

(October 24, 1932)

After-Thoughts on Soviet Russia

BY MR. FREDERICK GRIFFIN.

PRESIDENT CHALMERS:—Gentlemen, to-day we are to have the very real pleasure of hearing an address from one of our own citizens—a gentleman who has achieved a rare measure of distinction in his chosen field, Mr. Frederick Griffin of the staff of the *Toronto Daily Star*, who has achieved the distinction of being one of the leading reporters of the North American Continent. To-day Mr. Griffin comes to give us a descriptive view of Soviet Russia. He is thoroughly qualified to undertake that task because, during the past summer, he has spent a little more than two months travelling across the length and breadth of European Russia. I would let you behind the scenes in modern journalism if I were to tell you how Mr. Griffin came to visit Russia. May-day came on a Sunday when demonstrations of radical workers were held all over the world. Naturally the parades were most important in Russia. Mr. Griffin's managing editor got an idea and when Mr. Hindmarsh gets an idea, as those of you who know Mr. Hindmarsh are aware, it means action in a big way. On a Monday afternoon he called Mr. Griffin and said, "I have an idea for a good story." On Thursday afternoon Mr. Griffin was on his way to Russia. Mr. Griffin filed many despatches, a good many of which have been republished in book form. I had the opportunity of reading the best part of it over the week-end. "Soviet Scene," is published by the Macmillan Company of Canada. The first copy is on sale to-day. I do not know whether that was pre-arranged or a coincidence. It is a very real pleasure to have Mr. Griffin with us on the day his book is published.

It is a good bit of reporting, a remarkable story of what Mr. Griffin saw. Mr. Griffin is a keen observer. I do not think he will attempt to give us an analysis of Russia, but tell us something of Russia as he saw it. Mr. Griffin.

MR. FREDERICK GRIFFIN:—Coming out of Russia, I got, in Poland, the first English papers I had seen in two months with the exception of the *Moscow News*. You may imagine how eagerly I read them. Not that I am going to attempt to describe my reactions to the news in the light of the direct realisms of Russia from which I was just emerging but will merely mention a letter I saw in the *Manchester Guardian*. It was from an English immigrant in Australia, an out-of-work. He wrote with that kind of gaiety the English sometimes assume when things are tough, but he made no attempt to hide, rather did he accentuate, the conditions of the unemployed "down under." He spoke almost with gratitude of the efforts made to care for men out of work. In fact, one might almost have imagined that unemployment was a lark if he had not ended thus: "We can manage and it would not be so bad if there seemed an end in sight. But the trouble is that for thousands of men there can be no hope."

Like a flash that crystallized for me the fact that in Soviet Russia there is hope, a hope based on deeds, a hope based on achievement, a hope based on state planning and a definite social and economic program. I thought of the conditions of the rest of the world, the capitalist world, I mean our world. Four years ago, things seemed fine. We had prosperity by the tail. We had worked out a perpetual formula of bigger and better business, richer dividends, larger fortunes, a continuously higher standard of living. Then came the crash. To-day our world lies sick and, it would sometimes appear, hopeless. Industry is in the doldrums. Production is piled up. Manufacturing is slack. International trade is stagnant. Ships and trains lie idle. Millions are out of work. Our leaders, political leaders and business leaders, their hands tied by conflicting interests, are looking for formulas and panaceas, trying with conferences and words to find a way out—but without

a plan or a program since a plan or a program is impossible. It may be not so much that capitalism has failed as that democracy has fallen down. At least the world presents a picture of acquisitive individualism in misery, if not in chaos. Contrast this picture of our scared and helpless state, like children caught in the dark and crying, with the picture presented by Soviet Russia, a mere fifteen years emerged from Czarism, feudalism, mediaevalism and serfdom, if not actual serfdom, which was abolished about the same time that the American states abolisher slavery, at least economic serfdom of the masses of its people. Russia has awakened. The bear that walks like a man has emerged from his hoary lair, no longer a shambling, witless, stupid, leaderless creature to be mocked, but a youthful, magnificent giant in a red cap who challenges the world, vital, lean, hard, eager, spiritually athletic, throbbing with energy, arrayed with hope, working to the limit to catch up with the handicap of his sleeping years.

Russia, if you will take the word of a newspaperman, is incredible. One does not need to have known the old Russia to realize the change that has taken place. The old basic Russia is still there, visible, measurable on all sides. It was a Russia without education, without freedom, without hygiene, without highways, without developed agriculture, generally without industry or a trained working class, without a system of distribution, without canned goods, refrigeration, modern plumbing, electric power, automobiles, telephones, tooth paste or rayon underwear, with over one hundred million peasants who were in the mass primitive, squalid, barbarous and superstitious.

That is the country which to-day, fifteen years since the revolution came as a climax to its social and economic break-down in the middle of the Great War, during which it had passed through a turmoil of change, civil war, famine, colossal reconstruction, Communist dictatorship and external hate—that is the country which to-day is making the rest of the world, our world, quake in its shoes

The mere fact that our world is so scared of Soviet Russia is the best proof, in spite of anti-Soviet talk, of

what Communism has achieved there. What has Communism achieved and why? And what have we of the capitalist system to fear from its Russian success? I am not going into details of achievement. I wrote nearly one hundred and fifty thousand words of a running record, trying to keep up with the wonder of what I saw during the crowded hours of a two months trip this summer. In brief, one saw that not merely had a vast system of government been created on the ruins of Czarism, of a new and radical nature, with huge departments, terrific centralization and an amazing bureaucracy of control (an army and navy built up) but within the past four years industries have been created and factories had been built and equipped with the most modern machinery in the world.

Fifteen years ago Russia was a vast primitive state in which an archaic government had broken down. Now it is probably the most powerfully governed and disciplined state in the world, in which industry of mammoth proportions has been initiated. Not only has government been stabilized on a Communist basis of philosophy by way of a forceful dictatorship, not only has industry been started on an ambitious scale that threatens to rival that of the most modern capitalist states, but other phases of life have marched in step.

Education has been set in motion with sweeping volume. Universities, technical schools, trade schools for the training of workers, high schools and elementary schools have been set up or existing institutions have been enlarged very greatly. Workers' clubs without end, parks of culture and rest, factory kitchens for the central supplying of meals to workers, nurseries for children, hospitals and clinics, regulations to care for expectant mothers, rest homes, all kinds of insurance and other schemes to ensure the security and well-being of the working man and woman, are among the widespread evidences of change and achievement. It is not merely that these economic, social and political changes have been brought about, but you must remember that they have been brought about on a Socialist or Communist basis that has cut right through the individualist principles on

which our society is founded and on which it has developed and flourished for generations.

Private capital has been abolished and, therefore, private reward in a money sense. The railroads, the mines, the means of production, the factories, distribution, the stores, the making and showing of movies, the theatre, books, newspapers, technical magazines, horse racing, the banks, even advertising and the painting of pictures, have been socialized. And now the dictatorship is in the throes of its greatest effort of all, the attempt to socialize, to industrialize, to proletarianize the land, to wipe out individualism from the farms by a vast state-controlled agriculture and to eliminate the last lingering capitalistic instinct in the breast of the peasant. Such is a brief *résumé* of achievement. Please take my word for it, from the little I was able to see in two months, there *has* been achievement. And it is not a question of whether the five-year plan has been fulfilled to the tractor or the last ton of steel or coal, or whether Communism is going more to the right or left, or whether the Russian is as good a workman as the Canadian, or whether the quality of this or that product is up to the North American or English or German standards, or whether there is suffering, and shortage and discipline.

The fact is that great factories to build automobiles, tractors and agricultural implements, to turn out steel and chemicals and glass have been set up where none existed before, and that tens of thousands of new workers are busy on millions and millions of dollars worth of the finest imported machinery, and that output is an actuality, even if below the flashy and fancy standards of our system which long ago served its apprenticeship. Believe me again, there is imported machinery in Russia of the very latest type. We may refuse to trade with the Communists, but the Americans and Germans, the English and the Italians have not refused. Glance into any factory in Russia and you'll find that out, particularly about the Americans and Germans. An expert in the foreign trade department in Moscow told me that one-fourth of Germany's industrial production last year found a market in the Soviet Union.

When I was coming out of Russia, I had as English-speaking companions on the train as far as Berlin three Englishmen of a very fine commercial type. One was Sir Felix Pole, former head of the Great Western Railway of England, now head of Electrical Industrial Incorporated. The second was a Mr. Lloyd of Lloyd's, the great insurance firm. The third was Mr. C. S. Richards, an engineering expert of Vickers. They had been three weeks in Russia. For what purpose? Trying to sell their electrical and engineering products—and they deplored in no uncertain terms the fact that the Americans and Germans had got such a jump on them. Truly there has been an industrial up-building in Soviet Russia. And yet what amazed me in the Soviet Union was not that industrialization and an attempt at quick mechanization had taken place on such a great scale in Moscow itself, at Nizhni-Novgorod, Stalingrad, Rostov and Kharkov, in Trans-Caucasia—I had expected that, though not to the degree found in effect. What amazed me was that the Socialist idea had been made to work so tremendously in every phase of life and endeavor.

We have in our capitalist states many evidences of socialism. In Canada we find old age pensions, workmen's compensation, mothers' allowances, a state-owned railroad, a state police and post-office system, publicly-owned street-cars and publicly-operated power plants, all running side by side with private and individualist endeavor, but in Russia, no matter what you touch, you find it co-ordinated to the socialist idea. The philosophy of communal ownership and the operation of the people's rule, of a state not run in the interests of a governing class or of privileged classes, but in the interests of the plain working man and woman, may be found applied on all sides. No matter where you go, into a court or a marriage and divorce bureau, in a school, a theatre, a factory, a restaurant or a prison—I mean a prison run on Soviet lines and not one of the G.P.U. prisons, which I did not see and of which I cannot speak, except by hearsay—you find the new principles applied to cut through the approach we have had to life and society, to behaviour and economics which have been, as we all

know, evolved from the viewpoint of private ownership and possessive rights.

In the courts, (and I saw some of them in operation and had the proceedings interpreted for me, so that I understood what was going on as clearly as if I had been up at Osgoode Hall), the mazes of legal argument and the red tape of procedure have been simplified to a degree, and problems are settled on a direct and simple basis of common sense and justice. If a man thieves, if a man commits murder, it is argued he is not so much to blame as society. Punishment is not the prime aim, but redemption. Russia, in this respect, may indeed be called the land of the second chance.

On the other hand, if a man is wilfully dishonest, as an official in a position of trust, or dishonest, as many men have proved in this country, who have, by manipulation of accounts or graft or the financial hoodwinking of clients, stolen large sums of money, they do not go to the penitentiary for two, three or five years, as so many of our more social crooks go, to be released, as often as not, long before their full time is served, but they probably face a firing squad.

Scarcely a week passed during my stay in Russia that the newspapers did not contain news of men of this type, in the Russian sense, of course, who were condemned to be shot. For example, there was an account of corruption in a series of co-operative stores in which a number of men had conspired to divert foodstuffs from the stores and the needy people to sell privately for their own enrichment. There was a string of sentences, two years, three years, five years, and the five ringleaders were shot. This, after a simple process of trial. You see Communism has not merely changed the economics of Russia, in fact, economics generally, as we have been accustomed to them; it has not merely wiped out capitalism and private ownership but has set up new values in life and behaviour generally. That was what amazed me: how, in so short a time, the new view of man has been applied so widely and practically. The prisons, (at least the aim for the prisons, since the system

does not function ideally in this or any other particular) are no longer places of mere punishment and useless detention from which men emerge hard, bitter and more criminal than when they entered, but places of education, redemption and hope. Men are taught trades, and in Russia, remember, the products of a prison do not clash with the products of outside industry and trades unionism as they do under our system, to prevent prisoners from indulging in useful and gainful labor. In Russia a prison is simply a unit of state work like a factory, paying wages for piece-work like a factory.

I was told by the Red Executive of a Moscow correction colony, as this jail was called, that sixty men had left within the past two months and gone into production outside, highly recommended for their skill and therefore welcomed by factories needing trained and skilled help. Thirty of them had almost immediately become foremen. Contrast that with our general attitude towards the criminal who, on release, scorned, branded, refused a job, desperate, is driven back to crime.

As in the courts and prisons, so in the marriage and divorce bureaux, the factories, the schools, everywhere we find the new values. Of course, the schools of the Soviet Union are propagandist in their interpretation of history, literature, geography, even of science, just as our schools are propagandist, but it seemed to me that the Soviet schools have an awareness of life and surrounding society that our schools have not. Instruction is in the terms of the worker, of labor, of the machine, of the state, of the current ideology. Teaching is a practical preparation of the children for an adult existence. I shall not go into the new system as it is found applied in the factories in relation to the worker, since I wrote a lot about that, but I may mention marriage and divorce as an illustration of how the new thought works out in terms of Russia's humanity.

You have all heard of marriage and divorce in Russia as godless, loose and highly immoral processes. I do not need to remind you of the charges, widely broadcast in the early days, that the Soviets had nationalized women. That

was rot. No doubt, in the early days of the revolution there was freedom and even license, but to-day, the Communists, members of the party, I mean, are militantly puritanical. At least, it is worth remembering that the morals of the vast mass of the Russian people were woe-fully different from Main Street standards. Many men, many morals. But what do you find now in Russia? Marriage and divorce have been made the beginning and the end of a simple, human contract. Here again is an expression of the new principles, the new realism. It is not so much that marriage has been taken out of the hands of the church as that marriage has ceased to be governed by implications of property, possession, inheritance, legitimacy and other corollaries of a capitalist system. There is no such thing as an illegitimate child in the Soviet state. Women have absolutely equal rights with men. Children are protected by the state. So that marriage has been reduced to a simple alliance between two people and divorce an equally simple affair of parting. At that, I could not find any evidence that marriage and divorce are any more lightly undertaken than with us or that divorce is even as high in the urban centres as in some states or among sections of society in the United States for example. As for the charge that the home has been smashed by Communism, the home has been changed, no doubt, by the extent to which women work, by the establishment of public nurseries, by the growth of central feeding, by the interests created outside the home—changed possibly for the better, but certainly not smashed. Rather has it been for the proletarian protected and strengthened economically, when compared with what takes place under our system to homes when tens of thousands of wage-earners are thrown out of work, as has happened to-day.

Here I might make a passing reference to the church in the Soviet Union. Freedom to worship is guaranteed under Soviet law as it is guaranteed under our law. The church in Russia is actually much freer and no doubt much less harassed than it is in Mexico. Three years ago I was down in Mexico when the churches reopened after a three

years' interdict, during which every church was closed and in which prelates and priests were driven to the mountains, into hiding, and out of the country. Even when they returned there were severe restrictions. Religious processions were taboo. Priests and nuns might not appear in the streets wearing the garb of their office. No such restrictions are evident in Russia. Churches are open, in Moscow, in other cities. Priests may be seen on the streets, on the trains, on boats, wearing their long, black soutanes. Of course, the churches are taxed heavily and the priests do not look very prosperous, since they have to depend on funds from meagre contributions instead of having at their back vast land holdings, great endowments and the tremendous sale of religious objects, as of yore. Very many churches have been closed, very many pulled down or converted to secular use, first, because of the heavy taxes, second, because of the people's desertion of them, third, because of the active anti-church propaganda of the Communists. In this regard, I offer this observation for what it is worth. The Communists did not destroy the Russian church. The Russian church destroyed itself. It is to-day being paid its debts of mediaevalism and of social neglect of the rights of its people as human beings. It was a shell of formalism, lazy, corrupt, superstitious, linked with exploitation, a mere fact of czarism, fattening itself on the ignorance of the peasants whom it exploited as it had enslaved thousands of them, when the peasants were serfs of the church as the landlord. It crumpled when revolution came because it could not stand up. Since I came home many people have asked me about the church in Russia and I have said this: "Is it not the history of the church that it flourished most when there was persecution? Was not the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church? Suppose there were a revolution in Canada, would the United Church, the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church in Canada, crumple into dust like a decayed fungus?" You know it would not. Why? Because they have a spiritual meaning and a social reality for tens of thousands of people; because, let us hope, they have a living, vital force within. In such a light as

that we must view the success of the Communists of Russia in their drive against religion and in their creation of a public opinion that is against the church, while substituting things that must take the place of it.

That brings me back to repeat that what amazed me in Russia was not the social, political and economic achievements of Communism, but the amazing way in which the principles of Communist ideology had been worked out in the running of this huge, complex collection of peoples and states and applied to every phase of human life and effort. I tried in vain to find out how the academic principles of Karl Marx, written for application in an industrial state, as I understand it, were applied practically as a form of government and a way of society to Russia with its lack of proletariat and with a backward, illiterate peasantry forming the bulk of its people. I have not yet come across a book which even pretends to show how it was done.

Now let me try to measure Communism in Russia as I saw it and the Five-Year-Plan about which we have heard so much in the last four years, and about which so many of us know so little. Outside Russia, people are inclined to think of Communism either in terms of a sinister and evil menace, enemy of every decency and of everything we hold dear; or, as it is exemplified in Russia, an immovable doctrine, which, like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, altereth not. They regard the Five-Year-Plan as if it were the objective of a Community chest campaign. Either it is reached or it is not reached. Not to reach it in any one of a thousand particulars implies failure. And so we find those who wish that Russia were safely back under the miserable rule of the czars, hail every hint of a delay in reaching an objective of the Five-Year-Plan as a sign of distress implying the breakdown of the dictatorship and the failure of the Soviets. This is only the result of unreasonable fear, the father of illogical reasoning. It is also a case of ignorance of the slightest knowledge of the essential fabric of Communist aim and rule.

I do not know what Communism was like in Russia five years ago or ten years ago, but to-day it is undoubtedly a

powerful thing of tremendous idealism. At one time it may have been imposed from the top, but that time is past or passing. During the brief years that have gone since Lenin, Trotzky and the others found themselves, by the sudden rift of the great war and the failure of Kerensky to consolidate what the Bolsheviks call his petty-bourgeois revolution, in power in Russia, and given the chance to work out their ideas of radical proletarian rule, the Communists have undoubtedly done tremendous things to root and stabilize their position, not as a foreign or alien imposition on unwilling people, but as a native, natural, desirable growth that is an expression of the people themselves.

It is trite to say that millions of the present generation have never known any other rule, but it is true. Millions of boys and girls in their teens and twenties have forgotten, if they ever realized, the rule of the czars. Millions have never seen a policeman or a Cossack. A powerful education has been at work, of a mass nature which outsiders can scarcely conceive, to mould the new and growing generation along Communist lines. The Communist party has spread itself and consolidated itself throughout the length and breadth of the land. Communist ideas have infiltrated through the peasantry, into the distant villages beyond the Urals. Once the party was highly selective and jealously narrow in permitting new entries to its ranks. It is still selective, there is a long preparation or candidature and the strictest examination of a candidate's *bona fides*, but it has grown until to-day it numbers two million five hundred thousand members and half a million candidates.

Then there is the Communist League of Youth, the Komsomols, founded just nine years ago. This comprises six million of the most militant, ardent, educated and ambitious youth of the Soviet Union, between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four. It serves as a training school for the party proper and for positions of command and authority. The Komsomols are the shock troops to put across plans, to put into force ideas and aims. They are the spearhead of the new proletariat. Finally, there are nine million youngsters in the Young Pioneers, the juveniles

of Communism, but, as I found in contact, mature in their social thinking and their aims. You have, therefore, eighteen million people, in the main youthful and fanatical, the favored, the cream of the proletarian and peasant society of Russia, vowed and devoted to the cause of Communism to a degree that few adherents of our churches are vowed and devoted. They know Communism as the only way of life and would bare their breasts to support it. In addition, there are millions, not members of the party or its subsidiary organizations, who have been educated to believe in proletarian rule and Communist aims, who have seen Soviet achievements and who would undoubtedly resist a change back to things as they were. It is wrong, therefore, to think of the dictatorship as an absolute tyranny forced on an unwilling people, made to knuckle down only by the Red Army and the secret police. For one thing, what would you offer the Russians, if Communism failed or were taken away? A return to the czars? It is impossible. You have only to read Father Walsh's book, "The Fall of the Russian Empire," without doing any deeper reading—and Father Walsh can certainly not be called friendly to the Bolsheviks—to learn how impossible is a return to those horrible conditions under which the mass of the Russian people suffered for unhappy centuries. That is a thing our fearful people should remember when thinking that Communist revolution may crop up here; they should remember that the rule and fabric of Russia which brought about the upheaval and gave Communism a chance was a very different condition from that which the majority of us enjoy in such countries as this, in spite of its inequalities and shortcomings.

To return to Communism in Russia, we have painted for us as a rule only its disciplines and terrorisms, only its dragoonings and horrors. We do not hear so much of its aims and idealisms, its benevolence and achievements. It has its terrorist side, of course, and it has had its horrors, some of them recent enough, such as the baiting of the engineers and other intellectuals, two or three years ago, the brutal angles to the collectivization of the peasant, the

harsh grain collections by strong armed zealots, the cruel liquidation of the so-called but never defined Kulak, but it also has its benevolences and achievements. Disregarding what is past, just as we have forgotten the thud of the French guillotine and the rumble of the Paris tumbrils since it was part of a bitter, bloody and terrific revolution that was convulsive in its scope, weigh up the benevolences and achievements, the aims, ideals and hopes of the present regime in Russia against all the horrors that may currently be charged against it, all from the viewpoint of the Russian humanity whom it is seeking to raise, and the tale of its horrors will be as chaff in the balance. Weigh the terrors of the dictatorship of Stalin against the terrors of czarism and they won't even begin to tip the pressed down scales. The horrors of the centuries had a long, long start. Communism is not, at least as it is working out in Russia, a narrowly defined conception or program from which there can be no deviation. It is fluid, plastic, realist philosophy, a force which is constantly changing to meet conditions as they arise. It has only one aim really, the setting up of a proletarian society and the establishment finally of a classless state, which involves the complete disappearance of capital as we know it and of what the Communist calls exploitation, but it is not worrying how it reaches its objective. Just because it wishes to obliterate capitalism in Russia, it does not throw overboard all the decencies, conventions and rules simply because these are found also in capitalist states. It is utterly pragmatic. It is thoroughly realist. If a thing works, it is good. If it does not work, something else must be tried, another avenue explored.

And no one must regard the Five-Year-Plan as a final objective to be reached, as we might reach five foot ten inches and then stop growing for the remainder of our lives, but merely the first step in a continuing revolution which has the long objective of proletarianizing the state and of setting up a classless society, which Communists themselves say will take years, if not generations. There will be initiated in January next another Five-Year-Plan, and after that another and another. Really these Five-Year-Plans

are slogan ideas, worthy of our greatest go-getters. They are pep-impulsions, like the exhortations to go out there and die for dear old Varsity. The Communists, being scientific moderns and educated to a degree that would put most of our privileged classes to shame, are psychologists. They have borrowed from the churches, they have borrowed from the war-makers, their formulas of fanaticism and enthusiasm. They know that man must have horizons toward which to strive, if not in this world, in the next. And so they gave them horizons—in this world. They hold out the promise of a better world to live in, here on earth. They hold out not merely the promise, but they show, amazingly, results. Russia to-day, with its lack of hygiene, its rationing restrictions, its queues, its shortage of foods and clothing, its over-crowded urban homes, its poor transportation and inadequate distribution—much of which is inherited from czarism and cannot be laid to Communism—would seem a hideous hades to those of us who are accustomed to the amenities of our enlightened civilization at its best, but with these shortcomings, right through these stringencies, the people of Russia get more than mere flashes of a heaven to come.

And now what have we to fear from the great Communist experiment that is taking place in Russia? So far as fear is concerned, my opinion, for what it is worth, is that we have much more to fear and, at the same time, much less to fear than our fearful ones imagine who have worked themselves into a lather of dreadful nightmare. Personally, I think, so far as the world revolution is concerned, the world has much more to fear and, again, much less to fear in the days of Lenin than in the days of Stalin.

I shall try to explain what I mean. I should like to take parallels for the two men from the early Christian Church but dare not, since to do so might offend many people. But if Lenin was the Moses, Stalin is the Joshua of the Russian people. Lenin was the lawmaker, the prophet, the dreamer, the idealist of the revolution; Stalin is its man of action, its practical, cold-blooded, hard-headed realist. Lenin was the student, the disciple of Karl Marx, the exile who lived

in poverty and who knew the proletariat of Europe, a proletariat which did not exist in Russia. He was an internationalist.

Stalin, the Georgian, who so far as I know only made one short trip out of Russia in his life, who knew little actually about a proletariat until he founded his own in Russia, is a nationalist. He would hate to be called that, no doubt, but every sign points to it. Lenin, finding himself with his theories in power in Russia—frequently, to his dismay, if we only knew the truth—had no particular plan. He had a program but no plan. His program was world revolution. Indeed so far as my limited knowledge goes he did not see how Russia could become a proletarian and Communist state and survive as such unless the world surrounding it became proletarian and Communist. Therefore, he plotted and pottered around and gave the world the “willies”, in those early days when every unholy charge was levelled against the Bolsheviks who were represented to the rest of us as monsters.

To me it seems that the world—Capitalism—missed a big chance in those days through ignorance or lethargy or through its individualistic nationalism, of smashing the Bolshevism which it hated. For again and again its fate, the success and continuance of Communism in Russia, must have hung in the balance. These were the days when Lenin dickered with the Capitalistic idea, when he put into effect his new economic policy, where he allowed more than a measure of private trading, when he really feared that the Communist state could never be achieved in Russia without a general dictatorship of the proletariat throughout the world. These were the days when there was active plotting outside Russia to bring about world revolution, to foster discontent and revolt in other states. Those were the days when there were really active endeavors from Moscow to change and overthrow existing institutions in other countries.

Then came Stalin. My own idea, again for what it is worth, but based on the reactions of what I saw, learned and felt in Russia, is that history will write Stalin down as

a much more significant figure in the Russian story than even Marx or Lenin. Without Stalin I believe that Communism in Russia would have long ago changed into chaos and the world to-day would be as indifferent to its fate at the moment as it is to China's.

Stalin was the man who converted dreams into a plan, who changed a gospel not into a church but into a state. It was Stalin who decided that Communism could survive and succeed within the confines of the Soviet Union even though surrounded by a capitalist world. It was Stalin who determined to drive ahead, not with a world program of revolution, but with a Russian plan. It was Stalin, man of steel, who put steel and concrete into Russian Communism, who gave it an industrial base. It is significant that Stalin, the nationalist, climbed to complete power when he drove out Trotzky, the internationalist, the returned *émigré* who, like Lenin, believed in a world dictatorship of the proletariat.

Stalin, it would appear, is a greater, a more single-minded, a more ruthless and powerful Communist than Lenin or Trotzky; but he is not an internationalist. I have often wondered, if Lenin had lived, whether Stalin might not also have driven him down as he drove Trotzky out. Maybe not. At any rate, my view is that Stalin is no longer a Red; he is a statesman. And so from the standpoint of world-revolution we have very little to fear from him. It was Stalin who really consolidated the Russian revolution on a Communist base when it was floundering around. It was Stalin who decided on industrialization and who initiated the Five-Year-Plan. It was Stalin who endlessly and relentlessly has dictated the policy of a continuing revolution. Where Lenin would have temporized with private trading and where Trotzky would have put off or sidestepped the problem of the capitalist peasant, it was Stalin who boldly and again ruthlessly cut through every phase of capitalism at all cost and started the drive to collectivize and proletarianize the peasant. What does it mean? As I interpret it, the Russian Communists are too interested, too fascinated nationally and emotionally, too involved in the problem of the Soviet Union itself, in the upbuilding of

this industrialist state which they have conceived, in the problem of converting the peasant into a proletarian, in the immediate and tremendous business of creating a new and radical form of society within the boundaries of the old Russian Empire, to care a fig about the rest of the world. If the rest of the world wants to go Communist, all right. If other countries seek to stage revolutions and set up proletarian rule, all right. In the meantime, Stalin, the nationalist, the realist, the statesman, the dictator, is quite content to consolidate his position while doing business with the rest of the world. I firmly believe that Stalin has long since come to the point of doing business with capitalists as we trade with Mohammedans, Chinese or Hottentots, without worrying his head overmuch about their beliefs or behaviour.

An illustration here might be taken from the church. Nineteen hundred years have passed since missionaries were exhorted to go out into the world and preach the gospel. They have been doing so and yet vast sections of the world remain unconverted. Why? You know the answer. You know that any Canadian church body is much more interested in preserving its own fabric and the welfare of its own people than in all the heathen who ever lived. You know that a particular church in Toronto is much more interested in its debt and its membership, its choir and its young people's picnic than in all the pagans in Asia. So it is with Russia. You meet no animus as a bourgeois or member of a capitalist society, from the Russian Communist. Rather do you meet pity and sympathy as from a superior people, such as we Canadians and Christians would offer a poor Hindu or a laundryman who believes in Confucius. In this regard, I felt that Russia was quickly evolving a superior people, superior I mean, in the sense that the Germans were superior in the old days of arrogant *kultur*.

Millions of young Russians are being brought up to believe that theirs is the only way to live and that those of us who are exploited by masters are inferior and to be despised. Whether this holds a kernal of trouble within a

generation or so, whether Communism turns imperialist, I am not competent to discuss. Maybe not, since Russia certainly needs no territory. At any rate, Communists there, when you talk to them, maintain that they seek neither land, markets nor subject peoples.

Christianity is essentially pacifist in its teachings but that did not prevent Christian nations from piracy, slavery, cut-throating and conquest. It did not prevent the church itself from using the rack and the stake to convert heretics. What the future holds for Russian Communism along these lines it is impossible for me to say, but I do not think that Russian Communism, even when the Soviets feel safe, secure and assured, will seek to proselytize with the sword or the bomb. That, of course, has nothing to do with the attempts of local Communists in various countries to stage revolutions of their own. All that I believe is that Moscow has ceased to exist as a centre of world revolution. I know that in my two months in Russia I did not hear the Third Internationale mentioned once. That, as I have said, is not what the capitalist system or capitalist countries have to fear from Communism as it exists in the Soviet Union.

A few years ago a certain Toronto church was frequently in the news as a cockpit of strife and reporters were often assigned to its services to cover its pastor's outpourings. One night a man from *The Star* was present as a war correspondent when an earnest seeker of souls drew near. "Are you a Christian?" she asked in a whisper. "No," was his reply, "I am a newspaperman."

In this matter of the Soviet Union I am a newspaperman. I am merely an observer, an onlooker from the sidelines, outside the pale of dogmas and -isms. I am not a Communist; I am not a Bolshevik. I am merely a working newspaperman, and it is on what I saw as a newspaperman that I say this to you: The Capitalist system may not need to fear the belligerent or revolutionary aspects of Communism, or the petty Reds whom we throw in jail. What it does need to fear—if fear is the correct word—is the success of the Communist experiment in the Soviet Union.

All the red herrings of talk about terrorism and starva-

tion cannot much longer obscure the realities which exist in Russia to-day. I tell you that over there in Russia are taking place, have taken place, in that vast, rude laboratory of humanity, changes so vital, so big, so fundamental in the matter of man's relationship to man, in the matter of man's relationship to property and possessive rights, in the matter of man's relationship to state, in the matter of man's relationship to the machine, to work, to art, to God, that they will affect every one of us, sooner or later; they will affect humanity and history. When one sees what has been achieved by way of change in the past fifteen years on top of the great war, revolution, civil war, famine and general deprivation, the mind halts, thinking of the course of the next fifteen or twenty years—unless Communism falters or fails, and honestly, I cannot see how it is going to falter or fail in Russia, unless its economics should prove all wrong.

The revolutions of the past, mere political upheavals which kicked out a king or an aristocracy but left the social and economic system largely untouched, were fly-specks on the face of time compared to the dynamic, dramatic nature of the continuing revolution which is taking place in Russia. That is the view of a mere newspaperman who is neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet and who does not care greatly whether you believe him or not. This, at least, I do know: My views do not matter; your views don't matter. . . Your views or my views will not change the facts of Soviet Russia one iota or alter the course of the Communists there by a hair's breadth. Your fear or my fear, your hatred or my hatred, should not blind us to the facts. Gentlemen, I have sought to speak not as a visionary or a theorist but as a dealer in facts. What is happening over there in Russia is not fable, but history. All I know is this, if I had written differently from Russia—given as I was by *The Star* absolute freedom to write the facts as I found them—I would have been recreant in my duty to my paper, recreant in my duty to its readers and recreant in my duty to myself.

PRESIDENT CHALMERS:—Gentlemen, I should like to

let you into one little secret. This is the first public address Mr. Griffin has ever made. Gentlemen, it has been a very real privilege to have had him here and I think we have done ourselves a good turn in inviting Mr. Griffin to address us. We thank him.