile Volga region - the granary of Russia - and thousands of unfortunates, driven by starvation from their homes, desperately sought means of subsistence in the big city and principally in Moscow. It seemed that Moscow (and St. Petersburg, too, before the revolution) was the goal towards which every provincial Russian turned his eyes with passionate longing - there, it seemed to him, were opportunity, abundance and, may be, the realization of his life-long dreams. Among those that escaped starvation and the ravages of civil war and found refuge in Moscow were the Homeless Children aged all the way from four to fourteen. In the course of a few years they had developed a perfect organization, by means of which they would accomplish raids, robberies and petty thefts of every kind; it protected them from the hands of justice, after murdering people that had stood in their way; it took care of their sick and sent them South for recuperation. Their "etiquette" demanded that they be dirty and as ragged as possible. They loved their free life, roaming the country from North to South and from West to East, eating and sleeping whenever and wherever they chanced to and indulging in all the lowliest vices known to the human race. Homeless, lawless life was not at all confined to the boys - there were girls too. The country was, certainly, breeding thousands of very tough citizens. The government realized it at last. It founded training schools, homes for the mentally deficient and collective farms, where the children were closely guarded and taught to enjoy work and absorb communism. Towards the 10th Anniversary of the Soviet Revolution the cities were more or less cleaned of them. Some of the children grew to like the work and the wholesome life they were leading and developed into loyal and useful citizens, but many of them could not resist the call of the wild, prohibitive vagrancy and made their escapes, regardless of the means by which they achieved them. They filtered back into the cities, their ranks replenished by the children of "deculackized" peasants and once more they stood as a menace to the cities and as a disgrace to the state.

One of the favorite places for the Homeless Children to curl up for the night was the sooty interior of the big kettles for melting asphalt - there were quite a few of such kettles in Moscow at that time (about 1930), as so many streets were being paved with asphalt instead of

the old and time-honored cobblestones.

One of the favorite pastimes, which was at once profitable and entertaining, was snatching things; the system was quite fool-proof: if they were caught at it, and in case the victim resisted, they would bite. Their bites were dangerous, as all the homeless children were diseased (Syphilis)

Another specialty of theirs was to have one of the boys snatch something from a prosperous looking victim and then make him or her pursue the boy, who would run into some secluded corner or alley, where the rest of the gang was waiting to strip the victim of all of his or her clothes.

If any militiamen, that's the Soviet term for policemen, tried to curb any of their activities, which were mostly carried out under cover of darkness, they were simply murdered

A very necessary part of the homeless children's existence were narcotics and they carried out an extensive traffic in them.

For a period of about four years - from the introduction of the New Economic Policy to the beginning of the first Five Year Plan - roughly between 1924 and 1928 - we had quite a relief from the trying years of extreme scarcity of daily needs; one could almost say, we had a good time, had it not been for the unchanged conditions in the crowded apartments. As a matter of fact, they were getting from bad to worse, since the population was still increasing, but the apartments in the newly built houses were mostly for the "elite" of the Soviet world.

Small private enterprises flourished and provided us with enough food and clothing; theaters, movies, circuses, amusement parks, restaurants and cafes provided entertainment for a people that had been starved both bodily and spiritually. Even gambling casinos were opened by the government to lure the money out of the successful NEPmen; Jews thrived on the black

exchange. The prosperity of the country grew rapidly and it was getting back into conditions that seemed to be too good for a Communist Paradise.

Lenin's' clever move "to step back in order to jump forward with greater force" did bring the country back to prosperity and thus reaped a great success in its first phase. Now the ardent Bolsheviks, with Stalin at their head, always eager to experiment, thought the country was ready to stand the blow of the second part of Lenin's famous precept.

The blow descended heavily on the reviving country, sending it down-hill back to misery and destitution. To invigorate the "jump forward". and to prove to the world the greatness of Marx and Engel's doctrines, the Five Year Plan was introduced.

The peasants were deprived of their land holdings and livestock, so as to make it easier for the Soviets to drive them into collective farms. The "kulacks", being the rich peasants of the village and who presumably got rich by exploiting the poor, could not be admitted into the collective farms. They were deprived of their houses and implements, to say nothing of their land and livestock, and then either exiled to increase the ranks of forced labor in the North of Russia or in Siberia, or simply let loose to roam the country by the thousands; hundreds committed suicide and hundreds tried to escape the country and were killed off like flies at the Polish border. When the peasants had nothing more to yield to support the Five Year Plan, the communists turned their attention to the cities, plundering the churches of their last possessions of gold and silver ornaments and precious and semi-precious stones. The inhabitants of the cities were forced to give up foreign money, gold, silver, and jewelry and in case they had none to give or refused to, which was the same to the extortionists; they were either exiled to the extreme North or shot.

Factories and plants, striving to complete their five Year Plan, turned out goods and machinery of inferior quality. Soviet statisticians juggled figures till they approached the requirements set forth in the Five Year Plan.

Once again food cards were issued and long lines of tired, shabbily dressed citizens of the Workers' Paradise stood waiting for hours at a time under any kind of conditions of weather for their scanty rations.

## EARLIEST RECOLLECTIONS

My earliest recollection is more in the nature of a dream than reality. I can see my old nurse sitting on her bed across the room from mine. A chest of drawers stands at the foot of her bed and a night light is burning. The arrangement of the furniture is that of the bedroom in the apartment on Pokrovka Street (Moscow) where we moved when I was about two years old, however the old nurse was dismissed shortly before that and the chamber maid slept in the same room with me. Therefore it is not a true recollection. The only explanation that I can offer is that my subconscious mind had retained the picture of my old nurse, while I myself was yet too young to reason clearly, and that later in a very vivid dream or in retrospect my childish mind put the old nurse of my infant days into the surroundings of a later period. I have at least one more recollection, the details of which did not check out with cold reality either, so all I can say is that some of my early dreams must have been extremely vivid to leave such a lasting impression.

When I was about 3 years old my brother had diphtheria and I was sent to my Aunt Helene Luchsinger (Mother's youngest sister) to avoid catching the disease. Aunt Lyalya (the Russian nickname that she had acquired in childhood stayed with her for life) had no children of her own and spent practically all her daytime hours with me. Her husband was manager of an Aniline Dyes factory in Sokolniki, a suburb of Moscow at that time, and they lived in the manager's mansion nearby. The house was large and the garden was spacious; there was also a huge public park nearby, but all I remember of it is that I left a pair of gloves on a bench there when Aunt Lyalya, Mother, and I went there for a stroll on one of the occasions when Mother came to see me, and the dressing down I received from her for my thoughtlessness. In later years I never had occasion to visit the park.

The mansion had a large attic and among the many things stored there was a dollhouse, that my grandfather Louis had made himself, including all the tiny furniture. For my coming Uncle Bruno Luchsinger restored the dollhouse, bought 7 dolls, who represented my grandparents Victor and Adelaide Louis and their five children, and wired the house for electric lights. I loved that dollhouse. Even though I had one of my own at home furnished with darling furniture imported from Germany, this dollhouse of my Aunt's with its handmade furnishings had a great fascination for me: playing with it seemed to establish a personal contact with my grandfather, whom I had never known, as he died when Mother was 18 and Aunt L. 8 years old. According to Aunt L., I always begged her to be with me, so she accompanied me to the attic and while I played, she read, did needlework or recounted incidents from her own childhood. When Aunt L. was in an extra gay mood, she would let me sit on the trail of her dress (yes, that is the kind of dresses they used to wear just before the beginning of the First World War) and she would take me for a ride on the highly polished, parquet floors of their house. At that time my grandmother Louis spent the winters with Aunt L. and Uncle Bruno Luchsinger and the summers with us in the country. As much as I adored Aunt L., I was afraid of her husband; so when Uncle Bruno would come home from work, I would run to my grandmother's room and hide there. They had to bring my supper there. I do not know why I held Uncle Bruno in such awe, except that he was tall, had an imposing personality, a deep, bass voice, a mustache and beard, and somewhat resembled Tsar Nicholas the Second. My cousin, Irene Louis Menzinger, told me one time that she used to be afraid of him, too, as a child. The only thing that I remember of my grandmother's room, is a stuffed parrot. He had been her pet and she used to tell me how he would get tipsy when he preened himself after an alcohol bath and would amuse everybody with his antics. I loved my grandmother Louis dearly - she was gentle,

affectionate, and forbearing. Later, when I was of school age, she used to tell me about her own school days. She received what could be termed as a finishing school education at an "Institute for Daughters of the Nobility," a boarding school for the daughters of noble birth, whose parents had no residences in St. Petersburg. It was sponsored by a member of the Imperial Family. My grandfather, Gotthart Bauer, was administrator of the boarding school and his daughters could attend it tuition-free. I never tired of hearing her stories, especially the ones that dealt with the visits of the school's sponsor on such occasions as Christmas and Easter. She usually ended with the one that described all the excitement and glamour of Commencement Day, at which members of the Imperial Family were present.

In 1914 we were spending the summer in the country as usual. I remember the excitement that was created by the arrival of a dressmaker who brought Mother a very special dress that she was to wear to a party in Moscow. Some friends of my parents were to celebrate their silver wedding anniversary and it was to be a gala event of the season. The following day my brother and I stood on the railroad embankment waving to the train that was taking Mother to Moscow. Her excitement had communicated to us and we were anxiously awaiting her return to hear all about the party. But Mother's return the next day was sad and filled with foreboding: Germany had declared war on Russia. It must be that every European is born with an instinctive dread of war, for even though I was only 4 years old, I shall never forget the fear that gripped my heart that day. 25 years later and many thousands of miles from our summer home in Bukovo, I was to feel the same sickening fear, when news of the Second World War was flashed on the radio in the United States.

Those of my parents' friends, who were German citizens, had to leave Russia on short notice or be exiled to Siberia. Many had come to love Russia and the warm, open-hearted hospitality of the Muscovites. All left convinced that they would return as soon as the conflict was over. Those of our friends and relatives, who were subjects of the Tsar, and were of military age, had to leave for the front and those of us, like ourselves, who were of German descent, but were subjects of the Tsar, had to make ourselves as inconspicuous as possible and refrain from speaking German in public. As a matter of fact, one of our maids objected to my parents speaking German to each other, as was their habit.

One day, a year later, while we were again living in the country, my brother and I were feeding the neighbor's goat through a picket fence, when the maid came running to tell us to go into the house immediately, as Father had unexpectedly arrived from Moscow. A German Pogrom was raging in the city and threatened to spread into the country. Father felt we would be safer in Moscow. Our departure for Moscow was not without its funny side: while my parents were deciding what should be taken along in the way of baggage, Mother thought that it was absolutely necessary that a "potty" be included, while Father could see no need for it. I think Father won.

Like a raging torrent the mob advanced through our street. When it stopped by the apartment house where we lived and asked the doorman whether any Germans lived there, the doorman, remembering the many tips Father had given him and the many jokes they had exchanged through the years, staunchly announced that no Germans were living there. And the mob moved on.

Aunt Lyalya and my grandmother were not so fortunate, however, since they lived in a mansion near the plant of which Uncle Bruno had been manager before the war. The mob stormed into the house destroying everything in its path; someone even ripped the robe off my grandmother, but Aunt Lyalya was able to stop the mob from further madness by showing the picture of Uncle Bruno in the uniform of a Tsar's officer and explaining that even though their name sounded German, they were both of Swiss descent.

I heard my father tell of a German firm - Franz Hegershof of Leipzig - that had sold laboratory equipment in Moscow, how the floors of the building were knee-deep in broken glass. The raging mob destroyed everything in their wake, breaking glass and china and tossing furniture out of the windows. I heard it said, that when pianos hit the ground, they sobbed and groaned like human beings.

Another incident, that I remember well, also happened in summer, when I was a few years old. Early one morning I was wakened by our chambermaid, bundled up in blankets and carried by her to the railroad embankment, which rose high as a wall and followed the railroad for many miles; grass, bushes and trees grew on it and provided a good shelter. As I was being carried out of our home, I heard someone say: "Should the wind get any stronger, it would drive the fire towards the back of the 'datcha'; as summer cottages are called in Russian. Once I was safely deposited on the embankment, I could see flames and clouds of smoke rise behind our datcha: the caretaker's log cabin, which stood at the end of our lot, was on fire. The wind did not increase, but the log cabin was a charred ruin.

The summer of 1916 we spent in a new development of datchas, which was near a woods and away from the railroad embankment on which we loved to play and watch the trains go by. That summer we had a real scare. One night some burglars tried to remove the heavy canvas drapes with which it was customary to protect the porches of the datchas from sun, rain or wind. Mother and the cook scared them away, but the rest of the summer was ruined for Mother, as from then on she heard burglars every night; even a "poogatch", a toy pistol, that father got for her, did not help.

The summer resorts around Moscow were situated along the railroads, which radiated like spokes of a wheel from the city, and all who could afford it, moved to the datchas for the summer. After the Revolution, when Moscow's population doubled and later tripled, datchas were winterized and the suburban trains were crowded the year around. Most of the datchas were made of logs split in two (lengthwise) - the round side of the logs faced the outside and the flat one inside; the cracks between the logs were tightly caulked with oakum, same as the peasants' huts. The datchas were either one or two stories high, had big front porches and attics for storage. The lots were big enough to assure complete privacy and except for the front lawn, were left in their natural state, which in most cases had been woodland. In all the datchas that I ever lived or visited, we were surrounded either by tall pines, whose bushy crowns seemed to reach for the very heavens, or by mixed woods of evergreens and deciduous trees, with the white trunks of birches adding a gay and airy appearance. There was always plenty of underbrush for us children to build lean-tos, play hide and seek, or imagine ourselves on all sorts of adventurous missions. Every lot was surrounded by a picket fence. Often yellow acacias were planted along the side of the fence that faced the street, and by the gate there was always a long, narrow bench: if you wanted to see the world go by, that is where you sat, but after dark they were the traditional trysting places of the young. The resorts were laid out in regular blocks, with the sidewalks a little higher than the streets with deep drainage ditches dividing the two. There were no street lights, no plumbing, and no electricity at that time.

No doubt, the peasants from the nearby villages provided the summer folk with produce, I do not remember that, as they must have come to the back door and our cook took care of that, but what I do remember so well, were the peddlers of candy, cookies and preserves. They were veritable confectionery stores on legs, who carried the goods, or should I say, goodies, in huge, rectangular wicker baskets on their heads. They would come in through the gate, walk up to the porch steps and lower the basket to the ground. The lid would be opened and we children fairly drooled over the contents. After

the purchases were made, I was no less fascinated to see those monster baskets being lifted back onto the heads of the peddlers. The baskets rested on doughnut shaped, stuffed, cloth rings.

The summer of 1917 was not without its memorable incident. That summer we did not rent a datcha, but boarded with friends, because Father expected to be called into the army and with times getting more uncertain, Mother, no doubt, feared burglars more than ever. And her fears were justified: we had a real burglary that summer. A former maid returned one dark August night, climbed up the porch, worked her way into the attic, which served as a sort of general clothes closet for the two families, threw the clothes off the porch roof to her accomplices below and then slid down the drainpipe. After that incident, when I went to bed at night, I lay awake for hours staring at the open windows and expecting more burglars to appear out of the blackness of the night. One night when there was a rustling sound under the window, I could not stand it any longer and began to scream and screamed until all the adults, who had been sitting on the porch, rushed in to see what was the matter. From then on Mother had to leave a candle burning in my room - amazing how much comfort the light of one small candle can provide: I have never felt comfortable in total darkness after that.

Also in August of that year was my cousin Victor Louis' birthday party. It must have been his sixth birthday. It may also have been the last of the big family gatherings, as the Bolshevik Revolution took place two months later and drastically changed all our destinies.

The Louis datcha was along another "Main Line", so most of the guests stayed overnight. It was a spacious datcha with a finished attic; somehow overnight accommodations were provided for all.

In front of the datcha there were several shapely spruce trees, which were decorated with colored electric Christmas lights - a novelty in those days - and when it became dark, the lights were turned on. There was a hush, then "Ohs" and "Ahs", and conversation was carried on in subdued tones. I do not remember if there was music or any other entertainment, I just remember the sheer magic of that lovely, warm summer evening, as the multicolored lights glowed like jewels in the blackness of an August night - in contrast to the early summer evenings, when it stays light till almost 10 PM., in August the evenings are very dark. The white, trumpet-shaped flowers of the night-blooming tobacco plant, without which no Russian flower garden was complete, filled the air with their heady, almost cloying, fragrance. The tall, graceful pines, whose bushy tops towered over the compact, cone-shaped spruces, were silhouetted against a star-studded sky, gently swaying in a light breeze. It was a lovely, unforgettable evening, made even more memorable by the fact that it was a long, long time before there was anything lovely to remember again.

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Life in Moscow proceeded in an orderly fashion. There were the usual family gatherings that united the Louis clan: Christmas, Easter and birthday parties.

Instead of a birthday cake - there was no such tradition in Russia - we had a Geburtstagkringel, a custom brought by our grandparents from the German-oriented Baltic Provinces of the Russian Empire. It could be likened to a pretzel-shaped coffee cake with a sugar glaze and plenty of almonds on top.

On December 24-th there was a lot of mysterious activity going on from which the children were carefully excluded. Father came home earlier than usual. The maid took us out for a walk, while our parents trimmed the tree and put the presents under it. In winter it gets dark in Moscow shortly after three o'clock in the afternoon, so when we were sent out for a walk it was pitch dark. I loved those walks: the anticipation of the festivities to come produced the sweetest kind of excitement, the crisp winter air was invigorating, the snow underfoot was crunching merrily, while the softly falling snow diffused the street lights, but when one squinted hard at a street lamp the light burst into many rays sparkling like a Christmas star.

While Russian children expected Grandfather Frost (contrary to statements made by some American journalists, Grandfather Frost is not a Soviet invention, but an age-old Russian tradition) we, no less eagerly, expected a visit from Knecht Ruprecht. Though dressed in red, his figure was trim and he carried the presents in a tall basket on his back.

When we returned from our walk, we were told to keep our eyes closed as we proceeded to our rooms to await the call from our parents. When the call finally came, I closed my eyes again and did not open them until I stood before a large Christmas tree, ablaze with dozens of candles and a pile of presents under it. The servants followed us into the room and there were gifts of money and plates heaped with nuts, candy and fruit for them. After that there was a quiet family supper. When we were older and also when there were no more elaborate preparations any more because of the lack of not only luxuries, but simple everyday necessities after the Revolution, we attended Christmas Eve services at the German Lutheran Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, which were held early in the evening to allow the widely scattered congregation to get back home at a reasonable hour. The services were well attended with standing room only for latecomers. There were two large Christmas trees, one on each side of the altar, with many large candles that illuminated the spacious interior of the church with an especially bright glow. After the service the congregation lingered in the large foyer, exchanging greetings with friends and acquaintances with that warm feeling of oneness of spirit and background in a land that was getting increasingly hostile to what was once a cultured and prosperous German-speaking community.

Christmas Day was for family gatherings or for calling on friends. Before the Revolution Dec. 26th was a holiday, too. Christmas postcards were sent only to a few close friends or relatives who happened to be out of town. Christmas gift-giving was limited, too.

Palm Sunday was called "Pussy Willow" Sunday, as palms were non-existent in the frigid North, but the catkins or the pussy willows were the first signs of the awakening of nature. Before the Revolution it was a great day in Russia with people in a festive mood crowding the streets and buying all sorts of religious objects, and of course carrying bunches of pussy willows. To this day I have a small red cross with a tiny peephole in its middle. When you put it to your eye, and hold it against the light, you will see a picture of the crucifixion inside. Our maid Sasha gave it to me one Pussy Willow Sunday when I was a little girl and she returned after a day spent walking up and down the streets of Moscow with her friends.