

Ea 1.14.11

One of my happiest experiences during my visit to the great land of the Soviet Union was a surprise and exciting announcement by Comrade Sonia an official interpreter to the South African delegation that arrangements had been made for our delegation to visit one of the Central Asian Republics. We learnt later on that we were to be joined by the Middle East delegation all of whom had become very friendly to South Africans. They had taken a great interest in the "Afrika" salute. This long journey was in addition to our long travels in the land of the Soviet Union as we had entered the country through Poland via Moscow across Siberia to Manchuria and again to Moscow from Peking we flew through the Mongolian Republic a journey which took 12 days by train and 2 days by plane.

On the 10th of November, 3 days after the great celebrations of October which we were also fortunate to attend, we took off from Moscow by plane for the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is one of the sixteen Republics of the Soviet Union. It is situated in the South East Caucasus. We landed in Baku, the same day in the afternoon after a flight of five hours. Baku is the capital of the Azerbaijan Republic. It is located on the west coast of the Caspian Sea. It is popular for its oil production. The ~~U.S.S.R.~~ U.S.S.R. possesses more than half the total world supply of oil; of this Baku produces by far the greater part. On our landing we were attracted by numerous oil wells numbering a little more than a hundred. We got into our motor and made for our hotel facing the Caspian sea. After a little rest my friends started off for a Children's Palace and in the evening they attended a cinema. I could not accompany them as I had caught cold. Less than 30 minutes a middle aged doctor, accompanied by a nurse; so thorough was the examination and good services that in a matter of a few minutes after he had left I felt well. I had none the less remained in bed until the following morning. The following morning on the 12th of November our delegation ~~started~~ started off by visiting a large Baku oil refinery. The director of the plant took us round and also introduced us to some of the assistant officers, one of whom was a lady who explained to us the

working conditions in that factory before October, 1917 the oil was brought to the refinery by cannon and now technical and automatic were used. There were more than one thousand workers 500 of whom were mostly young women she told us. The workers were entitled to annual leave from 15 to 24 days. The unskilled labourers were earning about 500 rubles per month. She explained the benefits enjoyed by the workers such as maternity and paid sick-leave. She also told us about the technical working of the oil pipes which were used to draw the oil from the mines to the refinery. "Another place we visited was a sweet factory in this factory we were taken around by the manager of the factory. Each of us could go to any place of the factory and ask any of the workers about the prevailing conditions. These are some of the questions we asked the workers, "Are you a member of the trade union? the young lady said, "Yes I am. "Does that apply to the rest of the workers here?" , no some were not. "What are the benefits enjoyed by the workers for being members of the trade union?" "The benefits are not limited to the members of the trade union, they benefit all the workers except that the members of the trade union were responsible to discuss the relations between the management, staff and the workers and also in respect of the individual cases. They fixed time rates for ~~various~~ varying grades of labour. The trade union organisation administers social insurance disabilities, maternity assistance, culture and sports activities to discuss means and ways of increasing production.

Our next visit was a theatre ~~where~~ where we saw a play depicting life in a ~~region~~ region under the Czarist regime. As soon as the delegates appeared on the balcony, there was a great ovation and excitement of the audience. During the interval, many pushed their way through to shake hands, they were very kind indeed, there was a great understanding between them and the Middle East delegation as many spoke the dialect which ~~was~~ could be understood by the delegates from Iraq and Lebanon. One night when we were discussing our experiences in the country, I asked the following questions: "What were the reasons for your count"

to join the Soviet Union Republics. "What are the benefits of such links and in which way are you better off than the position was before such a Union?" The friend whom I directed these question to said that these questions were of great interest and importance. We would rather ~~that~~ that they were answered by a senior man to the whole delegation. He accordingly made the necessary ~~arrangements~~ arrangements. On our last day in Baku a professor of Geography was introduced to us, who was requested to deal with the questions we had asked. He hung a map on the wall and gave us a brief history of ~~Azerbaijan~~ Azerbaijan and its people. He told us about different empires which changed hands on that same place. He then pointed to us ^{out} the present boundaries and gave us the population which ~~numbered~~ numbered more than three-million people. ~~He said~~ He said for the first time the people of Azerbaijan enjoyed complete freedom. They were free from the domination of Russian nation which exploited its people and its wealth forced its language under the Czarist Russia. The rich mineral resources of the country were now being used for the benefit of its country. The backwardness of the country and its people was a thing of the past. They now enjoyed free and compulsory education. They were using their own language cultural standards of the people were raised. They elected their own Government and their head of the state. He then explained the details of the their constitution.

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SOME EXPERIENCES AT SOVIET EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

A few days after Mr. W.M. Sisulu, a small Bhoola and I had arrived ⁱⁿ Moscow in November 1953, we went to see Lomonosov University. Towering over Moscow on the Lenin Hills is this magnificent edifice of education.

As we walked through some of the thirty-two floors of the University, it was clear to me that this giant building must have grown out of the best in Soviet science, Architecture and decorative art. Each floor added to the comfort and splendour which had appeared so complete in the previous one. On the thirty-second floor was the soil ⁱⁿ museum! I remember that it struck me as strange at first, but then I thought that there was no reason why the soil should not be elevated to the highest point in human life.

The firm, fine structure of the University derived its handsomeness from the blending of material from almost all parts and Republics of the Soviet Union- Georgian marble, Ukrainian ceramics- and so the University seems to have been carved, ^{fashioned} ~~shaped~~ and built by the hands, ~~of~~ craft and energies of thousands of Soviet workers, some ^{of} whom were working thousands of miles away from Moscow. Just as the material constituents of the University the human composition too ^{of} the students and lecturers- came from the different Republics of the U.S.S.R. The University therefore, reflected the unity of Soviet creative work, and the collective enjoyment of the fruits of that work. This huge generous institution fascinated me, I met the students and envied them.

After a while, we walked into one of the chess-rooms to rest and to write our notes. A man walked up to me with a portable recording machine and asked me if I would comment on the University for Moscow Radio. It was the wrong time to ask me

to speak. All my impressions were then merely^a whirl of fascination and admiration which had drowned my power of coherent speech. He seemed to sense my difficulty and he told me that I could make my comments after the tour of the University. My condition after the tour was no better. As he came to me again, I made a great effort to hold a few coherent sentences ready for the microphone, but I knew that I would be unhappy to hear them reproduced over the radio. I was greatly relieved when he apologised and told me that something had gone wrong with the recording machine, and asked me if he could come to the hotel for the interview. I eagerly accepted his apology and made the necessary appointment. I needed the distance away from that imposing building to arrange my impressions, and time to find my words.

Outside the University, there were many people strolling around the ~~place~~ it and obviously admiring it. Many were taking snaps of it, and others were having their snaps taken with the University as a background, and others again, were looking down towards the City, where the old yellow buildings of the Moscow University from which this giant rose, still stood in Mokhovaya Street. Our interpreter, Comrade Sonia, told us that those were some of the many visitors who came from all over the Soviet Union to visit the Metropolis, and to see their new University.

The Soviet people were rightly proud and jealous of their splendid gift to their children. Rightly proud, because it was part of that undeniable change and rise of the living standards and conditions in the Soviet Union, which one cannot honestly fail to notice. It is also a lasting expression of the Soviet peoples desire to develop the creative abilities of their youth under the most stimulating and comfortable conditions. Rightly jealous, because it reflects their constructive peaceful effort, which some war-crazy destructive maniac might destroy with a single bomb.

We were also invited to go to a Girl's Middle School in

a suburb of Moscow. After a short discussion of the principles of Soviet Education, with the principal in her office, she took us round the classrooms. It was break, and the girls in their brown frocks and white pinafores were strolling arm-in-arm in pairs. This no longer looked strange to me, although I was surprised that the children also resorted to this form of relaxation. I had seen, and joined audiences at theatres in Moscow, in what I had learned to be a very effective and refreshing form of relaxation between scenes. We watched the children for a few seconds. A few of them noticed us. They beamed and nudged their neighbours, and the orderly stroll broke into disorder and burst towards us. We were flooded with small hands - excitedly shaking ours, and pinning Komsomol badges on our lapels. Amidst the excited questions I caught a few in English. I immediately turned and replied that we were from South Africa. My reply brought a fresh outburst of excitement which however, changed quickly into a string of questions which were put to me through those who knew English, and who also interpreted my answers.

The School bell rang, and I could see the disappointment on children's faces. A few girls walked towards the principal and spoke to her. The Principal then told us that the girls had asked her to invite us to speak to them in their hall.

Bhoola then addressed the children. In silence they listened to the suffering of the majority of the children in South Africa., and they cheered the message of goodwill and friendship which we conveyed on behalf of our children. In reply, a young girl of about fourteen years told us that they were very sorry to hear of the suffering of the children in South Africa. The condition of the children in South Africa was similar to that of the children of the Russian people before the Revolution in 1917, but their fathers and mothers had struggled and many had died in order that their children may live a happy life. She had no doubt she said, that just as the Soviet pioneers (children) now lived and grew up happily, so would the South African pioneers, also be

~~free from their misery and sorrow.~~

free from their present misery one day and live a happy life. I was deeply moved by the simple and yet profound challenge this child made to the mothers and father's in South Africa.

We sang the International Youth song, and although they sang in Russian and we in English, there was deep harmony, and I felt united with their innocent hearts.

In Azerbaijan People's Republic we spent an evening at a Pioneer Palace. As we entered the palace, we saw an Orchestra of children ranging from ten to fifteen years. Little girls in ballet frocks stood nearby. When the children saw us, they stopped playing, and could no longer pay attention to their conductor. We walked up through crowds of children.

We were informed that there were 150 different circles, ranging from flower collecting to astronomers, and a child could join any one of these.

In the History circle a boy of about 12 years showed us round his pictures of the life of Lenin which he had collected, and told us briefly about Lenin's life. In the ship-modelling circle a boy of about 15 years showed us his radio-controlled model, and he told us that the following year he was going to the Ship building College at Leningrad. Next to the ship modelling circle was the Radio circle. I was amazed to find youth between the ages of twelve and sixteen constructing 5 valved sets. I remember confessing to them that although I had done the theory of wireless in Physics at the University, I had never gone beyond assembling a one-valve set.

After seeing the astronomical circle in which we saw the sky and stars reproduced on the inside of a hemispherical dome, and young astronomers peering through telescopes, we were invited to the Children's Theatre by the cultural circles.

We sat on the small chairs, amongst the children and we were fully entertained by a variety programme of folk music and folk dancing, and an extract from a "Svan Laj

dancing and an extract from "Swan Lake".

The Pioneers palace is the kingdom of the children, but it is not a kingdom of make-belief^{ve}, divorced from the life of ^{the} Adult. It is a Kingdom full of the realities of life for the child, which unveils and develops the creative abilities of the child. Life for the Soviet children, like life for the Soviet people is full of unlimited thrills.

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TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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