Chapter Two

The Promised Land

When the Danish vessel, the *Friedrich VIII* finally took off in the late spring of 1931, Moishe Wolofsky and his pal weren't even aware of its destination. How they ended up in Russia is a story in itself. How they became converted to communism over there is yet another.

The Adventurers

25 April, 11 am. The *Friedrich VIII* slowly steamed out of New York harbour. The ship’s band played:

*My native land, my country dear,*  
*Where men are equal free!*  
*To thee each morn, new hope is born,*  
*Sweet Land of Liberty!*

The boat moved up the Hudson River to the Atlantic Ocean, stopping briefly in Halifax. Moishe was worried that his father might be there to intercept and bring him back to Montréal. He was still a minor then — 20 years old. Moe, 21, felt safer. They decided not to leave the boat. In a few hours the ship cut its way out of the harbour and headed across the North Atlantic to the Old World. They quickly discovered that washing dishes for third class passengers was not much fun. Neither was getting seasick, and seasick they were the first day out. Only when they finally crawled down to the bow of the boat to their sleeping quarters did they notice the other twenty or so work-their-ways on the boat. Mostly Danes and Germans under deportation orders for being public charges, they washed out toilets for the crew. Washing dishes seemed almost pleasant by comparison!
First port was Oslo, then Copenhagen. That’s where they signed off. When a Danish immigration officer asked where they were going, without thinking Moishe blurted out, “Berlin, Berlin; we’re going to Berlin.” Even then they had no particular destination.

Hitch-hiking across Funan island and ferrying from island to island, they arrived on the mainland and crossed over into Germany, sleeping in fields and barns all the way. When they got to Hamburg, they decided to indulge in the luxury of a regular bed. Thinking they were British sailors, a policeman steered them to a brothel. When, with difficulty, they explained that all they wanted was a room, they were ushered upstairs. Having heard of such places and being frightened of what might happen, they shoved furniture up against the door. Scared of intruders, they learned too late that some intruders were already inside the walls, for when they finally flopped into bed, they were attacked by fleas. “Don’t worry about them, Moishe, just get them in your fingers and flick them off,” his partner advised.

That’s what they did, but it was a miserable night and the next morning they decided to get back on the road to Berlin. On the road they usually ate a little wild bulb plant that smelled like garlic — wild garlic they called it. In towns and villages along the way they found themselves treated as visitors by the local officials who offered them a place to sleep, usually a barn, and a meal of sausage and bread. With their khaki breaches, high boots, knapsacks, books, long hair, and tans they looked the part of student adventurers. “Believe it or not,” Bill told me, “I read The Descent of Man and The Origin of the Species while hitch-hiking through Europe. It was the most reading I’d ever done. It was Moe’s influence that got me to read those books.”

By now the two travelers had formulated rough plans. They would work their way around the world. From Berlin they would head towards Paris, from Paris to Spain, on to North Africa, and from there to Palestine and maybe to India and even China. Fate had other things in store for them.

Berlin

A chance meeting at a railway station in Berlin where they had spent the night on benches was about to change the course of their lives. That morning they attracted the attention of two young men who invited them to breakfast. Actually, the two young men, apparently knowing no German, were having trouble ordering their meal. Moishe offered to help and they struck up a conversation. It turned out that they were American. Amazingly, one claimed to know of Wolofsky Sr. and The Adler, although Moishe thought he detected a note of contempt in his voice. Moe joined the two
Americans in a discussion of the relative merits of Norman Thomas, J.P. Morgan and Morris Hilquit, names that Moishe had never heard. They were exchanging anecdotes about their travels and where they were headed when one of them volunteered that if they were looking for jobs, there was only one place in Europe they would find them.

"Where's that?" Moe asked. "Russia, and that's where we're going," one of them answered. "They're short of workers there. I'm an engineer on contract. My companion here," pointing to the man who knew of The Adler, "he's a journalist with the Yiddish Freiheit from New York."

"I looked at Moe and Moe looked at me," Bill recalled. "Why don't we, I asked. Russia was just a place for a job. I thought Marx was the dictator of Russia. That shows what I knew about Russia. I didn't know from nothing. The Americans said just go to the Soviet Embassy in Berlin and tell them you want a visa. After they left us and got on the train, we discussed the situation. Moe, he knew something, and he hesitated. I was more adventurous but he understood more. On the other hand, in many ways I was the leader. In any event, we decided to try the Soviet Embassy. The clerk at the Embassy asked us why we wanted to go to the USSR. 'To work and travel,' we answered. They told us our visa application would take several weeks to process so we arranged to have them sent to Warsaw."

When they left the Embassy they decided to take a trip to the southern part of Germany and ended up in Breslau. The German language course Moishe had taken at Columbia came in handy. So did the little Yiddish he knew. Moe, it turned out, did not pick up new languages well at all, so Moishe had to translate for him. Both wrote home regularly and Moe, or Dick Steele, as Moe would rename himself, kept a journal. Remnants of Dick's letters and journal have survived to supplement Bill's memory of the trip.

"All along the highway," Dick wrote home, "we meet German youths on bicycles. Young lads, mostly unemployed, just vagabonding their way from one end of Germany to the other without a cent in their pockets. Some of them took the trouble to initiate us into the art of begging."

"It is fiercely hot. We expect to reach Breslau the next evening, a distance of 60 kilometres. But what is this? Huge police trucks, packed full with Germany's keepers of law and order, armed to the teeth with rifles and bayonets, truck after truck, all speeding to Breslau. In two days, Saturday night, 150,000 Storm Troopers are expected to gather in Breslau for a demonstration."

When they arrived the next day, they noticed a big crowd standing around a monument in the central square of the city listening to speeches. As they approached they heard something about "the Scotsboro boys" and the "injustice of the capitalist courts of America." In April nine young blacks
Bill Walsh

had been arrested in a freight train near Scotsboro, Alabama, convicted of raping two white women, and were sentenced to the electric chair. Nothing had so dramatized the issue of civil rights since the American Civil War. The two Canadians had lived for over two years in New York, but they seemed to be the only ones in that crowd in Breslau who knew nothing about the Scotsboro boys. While they stood and listened to the speech, a young man slid up to them and asked who they were. "We're American students on Wanderschaft." They called themselves Americans all through their trip, because most of the people they met in their travels knew nothing of Canada and they got tired of explaining.

"Where are you going?"
"To Russia."
"To Russia, comrades," he shouted exuberantly to the others.

He ran up to the speaker and interrupted the proceedings to tell him that there were two American comrades in the crowd. A brief intermission while the chiefs conferred settled the matter. The chairman announced that the American comrades would tell the audience first-hand about the Scotsboro boys and capitalist injustice. The two "comrades" looked at each other in horror.

Just at that point the forces of Fascist reaction came to their aid when a squadron of mounted Storm Troopers charged the meeting and disbursed the crowd. In the ensuing confusion the man who had first spotted them grabbed them and shouted "come with me." They raced after him to what turned out to be his home. Despite his youth, Willy Scheer was one of the leading Communist officials of Breslau. That night, after a frugal dinner, he gave his guests their first lecture on the subject of the rise of Nazism.

"I don't know what you know, and what you don't know," Scheer began, in a relaxed but serious fashion, sucking his pipe, "but the German economy never really recovered after the war. You must know about the crazy inflation — our currency was completely worthless not so very long ago — and the unrealistic reparation payments. And then the depression. It hit us hard. No wonder that the National Socialists, Hitler's party, polled over six million votes last September. We have heard they have 800,000 members. Hitler is their Napoleon. They support him all the way. Do not doubt that, my friends." He paused, sat back, re-lit his pipe, puffed some more, then leaned forward to pick up his narrative. A new hardness entered his voice.

"The crisis is coming. It will be here soon. And what are the social democrats doing about it? Nothing." A gesture of the hand. "They form the largest party of the working people and they do nothing. An inept and gutless bunch. Their vacillation paves the way for fascism. We can count on nothing from them." The words spat out. Eyes ablaze, face tight, he put
down his pipe and jabbed his finger at the guests. "This will be capitalism's last stand. Fascism is a psychic dunghill raised to shore up a decrepit economic system. But the working class will destroy their dunghill. We have traitors in our midst — as I mentioned — the social democrats. The main concern of these petty bourgeois is to do things according to the letter of the law. They refuse to join with us to mobilize the workers and so invite the fascist vermin and their brown shirts to rule over us. We will defeat these misleaders, and the Nazis, too."

Scheer stopped now, stood up and walked to the window. Looking back at the two entranced young men, he saw that he had totally captured his audience. It was in the course of this discussion that Moishe discovered that, "Moe understood things that I didn't know about. I barely knew about socialism, let alone national socialism. I knew they were against the Jews and that's about it. But Moe, he knew enough to ask 'what are the Communists going to do about the Nazi demonstration planned for Breslau in the next few days.' Now I hadn't picked up anything about a demonstration, let alone that Communists should do something about it."

"I'll tell you what we're going to do," Scheer answered Moe's question as he pulled out a handful of firecrackers. "When the horses come along we're going to throw the firecrackers under their bellies and make them dance. That's what we're going to do."

Moe wrote about the demonstration in his letter home. "Towards evening we followed the crowd to the Stadium. The streets were jammed with marching troops. There was an air of grimness to the black shrouded flags. We took our place among the spectators in the immense stadium. The skies clear — only one cloud, a square, queer looking thing, shaped like a sphinx — mighty and silent. Thoughts of the Apocalypse, of the rider upon the white horse smiling ironically to himself, the skeleton of death, looking down upon the multitude waving and shouting in the name of Mars and Misery. I too look and I see 70,000 spectators shouting encouragingly to a field peppered with Storm Troopers. As the flag brigade, in a continuous stream, goose-step their way past the spectators — black, white and red — a thousand flags in formation, 70,000 voices shout out: 'Deutschland Erwacha,' and hands are raised in fascist salute. The band plays a hymn and in deep voice the thousands sing: 'Deutschland, Deutschland Uberalles, Uber Alles in der Welt'."

Speeches and fireworks follow until finally the tired patriots return home to rest for more celebrations the next day. "We turned away sick with the sight of this nationalistic ecstasy — fascism."
The next day the duo started their journey to Warsaw where they had arranged to pick up their visas. "We were hungry as we entered the the little village of Jordansmuhl in Germany," Moe wrote in his journal. "After a moments inquiry we discovered the Catholic Pastor's house. BEGGARS and PEDDLERS, 2-4 p.m., it said on the door. We knocked and five minutes later were sitting at the beggars' table in the garden."

From village to village they slept in barns or hostels for unemployed workers. After a breakfast of black, sugarless coffee and a slice of bread, they volunteered three or four hours of work to pay for their room and board before moving on to the next village. Worried that they would use up too many of their few remaining dollars on train tickets, they purchased bicycles though Moe had never learned how to ride one and promptly smashed his into a ditch. Moishe carried him on the handlebars of his bicycle but before long they were forced to abandon it too when its tires burst. A military truck finally gave them a ride into the city. The date was 6 July.

When they picked up their visas at the Soviet Embassy they were handed a cable forwarded from the Soviet Embassy in Berlin. It was from Moishe's mother: "DO NOT GO TO RUSSIA STOP TROUBLE THERE STOP COME HOME STOP WILL PAY FOR TICKET STOP."

In their letters home they had conveyed their intention of going to Russia, giving the Soviet Embassy in Berlin as their last address before departure. By now they were fully committed to the Russian trip and they shrugged off the message. In Warsaw they used five of the remaining 25 dollars to purchase railway tickets. Soon they reached Stolpski, the last town in Poland before the Soviet border. As it was only 7:00 in the evening, they immediately set out for the border, a few miles to the east. Half an hour later, rifle shots shattered the evening's silence as they followed a path that led into the woods. Moishe felt something slam his knapsack and knock him over. They found themselves face to face with three uniformed, and very surly Polish soldiers.

"Passports, passports, show us your passports," one demanded in Polish, then in German when he got no response. Knees shaking, the adventurers turned their papers over to these hulking border guards. They found themselves being shoved forward, through the woods, across railway tracks. Guards stopped them, pointing the way to the border crossing a few hundred yards down the way. But before letting them go one of them shouted "You don't go to Russia. The Communists will kill you." "That soldier over there will kill me?" Moishe asked, pointing to a member of the Red Army straight ahead of them. "We'll take a chance."
"As we walked ahead," Bill would remember, "we spotted a wooden structure. Later on I learned what it said: COMMUNISM SMASHES ALL BORDERS. When we approached the soldier with his long Russian greatcoat, he laid his rifle down on the track, opened his arms wide and put them around both of us, saying something we took as 'Welcome.' This was our first contact with a Soviet person and of course it was very encouraging."

For members of the Red Army Patrol, none of whom had ever been fifty kilometres beyond their village, the young foreigners were a very special attraction. As luck would have it, one of the men was Jewish and through him they were peppered with questions in Yiddish. "Who are they? Where do they come from? Why have they come? One of them fetched a world globe as Moe pointed out Canada to them. How did they get across the ocean? How did they make their way through the continent? How did they end up in this village of Negerolye?"

"It turned dark. Someone brought meat patties, potatoes and some bread. 'I'll never forget that evening,' Bill later said. We were there for three or four hours. They sang 'The Internationale' for us and asked us to sing our national song. We sang 'O Canada' and 'Allouette'. Then out of the clear blue a freight train which had just crossed the Polish border pulled up within a hundred yards of us and we were put aboard. We arrived in Minsk the next morning. That was 13 July 1931."

**Revolutionary Russia**

It was nearly fourteen years to the day since the Bolsheviks seized power. According to Marxist theory, the revolution was supposed to occur in the most highly developed of capitalist countries, ruptured by internal contradictions of a mighty productive machinery whose endless flow of material goods could not be absorbed by a narrow consumer base limited by class-ridden social structures. The industrial proletariat, the only oppressed class with the power to halt production, would be the agency of revolution and its political organization would finally seize state power. So much for theory. Russia of 1917 was capitalism's economic backwater, comprising mainly of peasants only recently freed from centuries of serfdom. Its industrial revolution had barely begun, and its industrial proletariat was miniscule and poorly organized.

Russia had a long history of social and political revolt. Conspiracies and murders were regular means of eliminating opponents from unpopular local officials to mad or ineffective Tsars. Opposition groups included revolutionary leaders speaking for an as yet unorganized peasantry, westernized intellectuals determined to transform Russia into a democratic and
liberal state, and socialists voicing the demands of the new industrial proletariat.

Russian socialism initially found expression in the Social Democratic Workers' Party founded in 1898 at a secret meeting at Minsk. It quickly split into two competing camps. One camp, subsequently called the Mensheviks, or minority, and headed by Martov, advocated an open European-style party which any adherent to the party philosophy could join; the other camp, subsequently called the Bolsheviks, or majority, and headed by Lenin, advocated a disciplined and highly centralized organization clearly more suited to the illegal environment in which it was forced to work.

No one anticipated the extent of demoralization after Russia's humiliating military defeat at the hands of tiny Japan in 1905. Matters came to a head on 9 January of that year, subsequently known as "Bloody Sunday," when a petition of grievances was presented to Tsar Nicholas II by a large delegation in the city of St. Petersburg. The delegation pleaded for a democratic Parliament, universal suffrage, free speech, recognition of trade unions, and an end to the war with Japan. Instead, as they approached the Winter Palace in the thousands, flourishing holy icons and portraits of the Tsar and singing "Our Father," they were met by a company of galloping Cossacks who proceeded to massacre them. "Bloody Sunday" was immediately followed by a wave of sympathy strikes in several cities, leading finally to a general strike, a peasant revolt, and the final act of the 1905 Revolution, the December Uprising, when the workers of Moscow took up arms against the authorities. The rising was eventually crushed, although disorder continued through 1906 into 1907. For the Bolsheviks, who had led the December Uprising, it served as a rehearsal for the seizure of power in 1917.

At first, the Revolution that broke out in Russia in March 1917 looked like a re-enactment of the events of 1905-6. Once again a war had fatally weakened the government. Once again the uprising was spontaneous and both government and revolutionaries were taken by surprise. But there were important differences as well. Among them was the fact that Russia had experienced an industrial boom over the previous dozen years, giving rise to a much larger working class that was already flexing its muscles with two million on strike in 1914.

By the end of February 1917, nearly a million soldiers had deserted, and tens of thousands of striking workers, joined by students and army officers, were parading in the streets of Petrograd, carrying revolutionary banners and singing revolutionary songs. By 19 March, 200,000 industrial workers, half the labour force of Petrograd, were on strike, and tens of thousands of soldiers had flocked to the Revolution. The Tsar abdicated on 15 March.

At first, the Bolsheviks did not aspire to governmental power, partly because its leaders held to the commonly accepted view that Russia was not
ripe for a socialist revolution, only a democratic one, and partly because they doubted their capacity to govern. In January of that year, a discouraged 46 year old exiled Lenin had told a Swiss audience he doubted whether he would live to see the coming Revolution. But on 3 April, after a ten-year absence, he speedily returned to Russia to take hold of his drifting party, shocking the assembled crowd of party faithful at the very moment of his arrival at the Finland station in Petrograd: “The Russian revolution has begun and opened a new epoch,” he declared. “Hail the world-wide socialist revolution.”

In October the decision was made to prepare for an armed insurrection: “The position is clear,” Lenin declared. “Either a Kornilov dictatorship or a dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest strata of the peasantry.” The insurrection proper began on 7 November and was successfully completed when the Petrograd Winter Palace fell to the Bolsheviks on 8 November. A week later they had triumphed in Moscow. Wherever the Bolsheviks already held a majority in the local Soviet, power passed to them with little difficulty. Not so in outlying regions where armed skirmishes frequently broke out over the next several months.

The whole of the Ukraine had fallen to Germany’s invading forces and the Bolshevik leaders signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty yielding the Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, and the eastern half of Poland to Germany and her allies. In the spring of 1918 Russia was invaded by several of her former allies in the War. While Japan sought territorial gains, the British, Americans, and French more concerned that a Soviet victory might pave the way for workers’ revolutions in their own countries. When the Germans surrendered to the Allies on 11 November 1918, Russia repudiated the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty and moved into the ceded territories. But it was the end of 1919 before Soviet victory was more or less secured in a civil war waged by so-called White troops representing the owners of large landed estates and supported by remnants of Allied forces.

Immediately upon seizing state power the Bolsheviks nationalized land, banks, and shipping, and soon thereafter all factories employing more than ten workers. Dispossessing landowners and capitalists was a popular move among the mass of people. But the total destruction caused by the World War, followed by the chaos of the civil war and further scarcities due to the Allied blockade of Soviet Russia, meant that production levels collapsed and money lost all value. Soviet authorities resorted to direct orders, requisitioning materials and food supplies, and draconian labour laws. Rationing and barter arrangements soon replaced market prices and money as a system of exchange. Strikes and growing protests, especially among the suspicious peasantry, were met by brutal force and all opposition was banned. This system, known as War Communism, could only be a short
term solution to the terrible conditions following the Revolution. In 1921 it was replaced by the New Economic Policy (NEP) which was to last eight years.

NEP began as a series of measures to win back support of disenchanted peasants and increase agricultural production, which had fallen to disastrous levels. Private ownership (or leasing arrangements) was restored for all but the largest and most essential industries, excessive regulation and centralized controls were removed, unrestricted competition and what was called "commercial principles" were restored in all sectors of the economy. The NEP was successful in achieving what it set out to do, but it was viewed as a temporary retreat, and at the end of 1928 it was brusquely reversed when a full-scale campaign against the despised kulaks (rich peasants) was launched and the drive towards forced collectivization got underway.

In the interim, Lenin's death in 1924 was followed by bitter internal Party struggles for power. In the last few years of his life Lenin had become aware of Stalin's ruthless character. In a sick-bed testament he wrote that Stalin should be removed from his position as General Secretary of the Party. Stalin managed to keep this testament secret and it was only formally published in the 1960s.

As General Secretary, Stalin was responsible for the selection of Party personnel and was able to secure a majority for himself when it came down to a showdown with Leon Trotsky and other leading rivals. In 1927 Stalin succeeded in having Trotsky expelled from the Party and exiled to Kazakhstan. From there Trotsky was deported and hounded from country to country and except for his writings and the loyalty of small groups of devoted followers, fell into historical oblivion. In 1940 he was murdered by an agent of Stalin in Mexico. With Trotsky out of the way, Stalin managed to eliminate other rivals until he had total control.

The hoped-for revolution in the highly industrialized west never did occur and Stalin declared that the Soviets could establish "socialism in one country." This was an impossible task. The socialism of Marx always presumed a society where a high degree of abundance had already been achieved. In the Soviet context where the first priority was to complete the industrial revolution, the socialist revolution was bound to be distorted.

In the summer of 1931 when Moishe Wolofsky and Moe Kosawatsky stumbled into Russia, the First Five Year Plan was barely underway. In no time at all they were caught up in its drama.
Factory Workers

It was early morning when they arrived in Minsk, capital of Belorussia. People were already moving about. Banners spanned the streets and buildings were covered with posters celebrating the ninth anniversary of the liberation of the White Russian Republic when the last foreign troops were chased out of the Soviet Union in 1922. They followed the direction the peasants were moving in with their produce and ended up in a central market place. It didn't take long for them to be noticed. Knickers, books, knapsacks, and long hair made them obvious strangers. Walking to the different stalls they stopped when they heard Yiddish being spoken. As they would find out later, Minsk had a very large Jewish population. Finally one of the townspeople led them towards a newspaper office whose walls were decked out with red streamers. The slogans read: "Workers of all countries, Unite!" and "Workers, knowledge is power!"

Inside, their guide sought out a young woman who addressed them in German. They introduced themselves to Emma Bumberg, assistant editor of the regional newspaper, Kolkhoznie Belaruss, "The White Russian Collective Farmer." Emma Bumberg took charge. She brought them to her flat on Karl Marx Street, near Lenin Avenue, where she lived with her mother and child. That evening they enjoyed their first home-made meal in months. Emma, they learned, had just recently arrived from neighbouring Latvia. A dedicated Communist, she was amazed to hear that her new friends were not. She found them hopelessly uninformed.

The next day Emma picked them up at the hotel where she had arranged for them to stay and took them for a tour of the Zavad Vorishilov metal work factory, the biggest factory in the White Russian Republic. Mostly it built parts for machine tools, tractors, combines, and other agricultural implements. They met the factory director, the Secretary of the Communist Party, and the head of the trade union, the triumvirate that ran the factory in accordance with the targets set out in the Five Year Plan. Each had their function, they were told, though as Bill recalled many years later, "It wasn't until I went back to the Soviet Union forty years later when I could ask the proper questions that I really recognized the very distinct functions of the trade union in the Soviet Union and just how little they had in common with trade unions in our country."

While Moe had worked at the Union Carbide chemical plant in New York, for Moishe it was a new experience since he had never seen the inside of a factory. "I remember that we gathered around one worker's grinding machine and he was explaining this machine," Bill recalled. "Emma translated into German and I translated the German into English for Moe. While we were there somebody came and brought him a litre of milk and this guy,
Alexie was his name, turned off his machine and sat down and drank it, and the other people who had gathered around applauded him. He got to drink the milk because metal grinding was considered to be unhealthy work. The workers asked us how this factory differed from factories in America. We couldn't tell them much, but we put on the best show we could without lying to them. We said it looks like a good place to work, the kind of place we'd like to work in. After Emma translated this for them, I asked, 'What did they say?' They said 'why don't you work here. You could start right away.'" And that's what they did.

There were thousands of foreign engineers and skilled workmen in Russia, brought in to design and build new plants, install equipment, train and supervise illiterate peasants. A few were working at the Zavod Vorishilov metal works. Many Russian engineers and skilled mechanics were sent to the United States to study American assembly-line production firsthand. Moishe Wolofsky and his pal were among the few foreigners who had come to Russia to work as unskilled factory hands!

They worked as metal grinders starting off at the bottom of the pay scale. What they lacked in skill they made up for in enthusiasm and effort. In the summer of 1931, the first Five Year Plan was barely two years old. It was an ambitious plan, overly ambitious. Already many industries had fallen behind schedule. The new collective farms required at least a quarter of a million tractors and an enormous mass of other equipment to supplement what little was available. At stake was the collectivization program and the very future of the Revolution itself. At least that's the message the plant secretary repeatedly delivered to the workers. He implored, cajoled, and pressured them to produce. Poster charts recording production for the day and for the week, lined the plant walls.

The plant operated twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Bill recalled that when work stoppages occurred, which, due to fuel shortages, happened quite frequently, the workers sat around and sang songs. If not all of them were caught up in the spirit of production, the two Canadians soon were. Frequently they worked two shifts, on occasion even three, Bill claimed. They competed with each other to see who could work faster and better. In fact, Bill competed so strenuously that he was criticized by the Party secretary for "bourgeois individualism."

Bill recalled an incident in the factory that left a deep impression on him. "One day, as I was discussing something with my instructor, a White Russian, I happened to pull some money out of my pocket. 'You've got money like a Jew,' the man sneered. The remark must have been overheard because the union charged him with anti-semitism and put him on trial. He was found guilty and sent to rehabilitation school for a month."
They were all caught up in the campaign launched by Stalin and carried through the press, film, theatre, and radio extolling the "heroes of the production front." The Revolution glamorized the industrial worker the way some countries glamorize their movie stars, soldiers, or athletes. The state flattered, nudged, pushed, and bullied to get workers to give their all. When propaganda failed to move them, other methods were used. Highly graduated wage scales and piecework systems mushroomed. Special rewards — a trip to Moscow, a rest house in the country, a sum of money — were offered for extraordinary effort. The state encouraged "socialist competition" between plants. Strict discipline, almost military in style, became the order of the day. Authority was gathered into a few hands. Workers who talked back to the manager or to the party boss in the plant, or who misbehaved, received fines and suspension for days, weeks, even months.

The local press showered winners with public praise. Its images were the images of a nation at war. They spoke of industrial fronts, agricultural fronts, battles for grain, and for meat, struggles against shortages of coal, steel, cotton, tractors. They spoke of shock brigades, discipline, campaigns, and of duty, traitors, and heroes.

Nobody before had ever promised lowly Russian peasants and workers anything. Now, far off in the distance to be sure, a bright, glowing dream of a beautiful life was held up for them, a dream in which they could all share — if only they worked hard enough for it. In the meantime, though their life was harsh, food scarce, and clothing almost unobtainable, it was no worse than before — but now they had something to look forward to.

The evidence that something new was happening was unmistakable. Entire new cities were being built to mine and develop new minerals. Everywhere new factories were going up, miles and miles of steel rails were being laid, and thousands of miles of highways. There were massive new hydroelectric dams in northern Ukraine on the Dneiper River, new oil fields at Baku on the Caspian Sea, and cotton grown around Tashkent and Samarkand on the southern edge of the great Asian desert. Production statistics, all of them positive, and stories of the new construction filled the press.

Curiously, the Canadians were more dedicated to the Revolution, it seems, than many of their Russian co-workers. Regarded cynically by some, and as heroes by others, workers came to their work bench to cheer them on. The local newspaper carried interviews and pictures of them and soon reporters came from national newspapers. In October they were rewarded with the ultimate honour and glory, chosen "Heroes of Labour" and decorated with medals.
Stars At The Bolshoi

The Heroes of Labour were selected along with three others to appear as representatives of the White Russian Republic at the October Revolution celebrations held 7 November in Moscow. The official car that picked them up the evening before wound its way through the streets of Moscow, down Marx Prospekt, across Sverdlov Square. It turned onto Petrovka Street and parked behind a theatre. Entering through the back stage, to their amazement they found themselves led onto a stage and seated there along with about 50 others in a semi-circle.

Amid much noise and shuffling behind the curtains, they remained totally in the dark as to where they were, what they were doing there, and what was expected of them. Finally, a man in uniform approached them, introducing himself in German as their translator and asked which one of them would speak. “What do you mean?” Moishe asked. “You are one of our special guests. You are going to speak. I am your translator but I don’t speak English so I must know what you will say.” “Say, where are we?” Moe asks. “You are on stage in the Bolshoi theatre.”

Moishe and Moe looked at each other, suddenly very nervous, and Moe pointed to Moishe. “But I don’t know what I should say.” “I will come back in a few minutes,” the uniformed man replied. They decided that it would be inappropriate for them to make a political speech for although they had developed strong feelings, they had little understanding. Something short and sweet would be all they could manage in any event. “All we can say,” they told the translator in German, “is that we are from Canada and that we are honoured to be here. We can’t tell you how you should be doing things. We came here to learn.”

The man nodded and left them. All of a sudden the curtains went up. The pair, by now in a state of panic, could only make out the outlines of the masses of people in the audience. As they looked over the sea of faces, the floodlights shone on the huge portraits of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin that lined the walls. At the podium stood Vorishilov of the Central Committee. The crowd broke into a rhythmic applause. Vorishilov greeted the audience and the orchestra played a popular song. Again the audience applauded, now in time to the music. The chairman of the meeting introduced speakers from the Ukraine, Vladivostok, and the far eastern regions. Each spoke briefly to thunderous applause.

When Moishe heard the chairman’s reference to “Americanskis,” the sweat began to pour from his forehead. The crowd began to chant all over again, and the orchestra played “The Internationale.” When silence descended over the expectant audience, the interpreter nudged him gently over to the podium. The few yards felt like a mile. Moishe felt his knees
shaking. This was the Bolshoi theatre. Thousands of people were looking at him. What was a Jewish boy from the ghettos of Montréal doing here anyway? Besides, he reminded himself, he had never made a speech before in his life! What a place to start. At the podium, he told himself, “Take it easy. Speak slowly, in your deepest voice. In a few minutes, it will all be over.”

The words, when they finally blurt out, sounded squeaky and high-pitched. Years later he recalled the speech, word for word.

“My comrade and I,” he began, “have come from America. There, as you know, there are millions of unemployed, and many problems. We can tell you nothing about solving your problems. But there is much that you can tell us. And that is why we are here. We want to find out all about the things you are doing here. Thank you very much.”

Knees still shaking, Moishe retreated to his seat to the cheers of the crowd. Moe shook his head. The grand debut had lasted all of 30 seconds. Now the translator took over. He spoke for several minutes, and the crowd interrupted a dozen times with thunderous applause. “Great speech,” Moe kidded his friend. Moishe never did find out what the translator said, but it must have been good, for now he had a reputation as an orator and from that day he found himself called upon to make speeches in Minsk and elsewhere.

The next day, hundreds of thousands of cheering Moscovites packed Red Square. Dominating the square was Lenin’s tomb. Back home Lenin was regarded as a barbarous Asiatic dictator, a Genghis Khan ready to exterminate half of mankind to fulfil his futile dream. Here, he was loved and admired by Bolshevik and non-Bolshevik alike — akin to George Washington, revered father of the American Revolution.

Here was Stalin, his successor, on the platform. Busts of all sizes stood in the windows of the shops facing Red Square. Ruddy cheeks, stocky body, black moustached, he waved to the crowd as they roared: “STALIN IS THE LENIN OF TODAY! STALIN IS THE LENIN OF TODAY.” He spoke:

We are marching full steam ahead on the road to industrialization, to socialism, leaving behind our age-old Russian backwardness. We are becoming a nation of metal, of motors, of tractors, and when we have placed the Soviet Union in an automobile and the peasant on a tractor, then let the esteemed capitalists of the world who so proudly proclaim their civilization attempt to catch up with us.

The crowd cheered, breaking out into chant: “Stalin Stalin Stalin.” Then, “The Five Year Plan in Four, the Five Year Plan in Four.” This slogan was projected from thousands of posters plastered on walls, stuck on street cars and floats, and waved from banners on buildings.
Vorishilov, head of the Red Army, received the troops as they parade by the stand. First came the armed workers, then the Red Army. "I noticed that this display really disturbed Moe," Bill recalled. "'This is terrible,' he said. 'It's militarism. I don't care if its militarism in a red flag or militarism in a white flag — it's militarism.' That's not the way I saw it. 'Oh, go on,' I said, 'this is different.' But Moe persisted. 'When I see the workers marching, that moves me. But to see the men in uniform — it's — it's all the same — it's just militarism.' Here we go again, I thought. I was remembering Moe's speech in Commercial High. 'Well, it doesn't bother me, this is different,' I said, taking the last word."

Initiation

It was now barely four months since they had wandered into Minsk, but what a four months! They began as mere adventurers, Russia only a curiosity. Back home they had heard about the "menace" of socialism from family and school. The press shrieked hysterically about the bandits, cutthroats and madness in Moscow, about women being nationalized along with all other forms of private property, and about famine stalking the land ever since the October Revolution.

But now the Soviet Union had become their golden land, their Jerusalem, and they were all but ready to join the cause as Young Communists. This was not the trip they had planned. They had come to Russia on a whim. But here in the land of the Soviets they began to find their bearings and a new identity. They felt part of history, that they themselves were making history. The final aim of this stupendous campaign was to wipe from the face of the earth the poverty, discrimination and superstition of the ages. There would be no classes and no cause to create them. There would be no racial feuds, no religious faiths and no need for them. All men were to be socially equal with an equal chance to work and live in dignity. Planning would eliminate depressions and unemployment. Ultimately the state would disappear. It was a beautiful dream and they bought into it totally.

That first winter Moe wrote to his sister Gertrude to come to the USSR to see for herself.

I realize, my education having been similar to yours, that the words 'communism' and 'dictatorship' hold a connotation which is abhorrent to an individualist. But surely it makes a vast difference when I tell you that in place of the Communist Dictatorship which you so fear, is a Proletarian Dictatorship of which Stalin is the head, and behind him the unbounded enthusiasm of the Party who willingly subordinate their
In the summer Moishe and Moe decided to join the Young Communist League, the Komsomol, and they so informed the Secretary of the League in their plant. Weeks passed and they heard nothing. “I wonder if it’s because of the meeting I had with her a few days after we indicated our intention,” Moe said to an impatient Moishe Wolofsky. He went on to say that at this meeting he had asked if joining meant he’d have to serve in the army. She had answered it didn’t since he was a Canadian citizen but Moishe took this reluctance as the reason they hadn’t been contacted.

“After some further discussions, I went to see her about our application,” Bill related. ‘I have no objection to joining the Red Army and I’m pretty sure my friend doesn’t either. He’s just got some concerns about militarism,’ I told her. Eventually we got our invitation to a meeting at the YCL Bureau office. We each presented ourselves for an interview. I wanted so desperately to be accepted that I attempted to answer all the questions in Russian, which by now I could handle, even if with difficulty.”

The office was filled with the busts of Stalin and Lenin and the walls covered with their portraits. The questions began. Here is Bill’s account of the dialogue.

“Why did you come to the Soviet Union?”
“I came as a student to find out about socialism.”
“What about your parents?”
“My father is a petit bourgeois.”
“If in the interests of the revolution you were told to shoot your father or your mother, would you do it?”

The question startled Moishe. “Why would I be told to shoot my father or mother?”
“We’re asking the questions. Would you shoot your father?”
He hesitated and began to sweat. Then, “Yes.” “And your mother?”
“Why should I shoot my mother?”
“We’re asking.”
“Yes.”

A few more questions and the interview ended. A few days later Moishe and Moe compared notes. The same line of questions had been put to each. Bill remembered the exchange.

“Do you think they meant it?”
"Probably."
"Would you do it?"
"I dunno. The whole thing makes me jittery."
"Well, it's all hypothetical anyway. We'll never be asked to do that, so there's nothing to worry about."

Moishe was not so sure, and he doubts that Moe was either. A few weeks later they saw a film with a similar theme. It was about two boyhood friends, one of them the son of a teacher, an intellectual who became a professor, the other a worker who joined the Red Army. They met each other often. One evening the professor was seduced by a woman suspected of being a friend of the White Guards. In the next scene, the soldier accused his friend of being a traitor and handed him his pistol. But he wouldn't take it. The soldier told him to walk, and then picked up the revolver and killed him. When the picture ended the crowd burst into a prolonged applause.

Maybe it really could happen. Maybe they would be asked to kill their parents some day. Neither of them believed it. In any event they decided not to say anything more about the subject. Years later, Bill Walsh was still troubled by the questions and especially his response to them. "They asked me those questions and they meant it," he said. "It's hard to explain my response except that I didn't know how to avoid it. I couldn't conceive of any circumstances under which this could occur. On the other hand, I could have said 'no,' but I didn't. I said 'yes.' That's how insistent I was on joining the YCL."

In homage to Stalin, Moe Kosawatsky when he returned to Canada a few years later would give himself the name Dick Steele, after Joseph Stalin, "the man of steel." "Do you think an imminent revolution probable in the United States?" he asked his sister Gertrude in a letter home. He obviously did, even going so far as to name the year — 1934! "The imminence of revolution depends upon the rate at which the country's economic condition becomes worse. There is no sign of conditions becoming better," he wrote. "What are the masses waiting for? The election will do nothing. Whatever relief the new government supplies will be insufficient. Riots will break out. Hungry mobs will become militant. The masses will learn to move in concert. The police will not be able to cope with them. The army will be called upon. But will they murder their own countrymen? I hesitate to say. But whether or not they do, revolution must come at latest in 1934."
True Believers

They were present in the midst of the great Soviet famine, a legend of horror no less than the industrial depression of North America. Nature took a hand, but it too was mainly a man-made tragedy. Many peasants had only recently come into possession of some land. Few had volunteered to give it and their livestock to the new collectives spawned by the Five Year Plan—so they were forced into them. They resisted, slaughtering their livestock in the process and withholding grain delivery. Cows, sheep, horses, pigs, goats were killed by the hundreds of thousands. Anyone with a tiny plot was labelled a kulak, a capitalist exploiter. "We must smash the kulaks," Stalin thundered from Moscow, "kill them as a class." Zealous party officials, ever conscious of party discipline, forcefully removed them from their property and pushed them onto some barren or swampy piece of land, or packed them into freight cars and exiled them to some northern region. Tens of thousands of peasants did not survive the move or died of starvation.

Moishe Wolofsky and Moe Kosawatsky saw the whole process as necessary and inevitable. "The kulaks are disrupting Soviet economic policy," Stalin announced, so of course they had to be squeezed out. "The way we got the story," Bill remembered, "was that the crops were failing because the kulaks had sabotaged the tractors by pouring sand into the oil which ruined the cylinders. At times our factory had to dispense with all other work to replace the cylinders and the pistons and the thumbs that drove the pistons up and down. The entire grain crop of the White Russian Republic and to some extent the Ukraine depended on their efforts. That's what we were told and we had no doubt it was true."

Everything was in short supply and everything rationed—from food to footwear, from safety pins to ink, from matches to toilet paper. But at least the poverty was equally shared, so they thought, and in any case temporary. They believed what they constantly heard: Russia would soon catch up with and outstrip capitalist countries in production and distribution—and the Five Year Plan was the first decisive step in that direction. Yes, there were sacrifices. But at least everybody was sacrificing and the sacrifices were all necessary for the greater good.

When Emma, by virtue of being assistant editor of the local farm newspaper, had occasion to invite some farm leaders to her home, Moishe suspected that these farmers could be the hated kulaks. Though she had become their close friend, he did not hesitate to inform on her. Did Stalin not say that farmers who fight collectivization are saboteurs and enemies of the people? And does he not teach that anyone who befriends them also betrays the revolution?
Looking back on his betrayal of Emma many years later, Bill Walsh confessed "When I think back to those days I recognize I had become blind — let me use the word pure blind, by which I mean purposely blind — completely blind yourself to any other view except the official view which you will defend, regardless of how unreasonable it is, defend it and defend it without the slightest vacillation. As for any doubts you had, well you just set them aside, suspended them. Anyone who didn’t tow the line one hundred per cent was regarded by me as being counter-revolutionary, contemptible, including this wonderful woman who had been so friendly to us and had helped us, comforted us and who had been in a very real way such a good friend to us.”

Late in the fall of 1932 an incident occurred which so disturbed the new converts that they made up their mind to leave Minsk. Emma Bumberg had given them a pass which she said would allow them to go to a store where they could purchase food not available anywhere else. She had applied for and received special rations on their behalf. When they found the unmarked store and entered with their passes, they could not contain their shock. Shelves bulged with loaves of white bread, butter, apples, and other fruits, a variety of candies, and beautiful fresh sturgeon fish. Such food was not to be seen in the regular stores where they had done their shopping up until now. Here there were none of the long lines they had learned to hate. As industrial workers they were given extra rations, but these only allowed them an extra loaf of black bread, a few extra potatoes, a little more oil and vegetables, eggs and cheese, and tiny minnow fish, all the staple foods of the citizens of Minsk. Meat, eggs, butter, cheese remained scarce, and they hadn’t eaten white bread since arriving in Russia.

And the prices seemed unusually low. The price for sturgeon no more than the price for minnows; the price for white bread the same as the price for the black bread which so devastated their digestive systems. “Never any problem of constipation there, I can tell you,” Moishe later joked. “For the first six months finding toilets was one of our biggest feats — and in a hurry!”

When they returned to the apartment and questioned Emma she told them that this store served foreign experts. “You can’t expect them to come here and put up with things they aren’t accustomed to. They are among our most precious people. Naturally they deserve special treatment,” she explained matter-of-factly. “But we aren’t foreign experts,” they responded, angrily. “We’ve learned our jobs here. We don’t want special treatment and we won’t abuse party principles to shop in those stores for you.”

It didn’t matter to them that her child was ill and that Emma herself was suffering a form of malnutrition, having come from Latvia where fruit was a big part of her diet. They decided that they had to break off relations with
Emma and move on. But it was more than Emma. They were aware that in all of Minsk there couldn't have been more than a few dozen foreign specialists, if that many, and besides, just about all the people they had seen in the store were local citizens. It gradually came out of Emma that some top government and Communist Party officials also received passes to these special stores.

This was a great blow. One of the things that they had found so attractive about the Soviet system was that nobody, no matter how high his position in the party, could earn more than 215 rubles a month, about the average industrial wage. Explaining his dismay many years later, Bill Walsh recalled, “we had guys in our factory earning 300 rubles and I thought this was tremendous — tremendous that an ordinary worker could earn more than Joe Stalin. We’re talking about God when we’re talking Stalin.” But now he had found the secret. Their 215 rubles could purchase a whole lot more than ordinary workers could buy for a 1,000 rubles and many things ordinary workers couldn’t buy at any price. Emma had no answer for them, at least none that they would accept. In any event, things become so nasty between them and Emma they decided to move to Moscow.

Moscow

Winter 1933. The shift from Minsk to Moscow led from Emma Bumberg to Muriel Altman. The boys had met Muriel during one of their trips to Moscow and had fallen in love with the Jewish State Theatre actress — and she with them. When they explained their problems in Minsk she invited them to stay with her.

They had no trouble obtaining work in the new ball-bearing plant, Zavod Kalinin, but life in Moscow was a lot different for them. They were not celebrities there, received no special favours and no special ration books. They were treated like ordinary Soviet citizens, which is what they preferred. Moishe went so far as to shave his head, the style of the day for Russian men. With his credible command of the language, he was almost indistinguishable from other Russians. They worked their regular nine-hour shifts in the day, attended meetings of factory cells after work and Komsomol meetings in the evening, studied the Marxist classics, and in their spare time they read the US Party press.

Like all others they ate the slab of dark bread, sticks of sausage, and drank grape juice for lunch. On the weekends they enjoyed the company of Muriel Altman’s theatre friends. Muriel was particularly taken with the gregarious and handsome Moe Kosawatsky, and he with her. Moishe felt in the way, but Muriel would not hear of him moving out of her apartment.
In line with official policy, all artists and writers were directed to use their talents to advance the “Socialist offensive” by glorifying the nobility of the proletarian and expressing the grandeur of the cause. The kulak and the entrepreneur always appeared as the political foes who deserved to meet defeat, and were without any redeeming virtues. As with Hollywood productions, it was easy to pick out the heroes and the villains. Only the hero in Soviet Russia was always the proletarian.

So-called socialist realism posed no problem for Muriel Altman and most of her friends. Dedicated communists, they were convinced that there was no better purpose to which to put their talents. Moishe and Moe soon discovered that not all members of the Russian intelligentsia felt the same way. They met some of these skeptics at a party thrown in their honour by Muriel. As the guests filed into her sparsely furnished living room with its pictures of Lenin, Stalin, Gorky, and Tolstoy, several of them encircled these curious foreigners who work in a ball-bearing plant, and peppered them with questions about life in America. Is there an abundant supply of meat, sugar, butter and white bread, they asked. Are American women really taking to long hair and long skirts? How expensive were automobiles, Fords, for instance? What about the speed of elevators? The visitors answered as best as they could. The price of the automobile surprised the questioners.

“If they would be so cheap in Russia, we would buy automobiles for ourselves.”

“Never mind,” one of the guests remarked, “we shall catch up.”

“And when will that be?” another put in.

“Which Five-Year Plan?” Laughter all around.

“Must we have everything immediately?” argued another. “Your grandfather never sat before an electric light as you do now.”

Moe got impatient. “Don’t be so impressed with America. Don’t forget that there is a depression there. Eight million are out of work. The unemployed don’t buy cars, many don’t get the food we get here. Meanwhile American farmers burn food in the fields and the government dumps it into the ocean. The revolution is coming in America, don’t you believe otherwise.”

But some of the things they heard about last winter’s crusade against private property gave even Moe some concern. They heard the story of a well-known merchant whose wife was on the verge of giving birth to a child. She pleaded with the chairman of the housing committee, a former janitor, to be allowed to remain in the apartment long enough for the baby to be born, whereupon, the former janitor replied, “Citizen, all these years you have been drinking our blood, now it is about time we drank a little of
yours." Story after story emphasized the mercilessness of the revolutionaries.

A communist in the room commented, “Yes, there may have been abuse. The search brigade was not supposed to do these things. But it was not a policy. They went too far.”

“All the things those brigades did,” someone else exclaimed. “What a nightmare. People were put out into the street with no place to go. No pity, no feeling.”

“But this is a revolution,” Muriel interjected. “A revolution is no game.”

“But is it not time to bring the fight to an end? How long will it go on?” someone asked.

“As long as we have enemies who wreck our plans.”

“But what about our rights?” one woman shouted. “Our artists are told what they must paint, our writers are told what they must write. Where is our freedom? Our gypsy music has been banned. Our nightclubs have been closed. Where are our restaurants? They have closed them or made worker cooperatives out of them. And what do they serve?”

“Listen,” another answered, “we have had a revolution. Now the workers are in control. They have no need of nightclubs or restaurants or gypsy music. Where is your freedom? Where was the freedom of the proletariat in the old days? Who cared about their rights? The exploiters rode their backs like they were camels. No more. You moaners and groaners make me ill.”

The exchange was angry, yet at the same time strangely friendly. These were old friends arguing over tea and biscuits. The discussion went on long into the night. The new recruits of the Young Communist League were largely untroubled by the stories, their faith unshaken.

A Cable From Herschel

Early that summer Moishe received a cable from England: “COMING TO MINSK STOP WILL TAKE YOU HOME WITH ME STOP YOUR loving father, Herschel Wolofsky.” The telegram, which had been sent to Minsk and forwarded to Moscow, came as a rude shock. It seemed like a voice from the very distant past. Remembering years later, Bill recalled that returning to Canada was the last thing on his mind. He had been in the USSR for almost two full years, the happiest years of his life. Back home, his life had been full of stress and without meaning. In Russia his life had purpose. In his mind nothing could be more fulfilling than staying and helping to build the new society.
His father was scheduled to arrive in the week. Muriel suggested he seek guidance from the Communist International or Comintern. The Canadian representative at the Anglo-American branch of the Comintern listened to Moishe’s story in silence, then asked what he wanted to do. When Moishe replied that he wanted to stay, the man responded sympathetically but asked that Moishe come back in ten days time, which would be a few days after Herschel’s arrival.

Herschel Wolofsky had been sent on a trade mission to Poland. Jewish boycotts had been organized against German goods and though the Polish government was anything but friendly towards the Jews, the Polish Consulate in Montréal had approached him to see what he could do to expedite a stalled trade treaty between Canada and Poland to take advantage of the Jewish boycott. His agreement would improve relations between the government and Polish Jewry, he was assured.

The Consulate offered to pay his expenses if he would travel to Poland, “so that I might be able to press my arguments with personal knowledge,” Wolofsky wrote in his memoirs. “I was somewhat dubious but the family encouraged me to go. Their interest was a family one; one of my sons who had made a trip to Europe two years earlier — had landed in Soviet Russia and found the country so much to his taste, that he had remained there. My family, therefore, wished me to undertake the trip to Poland, and thence to proceed to Russia and bring my son back with me.”

Not being informed that Moishe had moved to Moscow, it took Herschel a few days to catch up with him. When they finally got together, the first thing he asked him about was his bald head. After exchanging a few pleasantries, he told his son, “in a week you’re coming back with me. I promised your mother.” He surely expected a struggle. Moishe had written to the family of the wonders of the Soviet Union, the rapid advancement of industry, the campaign to wipe out illiteracy and eliminate discrimination, of the medals and honours bestowed upon himself and his friend, of the poem written about them by the renowned Jewish poet, Itzik Pfeffer, and of the book he and Moe were writing, From the Land of Despair to the Land of Hope.

“I know about the pig iron, and the machinery and building socialism,” Herschel intoned. “You’ve done your share. You’ve done your duty. It’s time to go back home to your mother and to your sisters and brothers.” “I’m staying here. My friends are here. Moe is here. I like it here. I’m staying.”

Herschel would have none of this: “What is this foolishness? Why do you worry about mankind? Does mankind worry about you? Believe me, if you should be dying of hunger, the Bolsheviks would not lift a finger. Canada is one of the richest countries in the world. The opportunities are limitless.”
They argued on. It went nowhere. Moishe kept his appointment at the Comintern. This time he was led to an old, large, ugly square building across from the Kremlin wall on the Mokhovaya. There, Moishe found himself face to face with an obvious big wheel in the Comintern. He never did introduce himself but from photographs seen only years later, Moishe identified the man as Dimitri Manuilsky, a trusted Stalin functionary. Not realizing Moishe spoke the language, Manuilsky said in a low voice to the Canadian representative, "tell him he's going back. He should come back here to see us after his father has left for Warsaw. Then we will tell him what we expect of him." A word was said about Moishe taking over The Canadian Adler and converting it into the Red Adler, something Moishe knew he could never do.

Moishe was shaken. What life was there for him there? Deep inside he still felt the wounds of his life on Esplanade. There he felt homeless. Here he felt at home. But not for one minute did he consider disobeying the instructions. "Was he not part of a world movement now?" he thought to himself. "One in which the leaders know how best he can make a contribution?" Not for him to question their decision.

So as not to make the change of plan too obvious, Moishe put up an argument when he saw Herschel the next day. "Look at your friends," Herschel thundered. "Some of them were crazy too but they got over it and now they are lawyers and doctors. And you — you're wasting away your life. My son, a factory worker? It's a scandal. What do you get out of it?"

"It's a good job. Anyway I'm not looking to get anything out of it. Living here gives me much more than I give it. The capitalist way is not for me. In the end it means making wars and killing people for profit."

"And the bolsheviks are angels? They killed plenty of people too," Herschel replied.

"It's true, I know. It's too bad that men haven't got beyond force. But it's been that way for thousands of years. Anyway, it makes a difference who kills whom and for what. If the Whites and the imperialists had left Russia alone, the Bolsheviks would have been happy to avoid bloodshed. You can't blame them for defending the first workers' socialist republic."

"They hate the Jews. It is in their blood. No revolution will change it. In Canada we are making progress. Look at me, an official representative of the government of Canada!" His father continued, "Do you deny the internal squabbles? Look how they have exiled Trotsky, forced others to recant, and the rumours are flying about more people. The revolution devours its children. These men are as power hungry as any capitalist, Moishe."

"Of course there are quarrels, serious ones," Moishe rebutted. "There are part of the growing pains of revolution. What's the alternative? Unem-
ployment, poverty, war. Some Bolsheviks may be bad, some made mistakes — but they are building a better world.”

The old man was furious. He felt he was getting nowhere. But two days later, according to plan, Moishe reversed himself. The old man was not so easily fooled. “Just a minute. You're not coming home to join with them there. You come back, you're going to behave. The Communists may be alright for Russia, as you say, but they're no good for Canada. You have nothing to do with the Communists there. You're going to work with me on the Eagle.” That decided, they made arrangements to meet in Warsaw a week later.

Back at the Comintern building, he was taken to see Manuilsky again, where he reported his conversation. He got his instructions.

Thirty days after he arrived in Montréal he would get a message that a Mr. Cook wanted to see him. Cook was to meet with him and tell him what to do. In the meantime, he was to behave normally and make no attempt to contact the party. He must not tell anybody about these conversations. Just say you are going back, that’s all.

“But I must tell my friend Moe and the other comrades.”

“No, nobody.”

“But I must explain to my friends why I am leaving. They'll think I am just deserting. I can't just leave and say nothing.”

“You don’t have to tell them anything.”

“At least Moe, I've got to tell Moe. I've never kept anything secret from him. Besides he knows I'm here. We discussed it.”

“Listen, comrade,” Manuilsky said. “We have a saying: ‘what you don’t tell people they can’t repeat.’ If he is such a close friend, he will understand.”

Within the week he was on a train heading for Warsaw.

And Moe did understand. As for him, he was staying on. His family was not pressing him to come back. He had no money to do so anyway and Hershel Wolofsky certainly made no offer to pay his fare. Predictably, the Wolofsky family blamed Moe, just as the Kosawatsky family blamed Moishe for having led their child astray. After all, this could never happen to their child without some evil outside influence. In any event, Moe had no intention of leaving at this stage. He was madly in love with Muriel Altman and she with him.

Relating the story of his departure from the Soviet Union, Bill remarked, “you have no idea of the sinking feeling in my heart as the train crossed over into Poland. It felt as if I was going from heaven into hell. When I passed through Minsk my heart went lower and lower and I thought, ‘can I survive this?’ Besides, I was leaving Dick with whom I had been so close for years. I worried that I might not ever see him again. All these things were going through my mind — going back into the capitalist system, how
can I live under the capitalist system? I saw everything there as exploitation. That’s the way I thought back then. I worried about how I was going to put on a pretence that I was happy to be going home when I was miserable about it.”

Warsaw

Herschel Wolofsky and his son were guests at the home of a prominent Warsaw rabbi. Moishe was the main attraction, a Jewish boy who went from the land of the free to a despicable totalitarian state. They minced no words. Moishe held his ground. He had trouble with one question only: “Why don’t they let people go out who want to go out?”

He never did find an adequate answer to this question. A young woman, about his age, the rabbi's daughter, came to his rescue. Up to now she had said nothing. “Would you like to go for a walk?” she asked. Moishe was delighted to get out of there. As soon as they got outside, she put her arm through his and gave him a warm, friendly glance. “Come on, I want you to meet some real friends.”

They passed others on the street. Something was happening. Finally the girl said, “We’re having a meeting. Did you notice that boy back there? He’s a comrade. We’re voting on some important questions. You see, I’m a communist too, but here the party is illegal. We pass signals between us in the street.” When they arrived back at her home laughing and joking both parents were pleased. Maybe something would come of this meeting. A rabbi’s daughter! A publisher’s son! Herschel was most anxious for his twenty-three year old to get married. What better way of getting him to forget about this communist business?

The next day, his father asked him, “Nu, would you like to stay on for a while here?” “No,” Moishe replied, “I want to go home.” Years later he would meet the same woman in Montréal when she escaped to Canada along with her family after the Nazis occupied Poland. By then the Hitler-Stalin pact that carved up Poland had soured her on communism and they found they had little to say to each other.