

The New Russia

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women take part in a common enterprise. The whole village, which may number thousands, is generally devoted to some special occupation, one village producing felt shoes, another flax thread, another wooden spoons, a fourth iron nails or chains, and so on. So certain gubernias (states) have grown famous for certain commodities. Moscow produces wicker-work, baskets and furniture; Kostroma carves wooden bowls and silverware; Yaroslavl and Tula produce samovars and saucepans; Vladimir makes ikons; Nijni Novgorod makes a specialty of knives and scissors; Tver produces saddlery and harness. Thus we have, among the peasantry themselves and as a part of their indigenous life, the beginnings of an enormously productive industrial system, side by side with their agriculture.

Out of these village industries, which seem to be absolutely peculiar to Russia, at least among European nations, large factories are springing up in the villages, doing the same things better, more systematically, more commodiously, and employing as many as ten or twelve thousand hands. Among the more rapidly growing industries are cotton-spinning, the making of linen, from the rude peasant fabric to the most beautiful damask, the spinning of silk, and the manufacture of beet-sugar. In Petrograd, Moscow and Warsaw, there has been a great development of tanning, and the dependent industries of shoe and glove making; while new and well-built factories are turning out paper, flour, tobacco and hemp ropes.

The list of these industries suggests what is one of the strongest points of the situation—that, in every one of these lines, Russia has her own practically inexhaustible supplies of raw material. She is as self-contained and as self-supporting as it is possible for a nation to be. Of raw materials, there are two great classes: those which grow in the ground and those which are dug out of the ground. In both, Russia is marvelously supplied. In lumber, she possesses the largest forests on earth, stretching from the Baltic to the Pacific Ocean. Her cereals are one of the world's great supplies. She has long been a great flax country. Her expansion into Turkestan has made her a great cotton country. In the north, she grows millions of tons of rye and oats. In the south, fine grapes, tea, oranges, and tobacco flourish. There is, in fact, practically nothing that grows that Russia does not produce.

As for metals and minerals, only two facts need be quoted. At one end of the scale, Russia is running France neck and neck for fourth place among the iron-producing nations of the world. At the other end she supplies, from the Ural mines, almost the entire platinum output of the world. Her railroads are increasing enormously in mileage, there being few engineering difficulties on her vast, flat plains. In 1869 Russia had 1,000 miles of railroads; in 1885, 16,000 miles; in 1905, 40,000 miles; and the increase since has been equally rapid.

VI. The Jewish Question

Russia numbers today 180,000,000—the greatest white nation the world has ever seen. On her Western frontier there are settled some 5,000,000 Jews, chiefly inherited from Poland, which offered them an asylum when the nations of Western Europe were persecuting them. Towards these Jews Russia's policy has been negative. It has practically amounted to bidding them remain where they were, when the Western districts were annexed. That is the real history of "the Jewish Pale." It is a question of political inertia and economic precaution, not of religious persecution.

On this last point let me quote an authority as impartial as the "Encyclopedia Britannica": "In his relations with Moslems, Buddhists, and even fetishists, the Russian peasant looks rather to conduct than to creed, the latter being in his view simply a matter of nationality. The numerous outbreaks against the Jews are directed, not against their creed, but against them as keen business men and extortionate money-lenders. Any idea of proselytism is quite foreign to the ordinary Russian mind," as indeed is sufficiently shown by the continuous satisfactory relations

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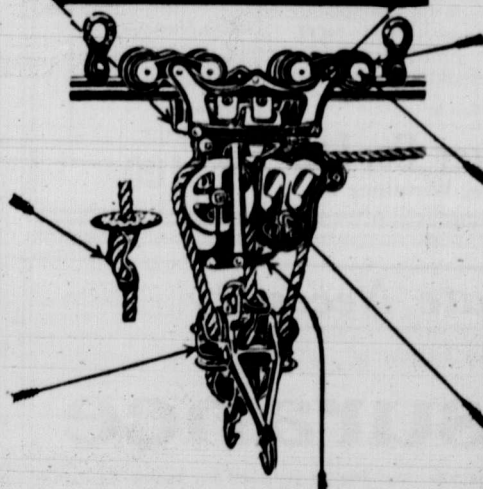
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between Russia and her millions of Mohammedan and Buddhist subjects.

Nevertheless, the Jews of Russia's Western frontier have felt pressure, and have bitterly resented it, filling the ranks of the revolutionary societies at home, and fiercely attacking Russia when they go abroad. So it has come about that we in America are prone to see the vast nation of 180,000,000 thru the hostile eyes of 5,000,000 aliens—or, indeed, far less than 5,000,000; for many Jews are well-disposed to Russia, both at home and among those who have emigrated. In just the same way, we have been prone to see England thru the eyes of the Irish Fenians, who came here after the abortive outbreak of 1867. In both cases, a narrow, bitter and essentially unjust view resulted.

But, just as the Irish-American ir-

reconcilable of the Clan-na-Gael have long ceased to represent even their own fellow-countrymen, so the anti-Russian Jewish opinion here is becoming unrepresentative and out of date. And this from two causes. The Czar's proclamation of religious liberty was followed, in 1907, by a relaxation of the rules which kept the former Polish Jews within the Pale; and, as occasion has permitted, there have been other ameliorations of the position of the Russian Jews. Notably so, since the opening of the great war, in which new opportunities to serve with distinction in the army have been given to Jews, of which they have splendidly taken advantage; showing that they possess high qualities of military valor, and that they are fired with the same love of their fatherland that flames in the hearts of all Russian soldiers.

So that in Russia the question of that little minority of Jews is settling itself. Much can be done in this country to aid and soften that settlement; first, by American Jews; next, by the American government. Let the Jews here recognize that the wrongs are not all on the Russian side—that seldom happens in this vale of tears—and, admitting the difficulty of Russia's task, and her sincere effort to fulfil it, let them drop the bad habit of carelessly girding at Russia, whether she be right or wrong. And let our administration remember that we have our own problems of citizenship here. Since the Civil war, which was to confer equal rights on the negro, we have deprived millions of negroes of certain political rights; and, to the citizens of the land of Confucius, the oldest civilized nation in the world, the nation which