A High Time in RED RUSSIA

Adelaide Hooker went into Russia with her younger sister "out of curiosity and cussedness"

MY SISTER Helen came crashing into our hotel bedroom, her fur cap and hair white with frozen breath. Tears solidified in a sheet on her cheeks began to thaw, thus releasing a captive smile.

"It's fifty below zero outside and dark at three. How can I paint under such conditions? The water-can freezes as soon as I step out of the door, and the only way I can moisten my brushes is to suck them."

She dropped her easel and rucksack on the floor and stepped on first one toe then the other, to loosen her great felt snow boots. She failed and flopped on the bed in a discouraged heap. The snow and ice which were caked about her thawed and sank gently into the bed.

"Well, what do you expect in Moscow in January?" I comforted. "Let's go to the country on a spree. I'm sick to death of the political conversation here. A murder is inevitable the next time I hear the words 'Ideology' or 'Proletariat.' And then, if a cable comes from home, we'll miss it."

Wanting to miss a cable sounds unusual, but we certainly wanted to miss this one. After three months in Leningrad and Moscow our life was bounded by two hazards—first, that our father would find out that we were in Russia; second, that the G.P.U., or secret police, would find out that Father was president of the American Defense Society. Discovery of the former would make life in the future rather tense at home. Discovery of the latter would make life, in the event of its being allowed to continue, rather tense in Russia. Our reasons for being there at all were curiosity and cussedness. We didn't know much about Marx and Lenin, but from Father's description they were bad enough to be interesting.

"Well, where shall we go?" came in a tired voice from the bed.

I pawed some papers on the desk which was piled high with histories of Russian art and architecture. "Logically and chronologically, we should go to Kiev after Novgorod, but geographically that's too difficult. Let's go to Vladimir. I've done the 'home-work.'"

The "home-work" was important. We knew as little about old Russia as we did about new. We had precipitated ourselves over the Finnish border as empty-handed of books as we were empty-headed of facts. But the dingy second-hand book shops of Leningrad secrete a wealth of pre-war Russian culture. From these sources we did our home-work—or rather I did it. While Helen painted the old monasteries, I read who was murdered in them.

The Pokrov Bogoroditsa, or Church of the Intercession—"the most beautiful in Russia, hidden away on a distant plain far from the prying eyes of tourists"

Where to go, and what to see, we learned chiefly from the pictures in Igor Grabar's five-volume "History of Russian Art." We could not read the text, but the photographs of little, white Novgorod churches and their twelfth-century frescoes, the swirling, blistered, scaly, burnished cupolas of Yaroslavl, and the Russian baroque of Kiev spoke for themselves and became our Baedeker. We had picked up just enough of the Russian letters to be able to read the names under the pictures.

"Vladimir it is! Let's go tonight!"

Packing in our household was simple. A wardrobe is not required in Soviet Russia—is perhaps inadvisable. With extra sweaters stuffed in the rucksack, we started. The concierge politely inquired where we were going. We misinformed him, hoping in that way to travel without a "suite." A "suite" is the term given to the people who shadow you in Russia. It is one of the Soviet's ways of solving its unemployment problem. Every one has some one to follow and feels awfully busy.

We were warned of this before and after crossing the border, but never actually

The Adventures Of Two New York Society Girls Who Saw Things From the Inside – Including The Secret Police

The famous ikon of Our Lady of Vladimir. The Misses Hooker saw it in Moscow the day before the Soviet was to seal it indefinitely from the public

By Adelaide Hooker

With Some Drawings and Snapshots by Helen Hooker

When Helen Hooker asked this peasant to sign her sketch of him, he said he was so old that he had forgotten his last name. A boy of the village supplied it

saw it happening. But it was fun to pretend, and every time we saw any one behind us for more than a block, we'd whisper,

"There's our big black spy."

It made us feel important and dangerous.

We inquired of the Travel Bureau for the necessary misinformation about trains. You can get it there as well as anywhere else, and it is interesting to have something to aim at, even though you know that the train will go when it jolly well pleases, regardless of timetables. A train should leave in twenty minutes, we were told.

We hailed a sleigh. "To the Kazansky Station! Two rubles if we make the train!" we encouraged our big, blue-coated *izvoschik*.

His tall hat was snow-covered, and the icicles crackled on his red beard. "*Davai!*" he shouted, cracking his whip. "*Kharoshi Loshad!* (Fine horse!)"

We scrambled in and were barely seated when the horse started off at a gallop. We clutched each other and the belt of the driver. It is the only way to stay on a Russian sleigh, which is a narrow box with no sides. Only I fell off. But I picked myself up out of the snow-drift and clambered back. Got a death-grip on the belt and shouted,

"*Skarye! Skarye!* (Faster! Faster!)"

We raced by the walls of the Tartar or Chinese town, through the Loubyanka, seeing practically nothing as we crouched with squinting eyes behind the huge bulk of the *izvoschik*. The wind whipped our faces mercilessly. With a swerve on one runner we drew up at the station. Tossing two rubles in the air behind us, we jostled our way through a crowd of peasants to the train gate.

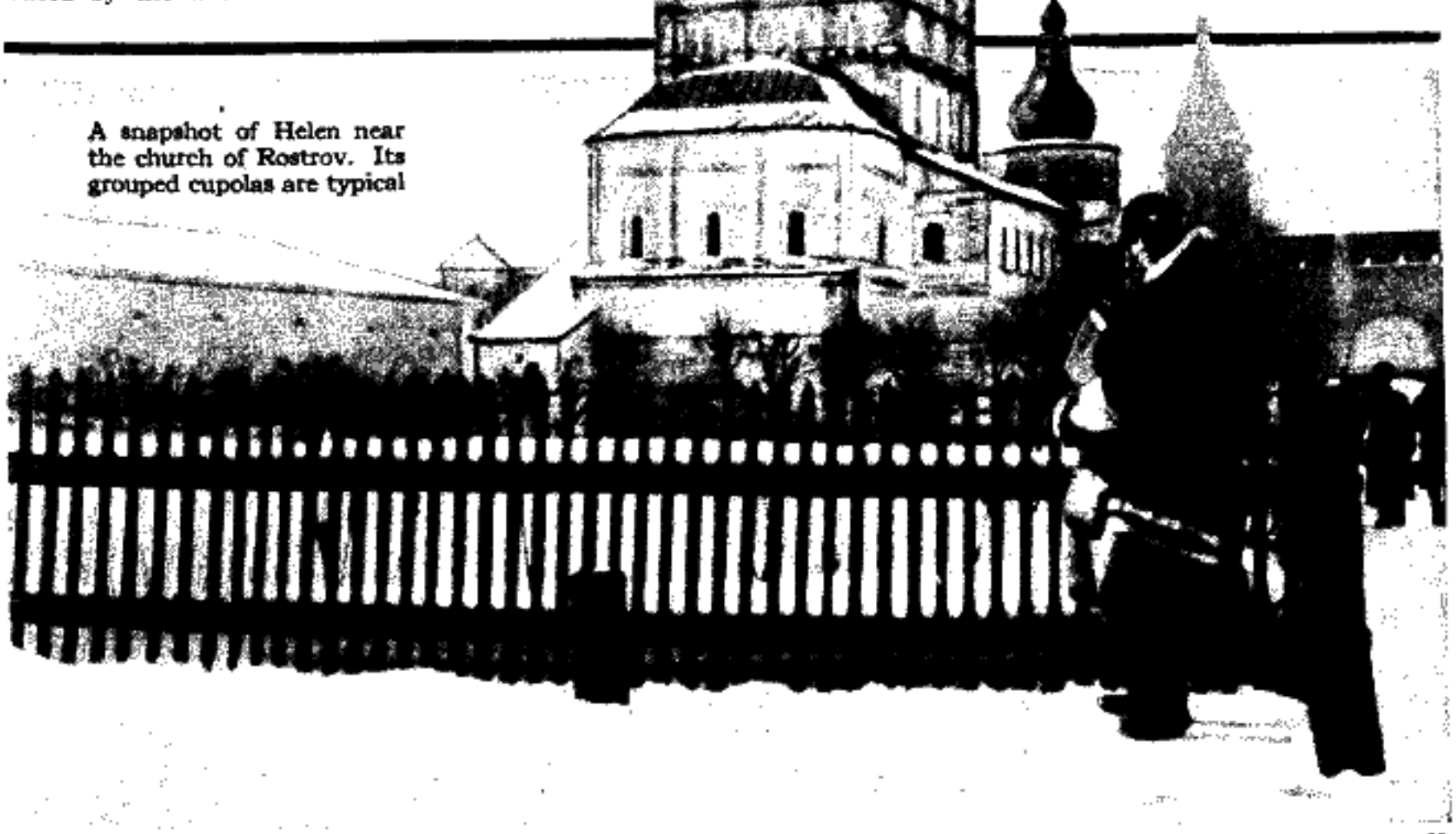
"Vladimir! Vladimir!" I gasped.

"*Spaquoitye, Grazhdanka, cherez chetyre chassa!* (Be calm, Citizeness, you've another four hours to wait!)"

We had forgotten to allow for the misinformation.

The air in a Russian station is just naturally putrid. At first you

(*Continued on page 174*)



A snapshot of Helen near the church of Rostrov. Its grouped cupolas are typical

A High Time in Red Russia

(Continued from page 33)

think you will choke, but soon you realize that if the others can breathe it, you can, too. It is combination of sheepskin coats, onions, vodka, bad tobacco, boots, and unwashed humanity, steeped together and mellowed with age. The fuel problem is acute in Russia, so that the air which is trapped and warmed in October is conserved until May. It is concrete by January.

We found places on the station benches, and a crowd gathered. A crowd would have followed us on Fifth Avenue because we were so shabbily dressed, but in the Kazansky Station it was because we were so well-dressed. An *Innostranka* (foreigner) can be spotted immediately. You may think that you look just too frightfully Russian, but they can tell the difference. Practically no foreign manufactured goods are allowed in the country at present, and with an eye attuned to the limited variety of their own products they detect details which stamp you. Also foreigners are rare in Russia. It is not like the Place Vendôme, where you turn around and stare if you hear French spoken.

WE SAT and held court in the dingily lighted hall. There was a continuous flux and flow of seething humanity from incoming and outgoing trains. They were mostly peasants—tall, red-bearded men and little, stooping women. They wore grimy *shubas* (sheepskins) of brown or black, worn shiny at the creases, and with the stringy fur hanging in a fringe from the inside. The men had fur caps and the women brownish-gray woolen shawls, folded catercorner, with the points tied under their chins. Some had high felt boots, and many had just bound their feet and legs in swathings of old rags and *lapti* (straw soles). The most bedraggled hadn't even *shubas*, but were clad entirely in these rags. Each was laden with bundles tied in burlap, or milk cans. It was a different picture from our Chauve-Souris concept of the Russian peasantry.

As they passed by, many stopped and stared. Others gathered about in a semi-circle. Time is cheap in Russia.

"Otkooda?" (Where from?) they asked us.

"Nu, iz Ameriki. Tam kharasho zhivoot! (Oh, from America! There people live well!)" wistfully.

"My father's cousin—*Skazhite, lutche oo Vas ili oo nas?* (Tell us, is it better where you live or here?)" a flashing-eyed young Communist provocates.

We had learned to be careful in answering this question. "It is different," I said noncommittally.

In the group were several "drunks." The government fights it, but liquor has a strong hold on the Slav. One dilapidated roisterer sat down beside me and looked at the English book I was reading.

"Kakoi bookvi! (What letters!)" He rocked with laughter. "English letters. Look, Comrades!"

Only one of the crowd evinced any interest. To the others, Russian or English letters were equally unintelligible.

"Can you read, Comrade?" I asked.

Again uncontrollable mirth. The tears ran down his grimy cheeks to his straw-colored beard. He wiped them off with a burlap sleeve. "Oh, you and I can read, Citizeness. We're not Hooligans like these people."

He used the confidential *tyi* (thou) of the peasant and drew closer. I was all for atmosphere, but this vodka breath was overpowering.

"Kto skazal Hooligani? (Who said Hooligans?)" an angry voice said from the crowd.

"Pyan, Pyan (drunk)."

The insult was waived with tolerance.

The side and end of the waiting-room was piled high with bundles, bales, and sleeping humanity. It was hard to distinguish one from the other.

I made a tour of inspection. Two little girls were asleep, half-buried under skins and rags, and one bundle suddenly squealed—twins, about two months old—not abandoned, just checked. Any one can sleep in the railway station. Sometimes the waiting-room floor is paved with *muzhiks* (peasants) sprawling in a possessive manner over their entire wordly goods.

This habit rather appalled us at first, but the time was to come when we appreciated it.

Three hours passed quickly, fraternizing with the Hooligani, and drinking unhygienic tea in unsanitary glasses. With one hour still to spare I got into line. For every obtainable commodity in Russia there is a long line waiting. It takes the first month to get used to this, but then it becomes automatic, inoffensive, and a matter of course. Outside every bread store from five to seven in the evening the queue winds half-way around the block. They are waiting to have their bread-cards punched and receive their daily rations. It is a depressing sight when the thermometer reads fifty below Fahrenheit and the wind and snow are blowing in gales.

I was highly amused one day, on picking up a government photographic weekly, to see a large heading, "America," surrounded with dollar signs. There were two or three pictures of night clubs, jazz parties, lynching, and other of our national institutions, and under one photograph, showing our deplorable economic conditions, was written,

"The starving New York workers, waiting in line to be fed by the Salvation Army."

I noticed that the "workers" were dressed in fedora hats and overcoats. The rain-streaks appeared to have been scratched on the plate, and I strongly suspect the line of being that outside the Metropolitan Opera House before a matinée.

But in the Kazansky Station I was waiting in line for a *platzkarta*. This entitles a third-class traveler to a whole shelf on which to sleep, by payment of one-third extra. Now, a night in a Russian third-class (there is no other on a provincial train) is by no means ritzy, but it is made bearable by the fact that you can stretch out. It is worth the hour you stand in line for your *platzkarta*.

A BELL rang—our train was announced "Express train, Vladimir! Nizhni-Novgorod!"

The Russian trains have a wide gauge. Therefore there is space for shelves in the usual European position, an aisle, and another row of shelves parallel with the direction of the train. There are officially two layers of each, but unofficially four.

You must pick your shelf according to your type. The crossways ones are wide enough but too short, and your feet hang out in the aisle. Here they are jostled by the hands or knees of incoming passengers who can not see in the dark. If you sleep parallel with the train, your bed is long enough, but too narrow. The upper berth is in each case propped up by a more or less flimsy metal bar. So you have also to decide whether you would rather drop with a crash and flatten out some unsuspecting *muzhik*, or have him do the same to you.

In spite of the bad air, though, we had no sense of uncleanliness on the shelves. The entire car was lighted by two tiny oil lamps placed over the door at each end.

Under me was a young boy in the full regalia of the Red army—pointed helmet of khaki with a red star on it, and a khaki coat with red tabs on the collar, very much shaped at the waist and reaching down to the floor. He couldn't have been over sixteen. Was I a foreigner? From America! Well, what did I think of Red Russia? Of course, it was still very poor, but give it time. Why did America hate the Soviets so? We are all brothers and comrades. How wonderful it would be if America could have her own Soviet and then there would be no more capitalist wars! Why

A High Time in Red Russia

were England and America so determined to have a war against their Russian comrades? There must be no war, but revolution—Red revolution—and after that, freedom and education for the oppressed workers.

I asked if he would like to see a revolution in America.

Oh, yes, it would come probably before two years now.

I inquired how he knew.

Why, not so very long ago many Russian people had tried to change their rubles into dollars and hide them away. But the Soviets had heard of it and warned them. They said there would be revolution very soon now, and the American dollar would not be worth a kopeck. The boy's eyes were bright with health and enthusiasm.

I told him in my halting Russian that America was not remotely interested in making war on the Soviets or anybody else, but that she was very much interested in the Soviet experiment. However, I said we resented the Soviet's supporting financially and encouraging propaganda on our shores to tear down our Government. I said that we loved peace more than the Russians, and though we knew that there were some bad things about our system, and occasionally economic conditions which were unsatisfactory, we hoped to correct these things by legislation and not by bloodshed.

He was interested but puzzled. "But, Citizeness, Ilyitch says there can be no revolution without bloodshed." ("Ilyitch" is the pet name of the Communists for their leader Lenin.)

"*Will* you shut up!" whispered Helen from her shelf. "You *fool*, to talk politics with strangers in a train! We'll be in jail in half an hour!"

On the shelf across the aisle were compactly sandwiched a weazened old woman in a shawl, a child of fourteen with two yellow braids, a burlap bundle, and bigger than any, a brown dog. The conductor looked askance at the dog, but let him stay on condition that he did not bark. He did bark.

The old woman had been following our conversation intently. "Oh, *Baroshnaya*" (prerevolutionary form of address for a girl, corresponding to mademoiselle), "do you really think that America will not make war upon us? If I could only believe it! We have suffered so, our people have starved to death, but we can stand anything if only there is not another war. They took my Vanya, my Aloysha, and our little Father Tsar. And here my Vanya's Masha is all I have left. Her mother died of hunger. Oh, what sorrows has God brought on Holy Russia!"

The little soldier looked up at me and winked.

"She believes in God!" he said.

HE SPREAD himself out with a bundle under his head and his coat over him. He took a big yellow pickle from his pocket and munched it as a pacifier. I heard the scrunch and peeped down from my shelf. He offered me a piece, but I couldn't go it. I dived into my pocket for some Moscow caramels. He and the old woman and little girl appreciated them. The Russians have a very sweet tooth. I suggested opening a window, but aroused a storm of protest from all sides. As Maurice Hindus said in "Broken Earth,"

"The simple Russian will fight to the death for his privilege of breathing foul air."

I lay on my back on the hard shelf and slowly unwrapped a caramel . . . I had an idea. I peeked over again to see if the Comrade was asleep. His arms were folded behind his head, and his wide, blue eyes looked up at me. Across from him and under my sister, an enormous *muzhik* was snoring through his red beard.

"Comrade, if the Soviets are so peace-loving, why is it that in the streets of Moscow now one can see more soldiers than in the streets of New York during the war?"

He knitted his eyebrows and said earnestly, "But, Comrade, you forget; we have to be ready for when they attack us—the Capitalists."

I had forgotten. We were back where we had started from. "Well, good-night, Comrade," I said.

"Good-night."

I put the Moscow caramel in my mouth and sunk my teeth into its sticky hardness. My two gold fillings remained imbedded therein. "Helen, do you suppose there's a dentist in Vladimir?"

"No," she snapped, "but I hope the jail is cozy!"

At about two A.M. the conductor pulled our boots and whispered, "Vladimir!" With aching backs we climbed down from our shelves, left our sleeping comrades, and loaded our few bundles. I should have liked to say good-by to the little Red soldier, but could not disturb his sleeping smile. He probably was dreaming of a glorious battlefield where single-handed he had taken J. P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller prisoners and was bringing them home for the mercy of his comrades.

We came out of the station, and four *izvoschiks* charged up with steeds and sleighs. After a minute or two of competitive price-slashing, we took the lowest offer and started up a long and steep hill.

THERE wasn't a light anywhere or a sound, except for the crunch of the horses' feet and the runners in the brittle snow. On the right was a yellow and white church with golden domes. We came up beside a fortress to the main street. Here the houses were long and whitewashed. We passed an open square, and off at its farthest edge to the left was a great, white stone building rising out of the snow. We clutched each other simultaneously and said,

"It's the Ouspensky!"

We knew our home-work. The Ouspensky, or Assumption Cathedral, at Vladimir is a historical and architectural landmark of all Russia. Its superb arches and gilded domes shone bluish in the moon.

The *izvoschik* asked us which hotel. We weren't particular. There were two whitewashed buildings facing each other, one big, one little. He thought the little one was cleaner, but it had no restaurant. We risked the big one. The entrance led directly to the second story, where we found rows of numbered doors and a bedraggled little chambermaid wound tightly in a red shawl and dangling numerous keys. She showed us a four-ruble room and a three-ruble room—the ruble being about fifty cents. They both looked pretty dubious, but one of the cots in the three-ruble room was endowed with only three legs. So we splurged and took the better.

The chambermaid brought a pillowcase and one sheet each and asked for a night's payment and our passports.

I gingerly lifted the ratty blanket and scanned the mattress. "Bedbugs!" was my verdict, though I had never seen one.

I caught three in the drinking glass and indignantly showed them to the maid.

"Yes, it's too bad," she said, and dumped the contents of the glass on the floor. The glass she returned to the tray beside the drinking water. "You can look at another room if you want, but they are all about the same."

We found another room with six beds but no occupants, and begged the mercy of two sheets. They were reluctantly produced, and we gingerly crawled between them, fully clothed, for our first night in the capital of Russia's greatest industrial province. In front of the door was set what we called our "Russian bear-trap." It was a provincial precaution—a chair with its back to the door, any odd crockery on the seat, and Helen's easel balanced on top of the back. If any one so much as *leaned* against the

In using advertisements see page 6

A High Time in Red Russia

door, the easel fell on the crockery, and Helen and Adelaide arose fully clothed and grabbed for their only weapons—nail scissors, in the right-hand pocket. The trap went off by itself in Novgorod once, and we nearly died of fright.

AT EIGHT O'CLOCK, which is well before sunrise during a Russian winter, we breakfasted on two *Boolki* (little brown loaves) and tea. The samovar was brought singing to our room. A samovar is a wonderful thing. If you are cold, or blue, or scared, or miserable, its cheery buzzing and bubbling raise your morale right up to the skies. And if you are alone, you feel all the advantages of a crowd and friends about you, and none of the disadvantages. This was a luxurious breakfast. Of course, there was no butter, and we gnawed our loaves like beavers, but we each had a slice of lemon in our tea. A lemon costs about forty cents in Russia.

Just as we reached the Ouspensky Cathedral the sun peeked out, blood-red among the rolling, white fields. The great church appeared to be made of the snow and ice from which it rose. It had a crimson aureole silhouetted against the sun and cast a long, blue shadow on the snow. The five golden domes, each with a huge filigree cross, were greatly elongated in the early morning light, and reached like grasping arms for the center of the town where the anti-Christian government held sway.

This church is very much a part of old Russia. It was built in 1158, when Vladimir was the capital. Vladimir Monomakh established a principality of Suzdal, which he left in charge of his son, Iuri Dolgorouki. But Iuri's son, Andrei Bogoliubski, developed it. He chose Vladimir for his capital instead of Rostov or Suzdal, where there were many powerful nobles, and became the first despotic prince of Russia. He was not satisfied, however, with his northern principality, and after his father's death marched on and conquered Kiev. When asked why he insisted on retaining his capital, at Vladimir, he replied that the great wonder-working Ikon of the Virgin, which he had brought from Kiev, would reside nowhere else.

This Ikon, the Vladimirskaya Bozhe Mat, or Vladimir Virgin, is the altar of Russia. More than any other single object is its history interwoven with that of the country. It has been to war and brought victory; it has blessed the ceremonies of peace. Countless miracles are attributed to it.

Tradition says that it was painted by the Evangelist Luke, but artistic records trace it to Constantinople in the eleventh century. The faces of the Mother and Child, cheek to cheek, are all that are left of that period. The expressions are moving beyond description. The Mother's eyes have a haunting premonition of the tragedy to come. It is almost impossible to believe that a face of such tenderness and humanity was produced in that early epoch of Greek painting, which is vivid, but stark and grotesquely simple in structure and coloring.

Andrei Bogoliubski placed the Ikon in the Ouspensky Cathedral and adorned it with gold and priceless jewels. He worshiped it to the point of madness and attributed his victory over the Bulgarians to its guiding influence. It watched over him even in death and met his funeral cortege on the way from Bogoliubov after he had been murdered there. It quelled the rioting which followed.

Vladimir was sacked and razed by the Tartars in the thirteenth century, and the cathedral was burned. But the Ikon was saved, and when the capital was eventually moved to Moscow, the Grand Princes still returned to Vladimir to be crowned in its presence. However, when Tamerlane and his infidel hordes threatened Russia, it was carried to Moscow by Grand Prince Vassili Dmitrievitch, and the Tartars retreated in terror. The great Cathedral of the Assumption in the Moscow Kremlin was copied after that in Vladimir, and the Ikon

was venerated there in the place of honor at the left of the altar, until the revolution. No Tsar of all the Russias could be crowned without its blessing.

In 1919 the Soviet Government took it from its shrine and had its repaintings and reglazings removed by the most modern scientific methods. It was placed in an exhibition of Russia's greatest art treasures and for the first time appreciated for its priceless worth. But the appealing Mother's face was suddenly declared contra-revolutionary, and the exhibition was closed as a menace to proletarian ideals. Our Lady of Vladimir was feared as a propagandist for religion, a tool of the upper classes to cow the workers.

Helen and I refused to leave Moscow without seeing this picture. We pleaded and cajoled at the Historical Museum, but were always put off. Finally Helen produced her membership card from the Metropolitan Museum, calling it a Union card in a proletarian land, and this, plus the intervention of the great art historian, Annisimov, who accompanied us, gained us access to inner shrines.

On the top floor of the museum are two spacious galleries in hideous disorder, in which are hung, crated, or stored most of the religious art of Russia—*the* art of Russia, for most later work is negligible in comparison. In the cases of one room alone are six thousand ikons. In the farthest room hang pictures of the third century and on, which are famous in all histories of art, and among these is the Vladimir Virgin herself. The Soviets are right. The picture casts a spell. We looked at it without speaking for half an hour and then tiptoed away. One is stricken to silence in its presence.

A few days later we penetrated this sanctuary again and were told that we were absolutely the last people to get in. The next day the department was to be sealed up for an indefinite period of time. The Government could not occupy itself with ikons in this day of progress. I gave a piece of my mind, in French, to one of the young sub-directors. Thinking I did not understand Russian, he commented in real surprise to a companion,

"She thinks the ikons are the greatest art in Russia. Isn't that strange?"

WITH all these thoughts going through our minds, Helen and I had been standing in our felt *Valenki* (boots), watching the sun rise and the blue shadows shorten at Vladimir. We tramped around the Cathedral, sinking above our knees sometimes in the drifting snow, but warming up with the effort.

The grizzly old caretaker, who lived in a hole like a woodchuck under the cathedral, directed us to the town museum, where we must get permission to see the church. We found the director, Comrade Selezniov, who was most generous with his time in showing us about. We made quick work of the rooms containing our pet anathemas—arrowheads and armor—and were greatly impressed by the gorgeous collection of ecclesiastical brocades, vessels, and paintings. There was Rublev's fifteenth-century copy of the Vladimir Virgin. When the original was taken to Moscow, he was commissioned to make its duplicate.

The museum director was reluctant to show this room because of disorder, he said, but we found the disorder most entrancing. The floor was piled with glittering brocades, purple and gold, green and silver—an Arabian Nights orgy. There were luxurious crimson velvets and strips of petit-point, all of them of an obviously ecclesiastical nature. The covetousness of the bourgeois mind immediately took possession of us. What were these dazzling robes and where had they come from? The kindly *Tovarishtch* (comrade) explained that they were the church properties, altar cloths and vestments, nationalized by the Government when the churches and monasteries were closed.

These robes were to be looked over and some of them sold to theatrical companies. I told the director that I was also an *Artistka*, and I should like to buy one or two costumes. He

In using advertisements see page 6

A High Time in Red Russia

was willing, so we pawed the treasure heaps avariciously. There were some old brocades of softened and mellowed colors, with eighteenth-century designs; some were modern, of silver or gold thread from the looms of twenty years ago, devoted exclusively to the weaving of vestments. A church procession on a holiday before the Revolution must have been an extraordinary sight. They are now forbidden.

We unfolded pile after pile of *diakons* (deacons), and *sweschenikí* (priests), and the air reeked with must and incense. Some were torn and stained with candle drippings; others looked as if they had never been worn. It seemed as though the whole province of Vladimir had been unfrocked before our eyes. I laid aside about twelve which I thought I could not live without, but gradually reduced the number. The customary bargaining began. One great deacon's robe of gold thread, which weighed at least fifteen pounds, I was told had cost about three hundred and fifty dollars to make. But now it went for a song. I asked where the priests who were left got vestments nowadays.

"Oh, they buy them back again from the Government," the director nonchalantly admitted.

That seemed to us a bit thick.

There was a paper shortage in Russia that week, and we should have to wander through the streets and travel back to Moscow laden with unwrapped golden vestments. Helen was afraid the simple church-goers would say,

"First came the Bolsheviks, then the Americans."

We overcame our consciences, but left our purchases with the comrade director until just before leaving town.

WE BUNDLED ourselves up to visit the churches. I have no skill to describe the cold of an unheated Russian church in winter. Even in those where a service is being held, two sweaters, two fur coats, a fur hat, three pairs of woolen stockings, boots and rubbers, and a muffler will not keep the cold from creeping up through the floor and chilling your very marrow.

Comrade Selezniov led the way to the Dmitri Cathedral standing near the Ouspensky. It is much smaller than the latter and simply irresistible. Each façade has three exquisitely beveled Roman arches reaching to the roof and supported by delicate Corinthian columns. There is a narrow window in each. The upper half of this façade is entirely covered with little animals and flowers in sculptured relief. They are crowded together in rows surrounding the window slits—perky griffons with flashing tails, the *zhar ptitsa*, or fire-bird, of Russian folk-lore, Scythian lions with threatening tongues, twisted necks, and tails ending in a daisy, a row of squatty angels on horseback—plaques of bulgy-eyed saints in with the griffons, and rows of oak leaves for design. The detail was so primitive that we jumped and squealed with the glee of ten-year-olds, and the whole was so stirringly beautiful in its dead white silence, that the frozen tears on my cheeks were not entirely those of cold. I never realized before seeing the twelfth-century churches of Novgorod and Vladimir-Suzdal that I could be so sensitive to architectural design.

We crossed the court to the Ouspensky Cathedral, and I asked the director what time there would be a service. It is beautiful to hear the Slavonic chanting in these historic spots. But he answered:

"This isn't a church any more. It is an anti-religious museum."

I was surprised but interested.

"We have a fine exhibit." He warmed up with enthusiasm. "The *Bezbozhnik* (Atheist) society is very strong here. We have closed every church in Vladimir but two, and we hope to close them by Easter. It will be hard work, but it will be a triumph."

I thought of the Society of Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in Moscow and the secretary who told me:

"Russia and America have so much in common. They both have absolute religious freedom."

In the same office one day I met an American woman "gone Bolshie" and living in Moscow, her original birthplace.. I asked her,

"Is it true that a Russian schoolteacher is fired for being seen in a church?"

"Yes," she said, "but in America she is fired for not being seen in it."

Our nice Comrade Director struggled with the mammoth lock on the portal. We kicked away the snow piled up at the entrance, and the door finally gave. It didn't seem as if either the Rublev frescoes or the anti-religious exhibit had done much business this winter. A sort of numb apathy seems to have settled on the general mass of Russian people. On top are a limited number of Communists shouting their theories and in absolute control of every method of spreading them. Underneath are a limited number of wretched creatures belonging formerly to bourgeois or aristocratic families, who are barely allowed to scrape together an existence, if they are at liberty at all. In between is the great mass of Russians, oppressed by the Tsars in the name of the Lord, and oppressed by the Bolsheviki in the name of liberty. Pavlov, their greatest scientist, an eighty-year-old seer who honored America with a visit and who is reputed to be the only Soviet citizen who dares to speak his mind, has said,

"The Russians have a reflex of slavery."

The cold inside the church splintered our bones. Here the Rublev fragments were barely more visible than in the other church. We made a few acid remarks, but nothing could be done. It was just one of those things. However, with the cooperation of the *Tovarishtch* and the caretaker, who found a wobbly stepladder and was generous with matches, we managed to see something of their beauties.

The whole church was magnificent with its dingy frescoes of a later period. The Byzantine form remained with its narrow arches of stupendous height reaching up to the five cupolas. And from each cupola stared down the black, haunted eyes of the faces of Christ or the Virgin, perhaps ten feet in diameter—painted in an era of faith, and wondering at this era of skepticism. The altar was marred by a ghastly baroque *ikonostas*, or altar screen—the gift of Catherine the Great, I believe. Isn't it remarkable what people all over the world were able to think of in that period?

I ASKED to see the grave of the wife of Alexander Nevsky, one of the most venerated of Russian-Saint-Princes. His body was removed to the Nevsky lavra monastery in Petrograd many years before, but the graves of his wife and daughter were supposed to be at Vladimir.

"They are in the anti-religious museum," the director said, and he led us back through icy corridors to a chapel near the entrance.

Here he was in his element. On the walls were hung gross caricatures of Christ leading the workers over a precipice, Christ and the Virgin as profiteers, and many others. They were artistically engaging as poster designs, but the subject matter was most repellent. Good taste is a bourgeois quality not fostered by the Bolsheviki.

The director asked us if we belonged to a church in America. We admitted that we had never been christened or confirmed.

"Then be warned in time," he said, and showed us a big poster of a minister as a marionette being tweaked by strings controlled by Lloyd George, Coolidge, Ford, and Rockefeller.

The text said to beware of the insidious teachings of these preachers who would try to draw one away from the Orthodox church and then would plunge one in a still deeper abyss.

"The religious menace is great in America,"

A High Time in Red Russia

we were told in fatherly tones. "Protect yourselves from it!"

We came out into the glaring snow, and the thirty-below-zero air seemed warm after that inside. Once more my eye caught the shimmering outlines of the Dmitri Church.

"You're an archaeologist, Comrade Director," I said. "And you know that such beauty can be created only in an age of Faith. Yet you can remain so hostile."

"Religion is the tool of the capitalists to subjugate the workers and make them think of the next world and forget the misery of this," he quoted from Marx. "And anyhow my subject is arrowheads!"

Helen and I shuddered and took refuge in a tea station.

We had a rousing lunch of dubious meat balls and a three-inch slice of black bread each. It is remarkable what you can eat in Russia if you just get cold enough. Coming out into the street we saw a group of boys with empty wood sleds driving toward the station.

"*Mozhno.*" (May I?) I shouted, falling into the back of the sleigh.

"*Mozhno.*" (You may) he answered and cracked his whip.

Helen fell into another, and they proceeded to gallop furiously down the long hill. There was a mad race. Helen rolled neatly off her sled at the station, and I about two hundred feet beyond. We picked ourselves up, waved goodby to our benefactors, and brushed off the snow. We caught the local train which just pulled in, and after twenty minutes ride descended at Bogoliubov.

BOGOLIUBOV was the country-seat of old Prince Andrei. His palace and church are still there, and also his famous Ikon, the Virgin of Bogoliubov. This is the picture he ordered painted of the Virgin's apparition to him in this little town, when he was bearing the Vladimir Ikon to Suzdal.

According to the chronicles the horses stopped dead at Bogoliubov. The gruff old prince was angered and tried to force them, but they would not budge a step further. Suddenly in the night the Virgin appeared and told the awe-struck prince that it was her will that her picture should be at Vladimir and that he should make his capital there. Two hundred years of Russian history were changed by those horses and that vision.

On arriving we tried to buy a leather belt in the village cooperative store, but the storekeeper did not know how to sell it when we had no workers' cards, so we could not carry off our purchase. As per custom we made a beeline for the biggest set of golden domes and tried to find some one who knew where the palace tower was. It was a race against time and daylight. Everybody pointed out the tower, but no one knew where the key was. We finally pounded on a door at random. Those Russian doors are very inhospitable-looking in winter. A wistful little old woman, clutching a shawl about her head, appeared at the inner crack. We told her our wish, and she begged us to come in. She was curious. Had never seen a foreigner before. Begged us to sit down and get warm and let her set the samovar. We were frozen blue, and it was tempting, but daylight was on the wane. We promised to return if we could, after dark.

She directed us to a leather shop in the monastery where the young caretaker was working, and he unchained the tower door for us. Beside the entrance was a well with a big Russian "four-poster" over it, painted bottle blue, orange, and vermillion. A "four-poster" is our name for those porte-cochères with bulgy columns so common in Russia. A white-washed spiral staircase wound up to the prince's chambers. They were small but dazzlingly frescoed on a bright blue background with saints drooping in one direction or another like lilies.

At the monastery entrance was the usual towering belfry with its rows of graduated bells from six feet to six inches in diameter. On the ground in front of it lay one of the monster bells, shattered.

"*Kak Zhal! Kak Zhal!*" (What a shame!), Helen and I both remarked, on seeing it. "How did it happen?"

"I did it," answered the boy proudly. "We don't need them any more. No one wants to hear them but the old women. We are going to throw all the rest down tomorrow. Will you be here? All the young communists are coming for the celebration!"

We protested vigorously, but roused nothing but scorn from him.

Leaving the monastery, we walked around the narrow sledge road to the church where the Ikon was. The priest's son showed us through. He was a thin, pallid boy of fourteen or so and looked a bit hunted. I asked him if he expected to become a priest, too. He didn't know, would like to, but doubted whether they would allow priests at all when he was grown up. Because of his father's profession he couldn't go to school, and the children wouldn't let him be a "pioneer" (children's patriotic organization corresponding to the Boy Scouts).

The church was disappointing. It had a beautiful gate, but ghastly modern decorations inside—as tawdry as the modern Italian churches. And the Ikon of Prince Andrei was hidden by a metal *oklad* leaving only face and hands visible. These metal coverings placed over the Ikons for their preservation and glorification are the bane of a sight-seer's existence in Russia.

THE sun was setting, leaving the countryside streaked with red and lavender. We had still to see the *Pokrov Bogoroditsa*—the Church of the Intercession of the Virgin. It was about three miles away, on a lonely river. We hailed a little boy who was passing in the basket of a rickety old sledge.

"I'll give you two rubles if you will take us to the little church on the River Nerli."

"All right," he agreed lackadaisically.

We fell in the back of the basket, shuffling about until we had made a nest among the rags and hay.

We had gone up and down hill about halfway when our chariot stopped.

"I don't want to go any farther," said the little boy, looking off in the distance at the church sinking in the shadows with just a faint touch of reflected pink. "I don't know the road, and I'm afraid of the dark."

"Are you cold?" I asked.

We were frozen ourselves. A biting wind had set in at sunset, and my fur coat seemed flimsy protection.

"No, I'm not cold, but *mnye nye khochetsya* (It does not please me to go)."

He used an arrogant Russian idiom with his chin high.

There was nothing to be done. No cajoling or offers of more money would change his mind. But we were determined to see the church. He left us standing in the middle of a bridge and turned back home.

An old peasant passed. "There is no road," he said. "You must walk as the bird flies."

So we turned off to the right and picked our way along the little river bank under a railway bridge.

It was practically dark by now, but the snow had an almost phosphorescent glow. We kept our eyes glued on our objective and trudged on. Sometimes the surface was frozen and we could trot, but occasionally the drifts almost reached up to our knees.

After clawing our way down one side of a steep cliff and up the other with the aid of some willow bushes we came at last to the church. Around it was a low white wall, into which were built the belfry and a crumbling, wooden dwelling. We sat huddled together on this wall and contemplated the white picture in front of us. It needed no light. It spread its own, and

In using advertisements see page 6

A High Time in Red Russia

our eyes were acclimated like a cat's. Even the single golden dome caught a faint radiance from somewhere. The style and decoration are similar to that of the Dmitri Cathedral, but the proportions are more beautiful. There wasn't another building for miles around.

It had a human quality. It seemed little, unprotected, deserted, young, and frail, though it had stood there since the year 1165. The wind whistled through the belfry and roared around the side of the church. We tingled with esthetic satisfaction, but were awed at the loneliness of the place. It was both magnificent and creepy.

There were portals on three sides, but the first two we tried were barred and bolted. The third iron door was hanging loose. We stood beside it and whispered before having the courage to drag it open. Suppose there were "Hooligani" (bandits), the great fear of the Russian peasants, inside! Well, take a chance!

We yanked, and the door gave. Some snow fell on us from above, and an icy draft stormed outward.

A black hole yawned in front of us. I was supremely confident that I would be murdered the next moment. We could see nothing. Snow was swirling down from the high window slips, and the one board we stepped on creaked and snapped in two. I shuddered and closed the portal hurriedly. I told myself how glad I was that I didn't believe in spooks. I caught Helen looking over her shoulder at every sound.

We went back and sat down on the wall and indulged in a few chilly day-dreams. What fun it would be to put it in order, restore the interior, give it an *Ikonostas* of all Rublev Ikons! We would repair the adjoining house and live there in summertime. It would be just another American concession in Russia.

I was slowly solidifying with cold. Snow had got in the open tops of my boots and was caked solid down to the ankles. I know now how ice-cream feels in the freezer. We pulled ourselves away, and the little church pulled us back. Its windy voice begged not to be left alone again. But we had to go—down the cliff, hand over hand, bush by bush, up the other side, always stopping and looking back. I waved a farewell once. Never has cold limestone come so near to speaking.

WE FOUGHT our way against the wind over the snowy fields and reached the main road in about an hour. In the same time again we wearily approached the town. A little band of marching soldiers passed. One is eternally conscious of the military in Russia. I wondered why they were marching thus at midnight. I looked at my wrist-watch. It was only six-thirty.

In Moscow, later, just before leaving for home, I met a famous Russian scholar and archaeologist. I asked him what he considered the most beautiful church in Russia.

"The most beautiful church in Russia is hidden away on a distant plain, far from the prying eyes of tourists. It is on the River Nerli in the Province of Vladimir, and is called *Pokrov Bogoroditsa*."

Helen and I smiled knowingly at each other.

"That, sir, is our American concession," we said.

(*To be continued*)

In the next instalment the Misses Hooker crash the gates of a young Communists' Fancy Dress Ball—and become involved in a political debate. Then they drive over frozen plains in an open sleigh to the small provincial town of Susdal where Adelaide fell ill with influenza and could get only casual medical care. And into her sick-room one day came an officer and two privates from the Tcheka, or G. P. U., the Soviet secret intelligence service. In the local prison, which Helen had been sketching, are incarcerated the remaining members of the old royalist Duma.