MISS MARGARET BURKE Describes

War Clouds Over Europe Bringing Terror In Poland

SHE DROPPED INTO A WORLD AT WAR

Russia Falls Before Germans

FIRST ARTICLE.

VICTORIA STATION on a raw September morning shortly before the Great War. A timid figure, I waited for the Irish lady with whom I was to entrain on my long journey to Warsaw.

She was an old traveller through Europe and a good linguist. The train journey to Folkestone was the usual rush for the boat; in those days there was little trouble at the Customs and passports were not needed until crossing the Russian frontier. The passage to Flushing was pleasant, a few hours on a smooth sea brought us in sight the port; my first vision of a foreign town. There was not much time to look round for the train for Berlin was ready to take passengers to the great German capital. The journey from Flushing was very interesting, through Hanover, a beautiful country with extensive forests and wide cornfields; abundance and wealth not yet disturbed by the ravages of war. Part of the journey was by night, but owing to the comfort of German railways I did not suffer from fatigue.

The one drawback was the lack of a morning cup of tea. I did miss it. My friend consoled me that we could get good tea in Berlin. I shall never forget it, such vile stuff. Of course, foreigners don't like tea. Coffee is their beverage. And, no doubt, they make it well. I grew to like it after a time, never giving it the place of our own strong cup of tea. We had a few hours in Berlin, which impressed me with its striking buildings, fine parks and above all the wonderful order in the big streets.

A Lonely Exile.

About seven in the evening we caught the train for Alexanderowa, the Russian frontier, which we reached at midnight. Passports were produced and signed by the police authorities; that to me was an exciting performance. Strange the Russian language sounded in my ears, and I decided I could never speak a correct sentence. That problem was solved in due time. Early next morning we arrived at Warsaw, the historic capital of Russian Poland.

Bewildered at my surroundings, a lonely exile I was that morning. I just felt I could go back on the next train. I tried to be brave; very soon I learned to love those people among whom I came to live.

I taught the English language in private families and in some of the high schools, giving me an opportunity to get into close touch with a most interesting people. The Poles were then sadly oppressed by the big nations which surround them. Poland suffered the fate of being torn in three, Germany and Austria taking their share of the nation that once played such an important role in the history of Eastern Europe. The Catholic religion, the established Church of the country, was tolerated under trying conditions, and the Poles had to make a constant struggle to keep up the Faith. In the country places the people endured great hardships to go to Mass, especially in the winter, when snow was knee-deep. It often reminded me of Ireland, the scenes on Sundays and holidays of obligation. There was, indeed, a lot in common with the Irish and Poles, especially their hospitable and generous natures.

Lack of Railroads.

One disadvantage Poland suffered was the lack of railroads. I will always remember my first visit to the country seat of my pupils in the summer. It was a distance of [illegible] miles. We did it in carriages, [illegible] horses. After [illegible] tired animals [illegible] almost [illegible] situation late at night [illegible] days and nights I felt I was [illegible] along that endless road. Still it was worth it all; the country looked its best, being the height of the harvest, which is earlier than in our Green Isle. The great activity in the cornfields, men and women in their national costumes of bright colours, busy reaping and gathering the corn, presented a gay picture. This finished, they were hard at work with the "beet" and potato crops, both produced in abundance to feed the numerous sugar factories and spirit (alcohol) distilleries.

During the autumn preparations were made for the long, severe winter months. The peasants generally devoted their time to making their national dress from the linen of the country.

The Polish women are a grand type, industrious in every sense of the word. Apart from their household duties, where they proved perfect mistresses, they are ever ready to take their stand in high social circles, nothing being above or beneath them. They are treated with the utmost consideration from the men folk, and are the "queens" of their homes. Rich women went amongst the peasants and poor of the town teaching the children to read and write. The long winter nights were given up to instructing the adults, who had to work during the day. This task was performed at grave risks. The Russian Government provided poor schools and banned the teaching of the Polish language, but the Poles were determined to keep up their native language at any cost. I saw the Cossacks ride furiously through the streets of Warsaw, horse-whipping the people who dared speak the Polish language. Still the Poles would not speak Russian, tho' they spoke it as fluently as the Russians. They preferred French or English, if not allowed their own language, in public. In private they only spoke in the native tongue.

Feasts at Easter.

Christmas rejoicing was planned for weeks before. The famous Christmas Eve thirteen-course supper (abstinence strictly observed). When the host and hostess broke "blessed bread" with all members of the household, struck me as a beautiful and typical Christmas greeting. The tinkling of sleigh-bells gave signals of the faithful hurrying in the midnight and in the early hours of the morning to greet the "Infant Jesus in the Crib." The carnival was a time of amusement and came to a close on Shrove Tuesday, when a big fish was produced to show that Lent was nigh and that the young people should abstain from dancing and other pleasures. Those restrictions were observed by all classes.

They made up for it, at Easter, when there was an enormous spread of food, such varieties. The priest was always invited on Easter Saturday to bless the houses and display of eatables. Early Masses were attended, then eating seemed to be the rule of the day. The Poles were perfectly happy when they had a crowd round their tables.

After an unusually long spell of snow, the summer was fast making its appearance. We were looking forward to a nice peaceful holiday in the country. We had

Women of Poland wearing their national dress.

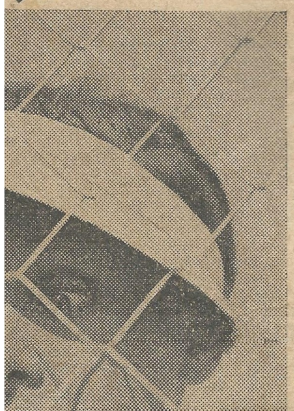
scarcely time to get there when we were disturbed by the clamours of war.

August, 1914. Russian troops marched through [illegible] Russian front. We could scarcely realise what was happening. We expected the Russian troops would advance right through Prussia. In the meantime, all the men were called to arms, military service being compulsory. What a plight for the Poles. Those in Russian territory were obliged to fight their comrades in the German and Austrian armies. A short time elapsed when the German troops pressed hard forcing the Russians to beat a quick retreat. The enemy had arrived and took up their positions in our midst, using the house, which had a high turret, for their observation point. We were ordered to the cellar while they made their attack on Warsaw, which lasted a couple of weeks.

The heavy bombardment of the German guns thundering forth shook the earth, the cries of the wounded and dying men were appalling, and the only aid we could offer was prayers. There was a Crucifix on the wall, and day and night the rosary was recited for all those in battle. To our relief, there was a sudden retreat on the German line and we were released from our underground quarters.

The Russians made another advance, and it was then I pleaded to the officers in charge for permission to get back to Warsaw. Understanding my position they gave me as a foreign subject a military pass, and I lost no time in returning to the doomed city.

I travelled on all kinds of conveyances, and on arriving, I went to the Consul, who was rapidly locating his subjects. With the usual passport regulations and military documents, I left with others on the last train for Petrograd.



MISS MARGARET BURKE Describes

A Sealed Carriage Which Changed Europe's History

REVOLT AND FAMINE IN PETROGRAD

A Monk Leagues With The Devil

(SECOND ARTICLE.)

What sad partings took place that morning as we assembled at the Petrograd Station in Warsaw. After a lot of confusion and excitement places were secured; the train steamed out towards the Russian capital, named after Peter the Great. The journey was very slow, frequently interrupted by troop trains.

Not until we crossed the Polish territory did we feel miles away from the front. Here was a different scene. Instead of the torn-up ground and the stretch of vast destruction which greeted the eye when I made my way into Warsaw some days previously, I saw an expanse of golden grain. The Russian men and women, dressed in their brilliant national costumes, were hard at work in the fields. The Russians, though the same Slav race as the Poles, differ widely from them.

A tragic picture of the Czar of Russia guarded in Siberia by Bolsheviks, who afterwards murdered him.

The latter are of a more excitable temperament, while the former are of a cooler nature. Both are fine types possessing noble characteristics.

Reaching Petrograd, where no signs of war were visible, was a relief, if only for a time. There was a different impression as one saw the officers' brightly-decked uniforms parade the streets, then the renowned Cossacks on their marvellous swift horses, so well trained that they could perform almost any feat at the demand of their masters. The Caucasians in their graceful loose tunics, richly decorated with gold and silver mountings, looked handsome with their marked classical features. They were a striking contrast to the men from the Ural and Siberian districts, in their heavy attire and big fur caps, burly looking fellows.

The city, built on the River Neva, had big wide streets, well kept; the well-stocked shops always fascinating, especially the stores for furs, garments essential in an intensely cold climate.

The Gay Capital.

The Colonnade, with a fine display of goods, was the centre of attraction. Not to forget the tea-rooms where tea was so elaborately served; and the homely samovar (tea-urn) ever in readiness. Russian tea was good. The restaurants catered the best of food, with their never-ending supplies of "caviare," that wonderful delicacy. The cooking was excellent, and food was generally produced in great quantity.

Among the huge edifices was the Winter Palace, the residence of the Imperial family, surrounded by Military Headquarters. The "Hermitage" museum contained priceless treasures of Art. The massive Orthodox churches, with their gilt domes, were a grand sight. This was the religion of the State. The interior of these churches were beautifully decorated, richly jewelled, and brightly painted.

The Russians had great devotion to Our Lady, and in every house was to be found an ikon, picture of Mother and Child Jesus, with a lamp burning.

Roman Catholic churches, though fewer in number, were also very fine buildings.

Feeling rather secure and not inclined to risk the danger of the Baltic and North Seas, which were full of mines, we decided to stay. It was easy to find work. I soon had a good connection in the teaching line, and became more attached to my Russian pupils as time went on.

Russia Collapses.

Meantime, battle raged furiously. Warsaw was stormed night and day incessantly until the fatal moment when the Polish town fell victim to the enemy, never to be restored to the Russian Empire. After a long and patient endurance of all that was horrible in that war, the Poles regained their country, though utterly destroyed, and are now enjoying their freedom. Once the German troops entered Warsaw, the Russian Army began to retreat rapidly. Petrograd became more war-like every day, reinforcements filling up the vacant gaps. Life was busy. People began to look more serious. Winter in all its severity was near; provision had to be made for that bitter enemy.

Men, women, and children were all busy, particularly the fair sex, knitting woollies, getting supplies for the sick and wounded, despatching parcels to the prisoners of war. Various organisations, occupied with heavy duties, which fell upon them so unexpectedly, were all alert. Great uneasiness was being felt as the enemy was pressing forward. Drastic military changes took place, the Czar being appointed Field-Marshal in place of the Grand Duke Nicholas, who was sent to the Southern front.

Surprise and awe were caused by those changes which resulted favourably for the enemies who pushed their way headlong without much resistance until they reached Riga, an important point for them. A tragic move for the Russians, one which they paid for dearly. All this was due to the luckless intrigues carried on in the Imperial Palace.

The Vampire.

The Czar governed this mighty Empire, with its 150 millions of population, ranging from highly-civilised Europeans to Mongolian and Siberian barbarians, speaking different languages and dialects. It contained nearly one-sixth of the land surface of the earth. He had supreme rule over life and death; and yet during that reign of power there appeared another supreme ruler in the person of Rasputin, the notorious Siberian, who posed as a Russian Orthodox monk.

This man professed wonderful skill in curing diseases, and was admitted into the Royal House. The Czar and Czarina had only one son, who suffered from the strange disease known as haemophilia (bleeding). The Czarina, devoted to her child, had tried every means that science could offer to cure him of this malady, but all in vain.

Rasputin was the one man in the world who could cure the fits of bleeding of the Czar's only son. Whether he worked some unknown medical remedy remains to be told. I know, it was often said in Russian circles, that there was no doubt, but his power was diabolical. I knew people connected with the Czarisky Dvor (Czar's House), who repeatedly said the man was possessed of the devil.

The atmosphere at that particular period makes one think of the possibility that the demons had a strong grip on Rasputin; for whatever suggestion was made by him was immediately put into force by the Czarina, who proclaimed him a prophet on high. It was he who ruled throughout the Great War, the Czar being a weak, feeble-minded man and absolutely influenced by his wife, who in turn was under complete dominion of this unprincipled adventurer. Through his interference millions of lives were lost at the Russian front.

Lenin and Trotsky.

The people could stand it no longer, they were enraged at the conduct of the Imperial family—they organised strikes, planned revolt, and made every preparation for revolution. The scheme was so vast that it was nearly too much for the human mind to grasp the situation. Still Rasputin held on his reckless course, dismissing Ministers of State, performing many other acts which led to woeful disaster. At last, a group of Russian Princes plotted for his assassination.

One night in December, 1916, they managed to get him away from the Palace, and taking him to a quiet spot, they shot him dead. The news caused consternation. Orders were issued by the Czarina for the arrest of the murderers. They had cleared the country, and so escaped the wrath of the Empress.

He had foretold that his death would be followed by the death of the Czarina and the Royal family; that prophecy did prove true. People were inclined to think that once he was removed conditions would improve. But insane tyranny followed, and rioting in the streets. In February, 1917, there was a general revolt.

Lenin, the great master of Bolshevism, realised that the moment for him was at hand. He, with Trotsky, who were then in exile in Switzerland, were allowed to pass through Germany, the train being sealed by the German military authorities to prevent communication with the army or people.

A Provisional Government was established, but had a short duration. The Czar was compelled to resign [illegible] and his family were imprisoned and taken to a place bordering Siberia, where they were later cruelly murdered, so ending the mighty Czars.

Yet had that boy of 14 years (the future heir to the Russian throne) not suffered from an incurable disease, Rasputin might have been buried in oblivion, Nicholas Lenin might have died in his lonely exile. The history of Russia and the world would likely have been very different. On what small items do great events often depend.

Chaos Brings Famine.

The country was in chaos and owing to the European War most of the frontiers were closed. That made evacuation doubly difficult. Many of us were hoping that when the war would finish we would have less trouble in getting away, so we decided to do the best we could in the meantime. We dispersed in various directions and lost sight of old friends.

The food question in Petrograd was becoming a serious problem day by day. No transport was allowed and famine was threatened. Hundreds of little children died of starvation. Those who could leave did so. I went with one of my pupils. Her parents had an estate in the Ukraine (Little Russia) which was not being disturbed at the time, so we considered it wise to get there; at least there would be enough to eat. There were many obstacles to prevent us going. Railway carriages were mostly smashed to pieces by the rebels, railroads pulled up. At all events with the greatest trouble we managed to get as far as the Ukraine. It always remains a mystery to me how that journey was accomplished and yet there were more intricate ones to come. It is good for us not to know what is ahead.

We settled down to the quiet simple life of the peasantry for a while. That did not last long; the air soon became infected with the taint of revolution. Our worries had begun, there was no remedy but to face the inevitable. An account of which I will give in next article.

MISS MARGARET BURKE Describes

Establishment Of Soviets

DEMORALISATION OF RUSSIAN ARMY

Imprisonment By The Reds And A Winter Retreat

(THIRD ARTICLE).

WHEN Lenin reached Russia, his mind was perfectly clear on one point, which was, to overthrow the whole social system and to establish an extreme form of communism. His first great aim was the youth-movement. He mobilised boys and girls from fourteen to eighteen years of age, had them trained for military service, fully instructed in the doctrines of communism. This to him was an important move, one to which he gave untiring attention.

He always said it was the youth that counted. He had no use for older people: if they caused trouble or raised their voices in protest, they should be removed off the earth. Soldiers and officers deserted the German and Austrian fronts, to return and join in the struggle for freedom, even though, exhausted with the hardships of war and the discomforts in the trenches.

Discontent reigned throughout the Nation. The Provisional Government had failed. The soldiers murdered their officers and generals.

The Four Horsemen.

Four horsemen on their chargers rode into the big towns, later dispersing into the interior and remote parts of the country.

One rider professed Atheism, his rallying cry was "What had the Church done for the people in the days of oppression. The second preached hatred, filling the young minds with bitterness and hate for the Cossack, the whip, the jailer, the tax-gatherer and his injustice. The third told the people of a summer replete of pleasure; an autumn abundant with wealth. The fourth spoke of criminal murder, for in his heart there was no mercy; truly he was the rider of "Might."

Lenin was at the helm; Bolshevism was in power. The word Bolsheviki, which means in Russian "majority," was the name given in the year 1903 when the Communists with Lenin's efforts obtained a solid majority and decided to work for open revolution rather than for reform by more peaceful means planned so that with lightning rapidity the whole country was under sway.

Soviets Established.

All private property was at once abolished. The workers, the Trades Unions, and military regiments appointed their delegates, who formed "Soviets" (meaning in Russian, Council). Those Soviets sent out delegates all over the country, even to the most remote places. The peasants who had received their land, wanted to be let alone, work the land in peace, and practise their religion.

For that reason our stay in the country residence was pretty secure. They took over the estate, leaving the owner to live in the house, supplying him and his family with provisions. That came to a close, as there was a constant struggle between the farm-workers and the delegates.

Meanwhile, the troops on the Southern front and the Cossacks formed an army known as the White Army, they pushed on towards the Ukraine, meeting with little resistance until they were well advanced into Little Russia. A strong force of the young New Army moved from Moscow and Petrograd. Agents and spies were busy. Soviet delegates were hard at work giving orders for arrests of suspects.

As the White Army was approaching our place, plans were made to take into custody any persons likely to be in sympathy with the "Whites." One night, at midnight, in the month of October, we were roused up by armed men, about twelve in number. We dressed as quickly as possible, and were then ordered to stand along the wall of the diningroom, while two soldiers stood on guard with their pistols ready.

Prisoner of War.

Others made a careful search for papers and documents, helping themselves at the same time to jewellery or other valuables which they fancied. We looked on in silence, it was not the time for reasoning. When they had finished they took away my pupil's father, and told us to clear out. We snatched a few articles of clothing and left the house, which was set on fire by the soldiers, who shouted in great excitement that it made grand illumination for the "White devils."

The girl's mother, who was almost distracted, decided to follow her husband and make an effort to find out his fate. She told me and the maids to keep together, and seek refuge in the village.

Young and inexperienced, I felt myself faced with a grave responsibility. I could not desert this child, ten years old. My one ambition was to save her from the dangers that surrounded her. We were miles away in the heart of the country, cut off from towns and friends. It was a cold night, with snow on the ground. We groped our way through hedge and ditch, until we reached a little hut, inhabited by an old woman, who in the olden days worked in the service of the family. She was a kindly old creature, and made us feel quite at home. We tried to calm the child, who was by this time nearly hysterical at the thought of never again meeting her father and mother.

We settled down, listening to the thundering of guns, the two armies having a desperate fight. Towards morning there was a lull. We ventured to open the door. Not a soul in sight. We could hear an occasional rifle-shot in the distance, which meant that the troops engaged had either advanced or retreated. I left the child in charge of our kindly hostess, and went out with one of the maids to see what was happening. We were told that the White Army was in possession. We continued on, and, looking towards the smouldering ruins of the house, we saw a few military figures standing by. I quickly made my way to the spot, and to my surprise I recognised one of the officers, who was a relation of the family.

Gregory Rasputin.

He was sorely grieved and worried over my position, and advised me to come and see the Commandant in charge and act on his counsel. I was told that the military situation was critical, as the Red Army had fresh reinforcements.

The Commander made arrangements for the girl and myself, with his mother and sisters, who were also in hiding, to move further south. He gave us military passes which enabled us to travel with the transport corps. I felt relieved, as I hoped in due time to reach Odessa or some other port. We were only a few days on our march when the troops beat a quick retreat. The officers gave orders to go ahead without stopping.

In Full Retreat.

We were on cargoes with loads of rifles, the horses and men were commandeered from the different villages. Those poor fellows, reluctant at being forced away from their homes and families, not much used to warfare, drove helter-skelter, regardless of the holes in the roads, which were like ploughed fields owing to the constant traffic. Our drivers, the fine type of Russian peasants in their big bear-skin coats and fur-caps, proved most considerate to us. They were sorry they couldn't offer us more comfortable vehicles, but we were all reconciled. It was war.

On reaching the big bridge that spanned the river Dneiper, the order for a quick advance was given, we could hear the shells explode and knew the fighting line was closing up to us. There was a big explosion, we were told that was the bridge which we had recently crossed. It was a terrible dash for life. Run we did through that once familiar country with its pleasant memories. It was snowing fast and the cold was bitter. The night was dark.

At last we came to a hamlet, where the officers decided to give the men rest.

They knocked up the inhabitants. On demanding food and shelter, they were informed that there was an epidemic of typhoid fever. In every house there were two or more cases. The men, paying little attention to this, flocked into the cottages and huts, throwing themselves on the clay floors with a sack for a pillow. In a few minutes they were in deep sleep. We thought it better to stay in the open. The officer in charge protested, saying we would be frozen to death. He made inquiries all through the village, until he found one house that was not infected, and we got sitting accommodation on a long, narrow bench.

There was no question of sleep. The women-folk offered us tea, which was most welcome. They were very generous in dividing their rations of food with us. They offered us a bed, which we refused. Being acquainted with the conditions of those houses in remote country places, we preferred to be on the safe side and keep to our wooden bench; we were glad to be under cover.

Among the Urals.

Next morning news came that the troops were to retreat with all speed. A message was sent to us by our friend, giving his various addresses in a town some distance away, where he considered it wise for us to stay, since it was not safe to continue the journey.

This was sad tidings for us, but we acted on the advice given and got to the town which was to be our home for the future years of suspense. We called on the people whose addresses were given us by the officers and explained our positions. They were friendly, giving us shelter for the time. We had arrived in the vicinity of the Ural district, far enough to be cut off from intercourse with the outer world.

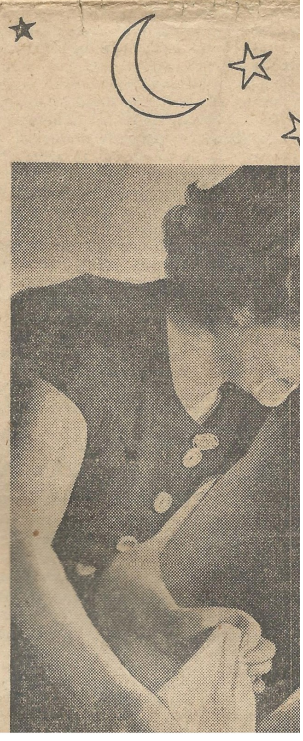
In a short time we learned that the White Army was defeated. We consulted with our friends, who asked us to remain, pointing out the many perils we should encounter. They suggested giving us a furnished room each, free of rent, which we were delighted to accept. There was a motive in that. Once the Soviet reign was established private property was confiscated, the owner of a house was only allowed two rooms and a kitchen for himself and his family. He was obliged to give over the remaining rooms to the people the Soviet delegates wished to send him. To avoid that drastic step, our friends preferred having us in their house.

The decision suited us splendidly; we were not able for much more. We had very little money; that didn't matter in the Soviet reign, for provision-cards were issued and exchange made instead of money. The remote town on the Ural border was visited by the Soviet delegates, who appointed their local "Commissars." We were then living a life of real Red terror; our troubles had begun in reality.

My protégée had braved the storm wonderfully until she realised that there was no chance of finding her mother; she had already believed that her father had met *the same doom as thousands of others.*

Several months had passed; there were no letters coming, and I had no news from home, though I wrote frequently. The letters were not passed through. It can be imagined the anxiety of the dear ones, especially as months ran into years.

In a following note I will tell you how I fared in Soviet Russia; the re-union of mother and child, and my return to Ireland.



MISS MARGARET BURKE Describes

Start Of War On Religion

RED PERSECUTIONS AND TORTURES

Youth Taught To Worship Lenin The Almighty

(FOURTH ARTICLE.)

THE White troops conquered, they fled to the South Seas, where some escaped on foreign ships, others were captured and brutally killed. A few scattered about in hiding, but were finally hunted from their hidden refuge. On one occasion my friends and I went to see the bodies of a group of young officers who had been murdered in a farm close by. We expected to find friends amongst them, and there was an officer who had been so good to us. His face was so disfigured that it was hard to recognise him. Still, the others were worse. Such sights! Their bodies were hacked to pieces.

The peasants gathered, and buried the bodies in a field. I heard they got into trouble over it. A few years later I conveyed the tragic news to our friends' sisters, who had not heard it. Olga (my protege) was not told, being a near relation. Hampered with the heavy burdens that were thrust on her early girlhood, I endeavoured to screen some of the horrors from her gaze. It was not an easy task, for I risked leaving her out of sight for any length of time.

The local "Cheka" had formed groups known as the housing section, the provision centre, the clothing department, and numerous others. To procure a room or any article of clothing or food it was necessary to present one's working card at any of the above, have it stamped, and in due time, after various visits and requests, permission might be granted to obtain the needed object. In more cases than one careful investigation was made to make sure that we had no extra food, not more than a change of linen, a dress or two, and two pairs of shoes and stockings. Those might be worn to a thread; we might plead for a change in vain, because the "Cheka" authorities would only give us what pleased them, and when it pleased them. They had entire control over everything: individuality was solely under their supreme rule. Individuals had become the tools of the State.

Frequently men from the house section went round examining the number of people residing, taking note of each person's occupation. We all had on our doors the paper stamped by this group showing we were fully entitled to the possession of the room. I had two, both stamped by the "Cheka," one signifying that I was a foreign subject, the other giving me liberty to use two rooms—one for teaching and working in. This privilege I enjoyed, being a foreigner. Olga was not supposed to have a room, so she used one of mine. Naturally, we kept quiet on the matter. The poor child used to do the little housework that was to be done—a change for an only child who had enjoyed so many comforts. She bore the brunt, and began to learn that she was to make sacrifices for her poor distressed country.

There were many like her who bravely stood the test, teachers, nurses, and doctors, who went about tending to their suffering people, trying at the same time to preserve a ray of the faith and civilisation, which were being rapidly erased from the minds of the youth. The moment those silent workers were detected they were immediately removed to quarters where they could not survive the conditions.

Any traces of religion and culture that remain in the Russians will be owing to the fearless energies of those untiring individuals, who died martyrs, unknown to the world.

Olga and I met two valuable friends, a doctor and his wife, who devoted their time to the cause. They were exceedingly kind to us in our great distress. Though they took every precaution, they were denounced and were mysteriously removed. We were deeply touched with sorrow, for we had suffered a big loss, as had hundreds of others [illegible] those dear souls. Their one and only thought was to give relief and consolation to body and soul.

Lenin addressing Russians.

Time went on, conditions became more drastic every day, food was getting awfully scarce. Hours would be spent in queues. On many occasions after a long wait in bitter cold, we would be sent away without a crumb of bread. Those pitiful scenes remain forever fresh in my memory: people worn out with untold hardship, badly clad, staggering for want of nourishment, wending their way back to satisfy the hungry, gnawing pang with a drink of hot water. That was our usual remedy. At least, there was relief for a while.

Our life became a mere existence from day to day, glad when one was passed, wondering what the next would bring. Easter was drawing nigh, we were saddened at the thought of no prospects of any religious ceremonies during the festival. The priests were still held captive, though the Roman Catholics, who mostly belonged to a foreign province, sent in petitions for the release of their priest. No responses were given to those appeals. Still they persevered. We prayed hard that the priest would be set free for Easter.

It was a joy when we learned that he might arrive for Easter Sunday. That Easter morning we assembled at the church at a very early hour. We saw the priest with a few friends hurrying along. His face and figure showed a spell of trying conditions. He opened the church door and told us that the sacred vessels would have to be re-consecrated. The congregation waited in silence while the touching ceremony took place. Then all entered, and Mass was celebrated.

That was one happy day in the midst of so many dark ones, and one which gave us new strength to continue on the rugged path. Olga attended Mass with me, and so did many of the Orthodox members. They had news that their priest would not return; it was learned that during the winter months he and a few others were taken one frosty night, stripped of their garments, buckets of cold water thrown over them, their bodies becoming blocks of ice. That was mild in comparison with what others endured.

Many churches in the big towns were closed to the Faithful. They were not destroyed, but used as garages, cinemas, and public-halls. Throughout the country the peasants put up a strong fight for their religion.

So it was that vast nation with its fine race was fast dwindling away and a new generation arising, brought up in absolute ignorance of the Almighty Power above. Their instruction taught them of the supreme ruler, who was "Lenin." He would give them all their needs.

Months and years were rolling by, we were still isolated, there seemed no hope of escape. I sent several messages to different places, where I expected to find friends. There were no replies. The Cheka authorities were again pressing the question of my protege. Affairs had nearly reached a climax. I couldn't see what was to be the end. I pictured the worst—to me, all was lost.

It seems that the blackest day brings a wee bright spot. One evening Olga and I were sitting quietly, pondering over events, when we heard a gentle knock at the door, which astonished us beyond measure. We were so accustomed to the usual kicking at doors or bursting in without any apology, that we paused a few minutes; then I opened the door.

To my great surprise, there was a friend of the family, whom I only recognised by his voice. That man had come from Petrograd on business. He was employed on a transport expedition, so promised Olga's mother he would try and find us. She got one of my messages, but was never able to send me one. In the turmoil that took place when she followed her husband, the soldiers would not allow her to follow. She also got cut away from Little Russia and made her way back to Petrograd, and finally reached her destination to find her home was confiscated. She went to her old mother who lived in a back street.

It can be imagined that woman's state of mind. Her husband held captive or murdered, her child, whose fate was unknown to her, was miles off in a distant spot.

She was obliged to work, so she secured a post as typist. She was able to get enough food, which she had to divide with her mother. The tidings we received with delight, and took no time in planning to work our way to Petrograd. But that was easier said than done. I received the good news in 1921, and not until 1922 were we able to return to Petrograd.

The permissions and passes which were needed to leave one little town to another! Special permits had to be obtained. My Cheka friends said that Olga would be sent back, and I could leave as a foreign subject. Of course, I knew that would not work. Many a visit I paid that "Cheka," until at last I got their consent.

Then I had to face the railway authorities, the housing sections, and hundreds of other departments, in order to secure the required papers for the journey. How many times was I told to call again; what countless calls did I make at the different sections before I received the full sanction of the authorities to leave the place.

There were no travelling expenses, all gratis in Soviet territory.

MISS MARGARET BURKE Describes Her

Escape From Russia

"LENIN THE MIGHTY" SIGNS HER PASS

After Years Of Starvation A Decent Meal Again

FIFTH ARTICLE.

THE day at last came when Olga and I walked to the station, carrying our bundles, with the aid of our friends. Suit-cases had long gone out of fashion; we were all "Comrades," on an equal footing. The eternal wait for the train, which arrived four hours after time. That was pretty punctual, considering people waited days and nights on open platforms to get a train. There were no carriages, but only open coal trucks. We scrambled on one of those, already crowded with passengers, and we were lucky to get room. It was summer, so it did not matter travelling without cover. Discomforts were nothing new in those days. We took a little dried bread with us, for there were small hopes of getting any provision en route.

It took three days to reach Moscow. On the way, we were stopped at every station, our papers examined, re-stamped, fresh ones given, our bundles peered into, lest we were smuggling food supplies into any of the towns. At one station we were hustled out of the train and marched to the "Cheka." There were a few suspects, so all the passengers had to go through the mill. As we were going along to the "Cheka," we passed a spot where the body of a dead soldier lay. He was shot for deserting. A group of women were standing by. When they saw us being marched under arrest they exclaimed, "Oh, they will be tried for the murder of this man, and serves them right." They showered curses on us and all sorts of ill-luck. Cheerful outlook to be accused of murder. However, we passed the "Cheka's" approval, with the exception of a few who were detained.

Night in Moscow.

We were conducted to the train and allowed to proceed on our journey. It was about five o'clock when we arrived at Moscow. What a sight greeted us at the station! Hundreds of people huddled together on the platform, waiting for a train to take them to their destinations. Some of them were there two and three days, lying about on the stone floors, a mass of human creatures writhing in filth and swarming with vermin.

We were told that the train for Petrograd was not due until next morning. That meant that we should spend the night at the station. We had to make the best of it. A few of us foreigners saw that the waiting rooms were locked. We asked the guards to let us enter. They refused, saying we should get a pass from one of the "Cheka" officials, who had his office at the other end. We approached that personage, who tried to be civil when he heard we were foreigners. He stamped a piece of paper, which we took to the guard. We were admitted to one of the waiting-rooms. The door was carefully locked, and there we remained until next morning, when we got our freedom.

Foreigners travelling to Petrograd were taken to the Kremlin, where we saw "Lenin" in all his "Might." He looked through our papers, which he compared with those in front of him. Extraordinary how all our movements for the past few years were kept in full account.

Petrograd Had Changed.

We returned to the station, having special permission to get seats on the train. There was a long wait before the train arrived. A furious dash was made to board it, but the people were pushed back, and only those with passes got in. We were glad to get going again.

The journey was slow, but eventually we steamed into Petrograd station late next morning.

There were no taxis or cabs. A ragged old man helped us to carry our things. The little back street was a good distance. We walked through some of the big streets. What a change! Grass growing on the once well-kept pavements; houses in ruins; an air of neglect swept the whole place. It was midday when we got to the house. The mother, who had just returned for a meal, opened the door. Here I pause, for the reunion of mother and daughter created touching scenes.

Having fulfilled my task the next step was for home. That involved another few months. Finally the documents and papers were stamped, and we could start when there was a train to take us to the frontier of Finland. A few weeks elapsed before the promised train appeared on the scene. We called every day in succession at the Foreign Department, expecting to get news of our departure. At last we were told to assemble at the station on a certain morning at an early hour, and all arrangements would be made for us.

While most of the inhabitants of the city slept, little groups of foreigners of different nationalities were seen tramping the streets and dragging their few belongings with them. Some managed to get a push-cart, on which a lot of stuff was piled, presenting a comical spectacle to those who could see the funny side. On reaching our destination, the Finlandskay Voxhall (Finnish Station), there were several groups scattered about, and a few guards were on duty. We asked them about our train. They simply shrugged their shoulders, made no reply, passed on, evidently thinking it was time we should cease asking useless questions.

About 11 o'clock we were informed that there was no certainty what time the train would come. It might come any time, and then there would be no delay. It was wiser to wait on the spot, and not risk being left behind. We spent the night at the station, and next morning at 10.30 our train puffed in.

Our friends had come to see us off; there were also a few foreign delegates to look after their subjects. There were not many British subjects, about 20 in all. The whole contingent, including the various foreigners, numbered nearly a hundred. There were many sad partings—Olga and her mother were deeply moved. It was hard to leave them behind, considering how closely we had been drawn together within the last few tragic years.

A couple of hours brought us to the frontier; here, the Customs had to be got through. At the station we were told not to leave our places. We were taken in groups to sheds which were erected for the purpose. Our few things were thrown on the ground, carefully examined. No written papers of any description, not even an address were we allowed to take. Then came the personal examination. There were women searchers. This was carried out very minutely and the very hems on our coats and dresses were undone, which, of course, took endless time.

The result was that it was mid-day the following day before we were through with the business. Our guards then came and took us back to the long wooden shed, in a more friendly manner. They told us that a hot meal was prepared for us. That was welcome as we had lived on dry stuff so far.

Freedom At Last.

A row of long wooden tables with benches stood about, no table-cloths, plates thrown here and there. The soldiers carried buckets of soup which they served. They also gave us chunks of brown bread. No use describing the relish. It was filthy. Yet, we were very glad to get it and our guards did their best for us. They had nothing better to offer.

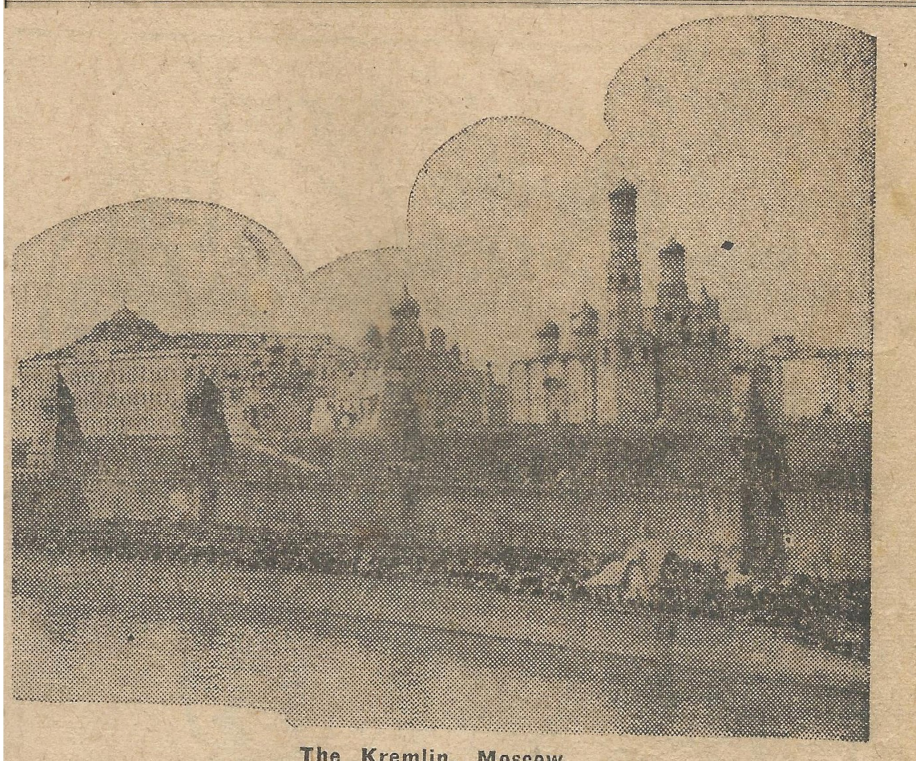
When that was finished we got a cup of black coffee. It might be dirty water. With that a spoon of sugar wrapped in a piece of old newspaper was given to each one.

Sugar was an unheard of luxury, and, naturally, we appeared well pleased and were most agreeable to our convoys, who accompanied us to the little river that separated the two territories. There, we passed on to the Finnish authorities, who were ready to take us to quarantine quarters, where we were subject to strict medical inspection during our stay of 14 days. We were well treated and the catering was splendid. We simply devoured all before us, especially white bread, which we had not tasted for years. Of course we were restricted, as there might have been drastic results. Members of the Consular staffs visited the Centre, bringing parcels to each of their subjects. Telegrams were sent to our different homes, announcing that we were safely in Finland.

Our quarantine term ended, we embarked at Helingsfors on a Swedish steamer, where we got first-class accommodation, and were well cared. We arrived at Hull, and were housed there for a few days, after which we were able to leave for different destinations. I was the only passenger for Ireland. Some of my Irish friends had died in Russia from the hardships they encountered, others made their way to Oriental countries.

It was a happy homecoming that November day, 1923, to find the dear old faces, that I had feared after those years of exile, might be missing, full of pleasure at the return of the lost one.

Here you have in a nutshell bits of my story which if written would fill volumes. I will conclude with a few scraps of my Spanish experience which certainly was not sought for.



The Kremlin, Moscow