

WITH THE WHITE RUSSIANS IN SIBERIA



An Australian army captain [Ernest William Latchford](#) (1889-1962) was a participant of WW1 who was awarded a Military Cross. After the Armistice in 1918 he spent some time in Mesopotamia and at the end of 1918 was sent to Siberia to serve in the British Military Mission. He wrote memoirs, which are of a great historic value, about this period of his life. One may disagree with many of his statements, but when reading this book, written by an observant man, you can come to the same conclusion again and again - the Allied intervention in Russia and their support of the White cause were doomed and this interference could only delay the inevitable collapse of the anti-Bolshevik movement. Moreover, the intervention could ignite nothing but a rise of patriotic feelings among the majority of the Russian population and a strong will to put the presence of foreigners on the Russian soil to the end. Anyway, read this page and make your own conclusions...

Naturally, Vladivostok was intensely interesting for us newcomers. Every allied country seemed to be represented by a force of some size or another; even Serbia and Romania being present. The International Guard was quite a novelty. Everything seemed to be very mixed up, and one could not get a settled view of the situation. All the Allies appeared to be watching each other very closely, particularly the Japs and the Americans.

Canada was represented by an infantry brigade, which, owing to certain "difficulties", was shortly afterwards withdrawn. Their units looked quite striking on parade, clad in their lumber jackets instead of conventional greatcoat. The lumber-jacket is a very sensible garment for the climate, and the bold colors, squares and checks made a parade into a colorful display. We all wore fur hats, and were supplied with special felt boots, sheepskin coats covered with corduroy cloth, moccasins, very thick underwear, and stockings and fur gloves.

We were all very amused at this stage to receive a generous issue of tussore silk underclothing, made up by the ladies of the China treaty ports - a voluntary association, similar, I fancy to our local comforts committees. We found the value of these silken articles later on in the interior. Was also the recipient of two parcels, one from a Scottish Women's League, consisting of the thickest woolen underwear I had ever seen. The other was from Christian Scientist Association in California, comprising the thinnest, the finest, and, incidentally, the hardest wearing, cotton singlet and underpants probably ever made. These latter lasted me for many years; in fact one of the garments gave out only in recent years. A number of the officers from the Indian NW. Frontier brought Afghan "poshteens" with them, and their bright yellow and barbaric appearance toned in with the prevailing color scheme.

Col. [John Ward](#), the Labour M.P., had brought in a battalion of the Middlesex from Hong Kong during 1918, but it had been withdrawn again, and, except for gun detachments from HMS *Suffolk* and our Mission, there were no British troops actually in the interior. The Mission consisted, apparently of about 250 officers and about the same number of NCOs, and with a few exceptions, was made entirely from the Regular army. Many of the officers were "Mons" people, who had been picked up in 1914, and who were now, after four years as prisoners of war, being given the opportunity of seeing some more service. They were, almost without exception, a fine crowd of fellows, and were a mine of information about the early days of the war, and of conditions in Germany. Being the sole representative of AIF with the expedition, I attracted a certain amount of attention from them, and was kept busy explaining details regarding our forces. A number of these officers had the bad luck to be caught by the "Bolos" when "our show" collapsed later in the year, and they had to undergo another term of imprisonment. [Francis McCullagh](#), a former war

correspondent and a member of the Mission, gives a graphic account of their doing in captivity in a book published about 1925.

Well, we were now among the White Russians. There was nothing to distinguish "White" from the "Red", as far as we could see, and that proved to be trouble all through the piece. Everything was different from what we had been accustomed to on other fronts, where one knew that "over there" or "in that direction" lay the enemy. Even in Persia, we normally knew who were our opponents, and their attire was a very definite guide as to their attitude towards us. In Siberia the opposing forces had stabilized themselves on an approximate and conventional "front", but hostile activity could be anticipated the whole length of the tremendously long railway from the European side of the Urals to the Pacific coast (over 4,000 miles). Having a political bias, the war provided opportunities for "local enthusiasm" in every village that could be influenced by Red propaganda, and, as the Reds as the Reds had been originally in possession of the whole area and had been driven out, disarmed or "disposed of" by the Czech and White Forces, it was logical to expect that many of the "conversions" had been of a hasty and correspondingly temporary nature.

Trains were being derailed and attacked, stations and military posts raided, and considerable difficulty was experienced in deciding "who is who". Siberia is a country of such vast distances and scattered population that it was practically only possible for troops to function near the line of railway, except near the actual "front". Enormous forests and wide open plains (steppes) forming the bulk of the scenery. The political and international situation was a considerable difficulty always, but as soldiers we were only concerned with getting on with our job, wherever it may turn out to be.

To return to "the mutton" After a very short stay in Vladi, my party was pushed off to the front, my destination being a place on the southern branch of the line beyond the Urals. The party consisted of 13 officers with batmen, or Chinese servants. We were accommodated in two large freight cars, fitted with bunks, a table, forms, and a stove, and we were in charge of 48 trucks of 5-inch shells to take up to the provisional capital at Omsk.

I had brought a British batman from Mesopotamia, but a number of the officers who came direct from Great Britain were supplied with Chinese servants. Those chinks were a snare and a delusion, and conformed to [Bret Harte's](#) description of the "heathen Chinese". They arrived at the train with tremendous packages, made up of out-sizes in dress blankets, which were all "franked" and placed in the sealed compartment of the train. Months afterwards, I met some of the officers who had had these Chinese boys, and, knowing something of the story, asked them how the Chinks had shaped. In every case the reply was the same - as soon as party reached the interior the "boy" disappeared, together with his enormous packages! All the wily "Quong" wanted was to get his stores (silk, tea, etc.) into the area where they would fetch fabulous prices, and they knew the only way was to get them "franked" past the Chinese and Russian Customs as officers' servants kits. They had a wonderful opportunity with our Mission, and, once in the interior of Siberia were I a Chinese trader's "happy hunting ground".

It was still very cold, but we were suitably clad, and soon made our "box car" something like home, and although the rate of progress of the long train left a lot to be desired, and despite the many the many and various interruptions, we became quite used to our travelling home, and made light of its many inconveniences. After four years of war and revolution, one could not expect the rolling stock to be A.I., and one of our many daily duties was to watch for "hot boxes". The only means of communication with the driver was by means of a long rope carried through rings on each truck to the engine. When a hot box was seen by the officer on duty, all hands pull on the rope, and the train eventually came to a stop, when the passengers and crew did their best to remedy the trouble, or, if the trouble appeared likely to occasion a long halt, the passengers took the opportunity to roam far and wide over the landscape, the engine drive endeavoring to collect the party by means of long, despairing bleats on the whistle, finally, in desperation, moving the train on its journey and causing us to abandon our "field studies" and to chase madly after the train;

"not so good", particularly, when one is wearing many and heavy clothes. It happened every day, and gave us an opportunity of getting warm.

We became expert also in getting off the train while it was in motion, to partake of some needed exercise or to collect snow for "tribal" fights on the roofs of the trucks. There was always the risk of being left behind, stranded on the broad plains of N. Manchuria or the Gobi, but we always accepted the risk. I particularly remember one occasion. the train was ascending the famous horseshoe bend leading into the Hinjan range, and some of us decided to move across the country and pick up the train again. Unfortunately darkness came on, and the spot we selected was on a slight down-grade, so that that when the train eventually arrived, it was going at quite a good "bat", and frantic leaps and desperate clutches were much in evidence. We were interested to learn later on that this part of the country was called "bandit-country", and we were considered very foolish people to ever leave the safety of the train. Ignorance is bliss!

Whenever we arrived at a station the train crew took the opportunity to renew old acquaintances in the district, or so it seemed to us. We took the opportunity likewise, to carry on an indefinite cricket competition. A telegraph post for the wicket, a piece of packing case for the bat and a rubber ball from the local Chinese store., made up the kit (inevitably renewed at each halt). The outfield, particularly those fielding among shunting trucks, had an exciting time. The local inhabitants were always tremendously interested in the novel spectacle of 13 weirdly dressed foreigners shouting, running and yelling after an insignificant rubber ball, particularly in N. Manchuria. The ordinate rubber ball is a common article in Manchuria, but the natives had never seen a golf ball, and our normal "turn" at wayside stations was to produce one and mystify the assembled crowd. It never failed. The ball would be handled, attempts made to bite it, long conferences held over it, and the senior villager would solemnly bounce it up and down, amid the excited comments of his compatriots, who evidently thought that there was a certain amount of magic about a hard object that could be bounced such a tremendous distance into the air.

The Northern Chinaman is a good sport, and could always see a joke, even against himself. On one occasion, owing to the onlookers pressing too closely, a hot drive hit a powerful big Chink fair in his open mouth. His compatriots, male, female and child roared with delight. His face was a study surprise, rage, and then a gradual grin, followed by half the Chinese alphabet to his neighbors. On another occasion at an important railway center (tsitsihar), I was fielding in between the shunting lines when, following a particularly noisy appeal from the fielding side, the Russian stationmaster came running out of his office with "What is the matter?" A wheel tapper called out to him: "It's nothing, only the mad English." - "So", - said the S.M., and retired again to his duties. Anything we did was accepted as being inevitable to the "Mad English".

Our route was by the Chinese-eastern Railway through Harbin to Chita, and thence on the Trans-Siberian. The Japanese controlled portion of the Chinese-eastern; the Americans were on the Northern branch (Amur River - Blagoveschensk), and an American-British Railway Mission operated the railway line generally. We were warned to watch "our step" with the Japanese after the trouble occasioned by the "arrest" of our chief (gen. H. Knox). Our two box cars carried a small enamel Union Jack on either side of the truck, with a notice in Russian, "British Military Mission", and we eventually came into the Japanese controlled area it was our special privilege and delight to crowd the door of the truck in our "muck order", and whenever the usual arrogant officer and escort arrive to inspect our train and to nonchalantly point to the small enamel flag of our nation, giving them the "wash out" signal with a tolerant smile and appropriate remarks. They took it very hard for a start, but we had our way. To see them go through a non-British train was an eye-opener and would have gladdened the heart of any Prussian officer. There's no doubt that the Japanese soldier is a very efficient person. The division we saw disembarking at Vladi was an extremely business-like outfit. The men and equipment appeared to be turned out of a mould, so exactly similar were they in appearance and turn-out. It gave one impression of looking at an army of machines.

We soon had to confine ourselves to day travelling only, as the area was regarded as "disturbed", and that meant a patrol along the 48 trucks throughout the long and cold night, "par bon", when the snow was falling and the usual Gobi desert winds blowing.

One night a sentry (one of the batman) saw someone attempting to open a truck, and opened fire. We were all out and prepared for trouble, but found only one dead Chink (quite a good "snap shot" - on the sentry's part - if it wasn't a fluke). The station authorities were awakened and informed of the casualty, but they resented very much being woken up on account of dead Chinaman. "What, - said the S.M. - Get out of my warm bed to look at him? I am not interested - dead Chinaman do not matter?" So we left it at that!

Later on and further up the line, an organized attack was made and but for the opportune arrival of a Czech company, complete with field gun, things would have been "very interesting" for all concerned. Thirteen revolvers and 4 rifles are not of very great tactical value opposed to 70 to 80 rifles, particularly when one is cooped up in a railway truck and the "other cove" springs it on you" in the early hours in the morning. The attackers had laid their plans very well, but hadn't allowed for chance, and it was just chance that the trainload of Czechs had to return owing to a breakdown on a bridge. Their return was in the "nick of time", and settled the situation. It has to be a well-built booking office that will stand up to a 13-pounder field gun shell at a range of about 15 yards! They blew everything and everybody before them, and then hunted the remainder, finally hanging 19 to convenient telegraph poles. Grief and despondency among the local "Reds"

At Harbin I met a major Robinson (Royal Engineers), who turned out to have an intimate knowledge of many Australian goldfields, and who was a very interesting chap, altogether. He had been all over the globe on behalf of British gold mining companies. We stayed a day or so in Harbin, and had a very satisfying look around at both the Chinese and the Russian city. It's a place I would like to see again. During the trip to Harbin we passed [Kalmykov's](#) armoured train, the main item of interest for us being the fact that all the "truppen" seemed to be issued with a girl, whether from the Q.M. Stores or by "local arrangement". I can't say, but it appeared a very attractive arm of the service to belong to in that cold country. The "emergency rations" were a very cheery crowd, and exchanged friendly banter with our party. Kalmykov was killed later on in 1920, and I suppose his "colony" were dispersed. What a pity! The AIF. would have been over-recruited if his idea had been known in time and adopted.

The Northern Chinese troops we came in contact with were a genial crowd, apparently well trained, and certainly looked like soldiers. On one occasion one of the trucks broke down completely, fortunately close to a small station, and it was decided to change the truck. The job of manhandling the contents was not particularly attractive to us, and it was decided that the railway folk ought to do it. The S.M. suggested that a Chinese battalion nearby could be approached. This was done, and a platoon of husky genial Chinaman came over from a splendidly built brick barracks some distance from the line and set to work. As the duty officer, I was in the truck superintending the removal, and I must say that their method of chucking the cases about didn't appeal to me, with my limited knowledge of composition of Russian 5-inch shells. Whenever I remonstrated I was met with a cheerful grin, so finally I called a halt to the proceedings, pointed to a case, and shouted "Bomba", accompanying with a pantomimic "pouff". The Chinks' faces became serious, and the remaining cases were handled very carefully indeed. Likeable coves, and full of fun, in sharp contrast with a number of their officers we met.

Around Chita we met a number of "queer hawks". [Ataman Semyonov](#) was in charge of the area, a typical frebooter, surrounded by a hard-boiled, wicked looking crowd. Most of the troops appeared to be of a semi-Mongol type, and we didn't envy captain Marriott (23rd Indian Cavalry) his job as the liaison officer with Semyonov. Semyonov was supposed to be Kolchak's local commander, but it was obvious even then that he and his gang were out of what they could get, and he eventually showed his hand with the Japanese and claimed the status and control as prince of Mongolia. After the show collapsed he went to the USA, was arrested, but I think

managed to get clear to Europe. It was a wild district, and had always produced wild men. Truculent looking "cows, to say the least of them.

During the war certain thin-blooded people considered that the members of the AIF. were a truculent-looking crowd! I wonder what they would have thought of some of these "birds"? The AIF looked like shell-shocked R.T.Os in comparison to them, at least, with regard to their truculence. Dressed in Cossack gear, with a sheep skin or fur cap rakishly stuck over one ear, a long curved sword (which was liable to flash out on the slightest provocation), an automatic pistol dangling from the right hip, or rifle hanging over one shoulder, and a general air of "get out of the way, you _____." Apropos of the AIF One of the "train party" told a good yarn.: He said that he had always been in doubt as to the difference between AIF Infantry and Cavalry. Another officer put him wise in this way. "Suppose you are in a train and a soldier in Australian uniform comes down the platform looking as he owned the b_____ train, well he is sure to be a cavalry man. If, however, an Australian comes along with the appearance of not giving a _____ who owned the train, you would then be in the presence of an Australian Infantryman"!

Manchuli (a border town) was another place of interest. Situated on a bare wind-swept plain, it had all the appearances of an American "wild west" locality. We went prospecting for things to eat, but only found things to drink. The principal building proved to be a "grog shop", and prices were ridiculously low for the articles shown. Whisky, gin, etc. - all of the best brands - were quoted at about 25 percent lower than the coast prices. The proprietor in response to our queries, imparted the information. No pay duty or words of that effect. I, fortunately, didn't indulge in "hard stuff" - and those who did were bitterly disappointed to find that the accurately labeled "Black and White" and "Gilbey's" contained horrible-tasting Japanese substitutes. They had not opened the bottles until after we had left Manchuli, so didn't have the satisfaction of making the shopkeeper drink his own poison. A comparison with "dinkum" bottles showed that the Japanese had accurately imitated every detail on the label, the only difference being that their whisky label was on rough-surfaced paper, as against smooth and shiny paper for the standard article. Having bought Japanese beer, I could afford to laugh at some of the other members of the party.

About this time we occasionally met American troops, who were keen to explain to us the particular forms of atrocity that the Bolos were reputed to be guilty of, but we were inclined to regard them as usual "furphy". Later experience, however, proved that the Yanks were not exaggerating in the least.

The Americans were in a peculiar position. They had recruited a special brigade for service in Siberia, and we assumed that their "efficiency" expert was called in for advice on the matter and probably reported Brigade for Siberia. Sure enlist required personnel from Russian Jews resident in the USA and you not only have men familiar with the language, but business men also". That is how it appeared to us, Britishers. The Jew is not popular in Russia, nor were the members of the brigade, and as they were prevented from taking any active action, either for or against the White Government, on account of the attitude of their "self-determination for small nations" policy, they were regarded with any favor by the residents or friends assisting". In fact, whenever the Russian people wished to be particularly offensive to us for any reason whatever, their usual habit was to mutter "Amerikanski" sufficiently loud enough for us to hear. It was very effective, and could be relied upon to "get our goat"!

We eventually arrived at lake Baikal and found it still frozen stiff, so had a game of football on it. The line now made a detour around the southern side of the lake, instead of using the ice-breaker or laying lines across the ice. I asked a local lad what the depth of the ice was and he pointed to the height of our box car (about 15ft). This portion of the trans-Siberian is reputed to contain the greatest number of tunnels in the world - 42 tunnels in 44 versts, one tunnel being about two miles in length. Very monotonous travelling. Baikal station on the European side of the Lake was in ruins, having been blown off the map by the "Bolos"; but the ice-breakers were there and complete.

Our food on the journey was obtained at each stop of the train, plus what we brought with us from Vladi. The locally obtained food was plain, but very satisfying. "Shche" or Russian vegetable soup was the usual thing at the railway buffets or stalls, and a bowl of this was a great warmer, being a "soup and meat and vegetable meal" all on one plate. Coarse rye bread and butter, eggs, fowls - and we got further into Siberia proper, fish and caviar. In fact, famous caviar palled on us - the British batman were reported as having stated that they were "fed up with fish eggs"! Every little station could produce something to eat, either in the buffet or through the local peasantry, who erect small stalls alongside the line. Hot water was provided by the authorities in a log hut with a prominent "boiling water" sign on its walls - in Russian, of course.

We were very depressed to learn that a change was to be made in the method of our employment with the White forces. The original intention had been to raise an Anglo-Russian brigade (Russian troops with British officers and senior NCOs, British equipment and rifles, and a modified rate of pay), but owing to "difficulties" with similar forces on the Northern or Dvina front, the idea was abandoned. In June 1919 British officers with the White forces on the Dvina were massacred by some of their own troops.)

The new method adopted was to attach us to the new White Army in process of formation, to assist with its organization and training, but not to be in direct command of Russian troops. On account of this development I found myself eventually at Irkutsk - the famous, or infamous, convict settlement in Central Siberia. I reported for duty at the Mission H.Q. there. I had originally been booked for Cheliabinsk in the Urals, and was not very pleased with being sent back to Irkutsk. My arrival there was not without a humorous aspect. I walked into headquarters and saw a number of other British officers at lunch, and was greeted with a chorus of "My God, a bloody sunkissed Anzac." - "This puts the tin lid on it, boys; everything will soon be out of bounds now." - "What the hell brought you up here, Aussie?." I replied: "Oh, I thought there might be a chance of an OBE. or something." "S-s-sh, BF," - was the unexpected reply given in a whisper. - The old man has one and he is in the next room"!

I felt slightly embarrassed and wished that I had not been quite so ready to retort. My new comrades considered that it was a good joke, and I went in to report to the commander. Lieut. Colonel Morley (Hampshire Regt.) had been on the Peninsula and thoroughly appreciated the AIF and its record, mannerisms, etc., and so made me feel right at home. He turned out to be a real good sport, and let me down lightly. I went out to become acquainted with my future comrades, and soon found myself right at home. They were, without exception, a splendid crowd of fellows. Capt. Boulager (Army Gymnastic staff), a French-Canadian officer - seemed to be made up of equal parts of quicksilver and electricity. Capts. Roscoe (Royal Canadian Regt.), a regular officer, and "Toby" Jones (Canadian Highlanders), were representative types of the sister Dominion. It has been my good fortune during the war to met some very fine men of all ranks - wonderful comrades - and "Toby" was one of the plums DCM. and Bar, and badly knocked about, but possessed of an unquenchable optimism and easily the brightest spark in Siberia. To get him singing "Abdul, the Bul Bul Ameer", "The Two Flies", or the song dealing with the vicissitudes of Maggie's Purple Lingerie" was to thoroughly enjoy life at the best.

"Jock" Howat (Royal Warwicks) was a "terrier" officer an engineering expert in private life - a real solid cove in every way. Beaumont (M.G. Corps) was the dag" of the group. He enjoyed teaching English to unsuspecting Russian officers who plagued him for lessons. I sincerely hope that they forgot some of the phrases. The Doc. (Cap. O'Driscoll), of the R.A.M.C. had been attached to the household cavalry during the early part of the war in France, and later with the Buffs. He was a "gem", with a fund of quaint theories and stories, and a positive flair for distilling synthetic vodka when the occasion demanded. I hear that he is now in Nigeria. Other officers came at various times, but the list would be too long to set down here. Majors green (M.G. Corps), a renowned English cricketing captain, and Bunbury (13th Frontier Force Rifles), were two of the outstanding comrades of those distant days. "bun" was a mine of information on the ways of the wily Pathan, Afridi, and suchlike folk. He is still serving on the N.W. Frontier and has become a recognized part of landscape by now, I suppose.

We had interesting Russian officers on HQ as interpreters. Eng.-Comdr. Bobroff (Russian Navy) was a splendid type, whose details of the revolution era made one's hair curl. "Pappa" Panieff, a venerable Colonel of the Imperial Guard, a lovable old gentleman of the Old regime - always courteous and making the best of everything. "Pappa" has been "collected" by the Bolos and had been ordered to report at the local center to be shot. The poor old chap duly reported - there was nothing else to be done - after waiting about for an hour or so and finding that everyone was too busy to take any interest in him decided that he had complied with the order given, and thought it best to walk quietly away. He kept on walking, and eventually got to the railway and kept going east. I wonder if he lives today?

The story may not seem feasible to people outside Russia, but it was confirmed by many of the people we met. "Pappa" was naturally not on the active list, and when they called at his rooms for him he had said: "gentlemen, I am a very old man and have served my country faithfully and to the best of my ability, but if you in your wisdom consider that it is necessary for me to be shot, I must bow to your decision." We didn't use a great deal as an interpreter on training matters; he was not of much more value to us on points of army routine, customs, tradition and etiquette, all of which had to be carefully considered when dealing with a proud military caste, such as the old Russian Army officers.

I found that my first duty was to attend a regimental dinner the evening of my arrival in Irkutsk, and on reporting to H.Q. about 5 p.m., after looking the town over, found the members of the Mission busily engaged getting large lumps of butter down their respective throats. "What's the big idea?" - I asked. "You'll soon learn, old boy," - was all I was told. However we arrived at the regtl. H.Q. and were introduced to those present and to others as they in turn arrived. Very slow business! You approach each officer in turn, click heels, bow, your respective ranks and names are given, a handshake, another bow, and off you go to the next. There were 35 officers of all grades present when our party arrived! About 30 more arrived after us. My nationality was again of interest, and I had to answer innumerable questions regarding my native land. A senior Russian officer, formerly an instructor at the military Academy, Petrograd, said: "So, an Australian! How

interesting. Whenever my students in the academy misbehaved, I would say, very good, you will now write an essay on the Australian forces. It was a most effective punishment, because nobody knew anything of your country, not even I.



After a period of general conversations on the above lines, with various officers (particularly one who was triumphantly brought forward as "English-speaking" and whose complete repertoire consisted of "I love you, kiss me quick!" we were invited to partake of glasses of tea with buns - an item known as "Pirozhni". Cigarettes and conversation followed for about two hours, and I was beginning to feel like bed when another adjournment was made, and we were regaled at "Zakooska", which consisted of caviar and innumerable little dishes of dried fish, smoked fish, and lots of

other items that I didn't recognize nor dally with. Vodka made its appearance at this stage, and I felt that it was not such a bad show after all.

However, after the show was over, nobody made any move to go, and more cigarettes and considerably more conversation followed. An orchestra of Hungarian prisoners of war had been manufactured in the "lager" and were a credit to those who had constructed them. Those coves

could play, and some of the Tsigane music, plus, of course the occasional "roumkas" of vodka partaken of earlier, would have stirred the heart-strings of a stone image. About midnight I was horrified to hear that the "dinner" was now on! Owing to my activities at "zakooska" I had not the slightest desire to eat a thing, but had to go through the programme. Huge bowls of soup, roast fish, venison, and countless other delicacies the whole accompanied by official and "unofficial" toasts - so that I soon appreciated why the butter was eaten so liberally beforehand by my comrades.

To digress a moment: the Russian is soul of hospitality, to be peasant, soldier, or official, and all endeavor to give their guests the best of all possible best times. We, however, received the impression that the army at least was definitely out to get us "blotto", and on occasions when we gave expressions to our suspicions, they laughingly agreed, condoning their actions by saying: "When a man has liquor, we see the real man; the mask is off." (very true, dear reader, if you cast your mind back to some of those "occasions" of yours).

The unofficial toast is usually the downfall of the guest. You (the Britisher) are always in the minority at any Russian function, so you can be sure that before very long a bright, laughing spark of a Russian officer will bow to you and invite you to drink, followed shortly afterwards by another of his comrades, and so on. It is only one each for them, but every time for "Muggins"! When the staple refreshment is vodka, it behoves one to watch one's step. Vodka has been described as a mixture of chain lightning and barbed wire. Judging from its effects the description is not inadequate. Theorists abound in every walk of life, and the "butter" theory was based on the assumption that it placed an oily coat on the lining of the stomach and nullified the "barbed wire" effect of the vodka (at least for the time being, for when the first line of defense had been penetrated, the individual concerned became a "cot case").

I must have earned an M.V.O. as least, for responding to the unofficial toast of His Imperial Majesty, King George the Fifth, as they soon learnt that we would not rise to a personal invitation, but could always be relied on to respond when they said: "Captain, it would give me a great pleasure to drink to the glorious King of England"!

To get back to the dinner: Being a newcomer and thoroughly ignorant of their charming custom, I was fair game, and only by appealing to the regtl. Priest (a jovial person in the usual monk-like dress of coarse brown material with waist-cord, and who, I had found out, lived in Melbourne before the war), was I able to resist the attack. To my unbounded relief the dinner came to an end at about 4 a.m., and I had learnt quite a lot of things that are not set down in official hand-books. However regimental dinners didn't come along every day. These dinners certainly engendered a feeling of comradeship.

Irkutsk (or, in fact, any Siberian town), is not thrilling in late winter or early spring. The Irkutsk-Lake Baikal area is reputed the coldest locality south of the circle, and is even colder than Yakutsk, much further northward. In winter the snow is crisp and sharp; too crisp, even, for making snowballs; but towards spring-time it has begun to assume a "second-hand" appearance, and when the thaw occurs the country is fairly "mucky". Owing to the arrival of refugees from European Russia, Irkutsk, Omsk, and, in fact, all towns on the main line, had become seriously congested, and carried an enormously increased population to that of normal times. After duty hours there was practically nothing for us to do - no amusements except a very mixed cabaret show and out-of-date pictures. Our usual relaxation consisted of a walk around the small riverside park or a stroll up and down the main street. An occasional visit to the well known convict gaol or to the railway station was about the limit of our enjoyment during this period. Recently on the radio I heard a traveler speak of the romance of Siberia! He went straight through by express train, and I daresay the place would look romantic under those conditions. But when you start to realize that it commences to freeze in October, and it is still frozen hard in May and there is absolutely nothing to do with yourself during this period, it beats me where the "romance" comes in. All the Siberians I discussed the subject with were enthusiastic about the romantic possibilities of Australia! Distant fields are always greenest!

During the brief spring and summer, however, you can get about a bit, and, except for the blasted mosquitoes, which appear to have been born with fur coats on, Siberia is a very enjoyable spot, and takes some beating during that all too short period of the year. A number of the British NCOs overcame the tedium of the weary weeks by joining the ranks of the benedicts, a possibility, which never occurred to me, as I had become engaged before leaving Australia. I often wondered how they got on in their domestic affairs, with the language handicap, but I suppose that "actions speak louder than words!" We occasionally visited Russian households, but the confined air in the practically airtight and heated rooms always gave me a desire to get out into the fresh and crisp air again. Double windows with a packing of moss or similar material, a good fire, and an ever-present reminder of the presence of stored cabbage, mushrooms, etc., combined with the usual human aroma, made up quite a good "fug". I suppose one would get used to it in time but it didn't appeal to us, and always gave me a sickening headache. It was a wonderful relief when the milder weather arrived and we could get out of the town.

As the weather was against any outside work, we had to confine ourselves to giving instructions in the barracks. My first job was with the Orenburg Cossack School, a famous old training corps, which had been shifted from its location in S. European Russia to its new quarters in Irkutsk on account of the revolution. It claimed to be 400 years old, and was full of traditional ideas. Another of my shows was the Siberian Military Academy, training Yunkers, similar to our own R.M.C. Cadets. These Yunkers had given a good account of themselves when the "Bolos" were at Irkutsk (before the Czechs drove them on), and they were a very fine crowd to handle.

With all our units, our first job was to get them decent uniforms and clothing, so everybody from the generals down were issued with a complete set of "Tommy" uniform, underclothing, equipment, etc. they were all very badly in need of clothes. With *Dunsterforce* our first job had been to feed the residents of the country. Here food was reasonably plentiful, but clothing of all kinds was at a premium. Goodness only knows how many million pounds worth of stores were poured into Siberia by the British Government. We could always get what we wanted to equip the units.

We were all very keen to get up to what was called the "front", but we found that, following the policy laid down in the withdrawal of the force from Archangel and the Dwina, British personnel were not to be allowed to take an active part in operations, and our only chance seemed to be to "work" our way with our Russian units. Just before the thaw commenced, I went to the 14th Siberian Division and settled down to hard "graft", training junior officers and NCOs for the new regiments. The idea was for these officers and NCOs to be ready to help their units as soon as the thaw came, and open training became possible, when some of the most advanced members, together with officers and NCOs of the Mission, would run regimental training cadres for the remaining leaders.

My first squad consisted of 50 officers and the same number of NCOs, and I was to be assisted by a British NCO (Sgt. Ide, Royal Suffolks), and a Finnish interpreter. At first sight the job looked an impossible one - an Australian officer teaching a British system of musketry and fire control to the Russian troops armed with Japanese rifles!

We were very proud of our efforts, and the Russian units made good use of the range. Our prisoner-workmen were a splendid body of men, and thoroughly enjoyed doing any work with us. "English, good" was their usual remark on our activities. The Russian system of rifle range practice seemed to be to have a mound behind which men stood and levered a projecting log which had wooden figures stuck into it. After a suitable period a pause was made in the firing and the markers came out and plugged the bullet holes with bits of twig. All the range equipment appeared to be sharp pocket knife and a green bough!

For field training exercises, I admit that I exposed my gallant Magyar markers to considerable danger in order to train the Russian junior leaders to deal with situations that were likely to occur on the battlefield, but nobody was hit, and it certainly made the exercises more lifelike and

valuable. The markers were under a Hungarian cavalry sergeant-major, a splendid little man, with huge waving mustaches and a cheerful smile. They seemed to regard themselves as part of the British Empire, and were very proud of our connection with our Mission. I can appreciate that, after five years of captivity in a barbaric land, it must have been a wonderful change to come under a couple of "birds" as "Jock" Howat and myself, who, though we worked them and ourselves equally hard, made sure that they were looked after and comfortable.

The prisoner of war question was a big one in Siberia, and the place seemed to crawl with the unfortunate victims of circumstance. Our first introduction to the problem was on the way up at Verkhne Udinsk, formerly a large war time concentration lager. Our train pulled up for the night, and we were accosted by a miserable poor wretch in rags, who asked us in very correct English for an English paper! We supplied his needs from our stock of old periodicals, fed him, and had a long conversation with him. Prior to the war he had been the leader of an orchestra (Austrian) at a prominent London hotel. He had been captured in late 1914, and for over four years had not heard a word from his wife and children. Here he was, a cultured man, in the wilds of E. Siberia, eking out a miserable existence and with no visible prospect of ever getting home again. The lager seemed to be just a camping area without any restraint being placed on the daily actions of the occupants, but they were as securely held there as if they had been behind stone walls and iron bars.

Verkhne Udinsk seemed hell to him, and the inspiring sight of a huge golden cross showing up clearly in the rays of the setting sun on the crest of a wooden hill was in terrible contrast to his pitiful story, and seemed a mockery of our Christian civilization. (The Cross had been erected by the prisoners of war during the war period). We thought he was a bad case, but later experience among prisoners of war or "Voinna Plainas", as the Russkys called them, proved that this case was only typical of a large proportion of the unfortunate people.

We found the Austrian, Hungarian, and Magyar prisoners generally very good coves; quiet and willing and thankful for any consideration. The Boche were a bit uppish, and had to be kept well in hand. When the Revolution was accomplished, control was released, and a large number of prisoners, particularly the Boche, joined the Red forces and were actively fighting against the White and Allied forces, so that V.P.'s were looked a bit askance from our point of view. At Irkutsk, a large number of the Boche V.P.'s had left the lager and were living in the private houses among the Russian people, with "all home comforts", and becoming quite accustomed to swaggering around the streets in all their Prussian arrogance. We put a "crimp" in their style after one or two incidents, and they were torn from their temporary homes and families and sent back into control again. None of us wanted to be hard on the class as a whole, but it was a bit thick to have to put up with some of their ideas.

We found that the Austrian-Hungarians were reliable and made full use of them whenever necessary for servants, workman, etc. I was a godsend for them, as we fitted them out with good clothes, good food, and even paid them. I had two all the time I was in Irkutsk, and they were trumps. My batman - a Hungarian farmer, who had had no communication with his home for five years - was the finest cove for the job you could ever meet. He looked after me better than a brother. I managed to "wangle" him to Vladivostok when we left, and also managed to get him looked after there, so that he had very good prospects of getting home again. The poor devils in Siberia must have had a rotten spin under the Reds when we left, and it was some years before any concerted action was taken for repatriation of war prisoners from the locality. Probably a large number never saw their homeland again.

Getting back to our rifle range: it attracted a lot of attention, and provided cause for slight friction on certain occasions. I had arranged to meet a Russian company one morning on the range in order to supervise their training, and was surprised to find that they were on the way home again. On enquiry, I found that a Czech company arrived there also, and had told the Russians to "imshi" (or words of that effect), which they forthwith did. There was not a lot of love lost between the two races because the Czech had a few grudges to work off from the early days of their captivity in Russian prisoner of war camps, and the relations existing between their higher command and the

White army chiefs did not help matters. The Czechs were a fine body, and were imbued with a strong national spirit, but certain incidents at the front had left a nasty taste in their mouths and they took every opportunity that presented itself of "putting one over" the Russian units.

As the representative on the spot of the great British Empire, I felt that things like this could not be allowed to go on among Allies and that the Czech officer could not be allowed to "get away with it", so ordered the Russian unit to return to the range. On arrival there I found a sulky-looking Czech officer "ticking-off" my Hungarian sergeant-major, who had evidently "stood on his dig" and refused to allow any of the targets, etc, to be handled by the prisoner of war fatigue party, and was being threatened with all sorts of penalties, including summary shooting, for his attitude. I joined in the discussion and settled that part of it by sending the indignant S.M. away on a job, and enquired from the Czech officer as to the reason for his presence here. He informed me in rather a detached manner that he intended to use the range that morning. I pointed out that unfortunately the range was engaged on that occasion by a Russian unit, but that arrangements could be made, no doubt, to accommodate his unit at a future date if necessary permission was applied for. He gave me the loud "Ha, Ha" and retorted that the "Czechs did not bother about such things as permission; what they wanted, they took."

Both he and the Russian officer were becoming very heated, so I ordered the Russian officer to move his company into the timber out of the way, to get their rifles loaded, and to await my return, which he did. I decided that the only thing to do was to bring the matter to a head there and then, and using the interpreter to make certain that my remarks were fully understood, informed the intruder that it was not a question of Russian or Czech rights, that I was the British officer in charge, and that what I said, went. I also took the opportunity to point out that the Czech nation existed only through the good offices of the great British Empire, and generally tried to give him the impression that it only required me to nod to Lloyd George and very definite changes would take in European politics, particularly with regard to the Czech nation, finally making it quite clear to him that I considered he was an insufferable blot in the landscape, and if his unit was not removed from the vicinity inside a specified time limit I would be prepared to go to extreme limits to ensure that they were!

It all seems very farcical to think back over nowadays, but it must be appreciated that I was a lone Britisher, and imbued also with a strong national spirit and a genuine desire to help the struggling White forces along their thorny path to victory. Having made my ultimatum, I reminded him of the strength of the Empire, and rejoined the Russians, wondering "what the blazes" I was going to do if he defied my orders. Thinking it best to impress the gentleman with my apparent intentions, I had the Russian company extended, and moved about through the timber as if preparing for action, but was genuinely relieved to see the Czech unit move off before its time limit expired. I had a good pal on Czech H.Q., and brought the matter to his notice on the next occasion that I was in his company, with very gratifying results to all concerned, except the offending commander.

One could not help admiring the Czech units for their splendid fighting qualities, and the very high standard of physical fitness and training. They had accomplished wonderful things in organizing their splendid corps from the various prisoner of war camps all over Russia, and collecting them to form the spearhead of the White attack. The story behind that achievement will probably never be fully told in English. It will be remembered that the Czechs were forced to fight under the banner of Austria and Germany, and they did so very unwillingly, taking every opportunity of deserting to the Russian armies; in fact, whole battalions were reported as having "gone over" with bands playing! They were placed in special camps in Russia, and received special treatment until the Revolution in 1917, when it became apparent to them, that the people in charge of things in Russia were not as favorably disposed towards them as they formerly appeared to be, and they suffered accordingly. The allies made a good move when they utilized the Czech personnel to clarify the position in Siberia. They reminded me of the AIF - "Fed up and far from home", but full of fight and the same "don't give a _____ who owns the train attitude always to the fore.

It was the beginning of the end when their troops through differences of opinion higher up, were withdrawn from active operations. I hope that they are on our side next war! They have some sound ideas, too. I was detailed once to meet a British general at a railway station, who was to present British decorations to Czech officers and NCOs. While waiting for the train I witnessed the arrival of the Czech guard of honor avec band, and was very struck with the sensible arrangement of the big drum. (One is always sorry for the big drummer of a band, he looks so uncomfortable, particularly on a rough road), but the Czech drummer on this occasion had his drum fitted to a frame on wheels, which was pulled along by a shaggy Siberian pony. He looked a most comfortable person as he strolled along admiring the turnout and occasionally giving the drum the required "thump". The pony was evidently well trained, and conformed to the movements of the band without any trouble. I suppose that when the band was silent he would take the opportunity to have a ride on the pony!

The fact that the world is a very small place was brought home to me on more than one occasion during my stay in Siberia. For instance, I walked into a Russian headquarters on one occasion and was accosted in the following terms by an officer: "Hullo, Australia; how goes it?" Well, one does not expect to be addressed in current Australian slang when meeting Russian officers in the wilds of Siberia, and I was a bit flabbergasted for the moment. On recovery I enquired what he knew about my country, and was agreeably surprised to hear that the speaker had spent a number of years in Australia, particularly in Queensland, but had made the mistake, according to his ideas, of coming over to his native country to fight in its battle, and could see no prospect of getting out of it again, and back to what I agreed was "God's own country". It was quite refreshing to hear him say: "You know, son, if I had any _____ brains I'd be out there still or in the AIF," it seemed like being back in Aussie, to hear him speak in the local vernacular with his cripes" and "fair dinkum", etc. I called in again when I passed that area, but could not get any news of him, and received the impression that he was suspected of "red" tendencies; if so, he would have had a very short shrift in those hectic days. A Russian had only to speak out of his turn and he was "for the high jumps".

On another occasion I was walking through a forest clearing, and, passing some log huts, came across a few kiddies playing. They straightened up in military fashion when they saw my uniform and the eldest boy gravely saluted me. Being fond of children, and having "young" ideas, I as gravely returned the salute and teasingly called out: "Good day, Joe; how goes it?" in English (or, rather, Australian). To my astonishment the boy replied: "very well, sir, but my name is not Joe" - in equally plain English. I was not prepared for the "comeback" and stammered: "Why are you one of those darned Yanks?" A high pitched female voice from a nearby hut broke in with (all our breath), "Indeed he is not, and you should be the last person to insult him like that: the boy is as good an Australian as you are, captain"! Thoroughly flustered, I made my apologies to the irate lady and her lad, and in conversation found out that the boy had been born in Brunswick (Vic.), while his parents had been on the staff of the Russian Consulate before the war. Poor kid. Goodness only knows what has happened to him by this time. I never passed that way again, and do not know how he and his folks fared.

On another occasion, when visiting a Russian unit and wishing to convey some special instructions, and not feeling very reliant on my ability to make myself understood, I asked if there was anyone who could interpret English. After a search, a "scruffy-looking" private soldier, dressed in the usual whitish-greyish cotton uniform of the old army, as produced. Thinking that he was the usual ex-sailor type one met on these occasions, with a vocabulary of about twenty words, 90 per cent. of which are generally a parody of slang or obscenities, I was agreeably surprised to hear him speak correct idiomatic English. He was quite frank, and gave me his whole history. It appeared that he was the son of a Jewish clothing contractor in a big way in London, who, realizing that conscription was imminent, sent his son to Russia out of the way. He avoided service by this means in Russia, but was conscripted into the new White Army after the revolution. The old man thought he was doing a very shrewd thing in not becoming naturalized in England, but it effectual "stymied" the prospects of his son. The White authorities would not recognize him as an English subject, and there he was, a good private soldier at 30 roubles per month, the rouble then being nominally 300 to 1 pound, but about 500 at actual exchange. He looked at things in a very

philosophic way, and reckoned that he was a "goner". I got the Railway Mission interested in him, and they applied for his services as an interpreter. He was on a good thing then; good pay, good conditions, and a certainty of getting back to U.K. Some time afterwards I asked about him, and found that he had "blotted his copy-book" by being found out in the sale of some stores, and had been sent back to the army again!"

While we were so busy at Irkutsk and the surrounding districts, things had not gone too well at the "front" itself, and from the beginning of spring the fortunes of the White Government had steadily decreased. While the Archangel and other Northern forces had been active, the White forces had steadily made progress, and the general collapse of the red resistance was confidently expected, but with the withdrawal of the Allied northern contingents a very definite change took place in the condition of affairs. Our troops received a severe check, the front was broken and the army retired; and when I say retired, I mean it! No half measures, thank you - a good old-fashioned retirement (as the American Negro soldier said to the hare: "Out of the way, let those run who can run!") We had been "itching" to get to get up to the front with Russian units, but it began to appear that the front would soon be back to, or past, us if we waited a little longer. There is no doubt that the position was becoming rather "interesting" for all concerned. The Czechs had been the strong card of the White attack, and with their withdrawal from the line, things went badly into pieces.

The Bolos were well organized (at least to deal with their opposing countrymen); they worked on the principle adopted by the Boche in 1914 - that of "putting the boot in"! Their propaganda was also very subtle and effective, so that the unfortunate White soldier was in a difficult position. He frequently was not sure that a neighboring unit, his own unit, or even his comrades, were "dinkum", or whether, at the first shot, they would "beat it" or "chuck" their hand in. He knew that if defeated, the least that could happen to him would be to be shot - should it happen to be cold weather he was assured of being stripped naked and tied up outside a hut with a temperature of anywhere from 20 to 40 below. (We found them in that condition). The officers also had occasion to worry. They were the special mark of the all-conquering Bolo, and if captured could be sure of "getting it in the neck" with variations. In addition they were not very sure of their troops in many cases, and instances occurred where the men, influenced by fear or propaganda, "did in" their officers and went over to the other side.

The situation was so muddled politically that it was beyond the powers of the simple Russian soldier to think logically and appreciate what object the Allies really had in continuing the war. The Bolos made great use of printing press, both for posters and for inflating the currency, and managed to get their products distributed well along the railway line in our rear. One of their "stunts" was to parody well-known Russian songs. I remember receiving an order that "Shahabanya", a favorite Russian ballad, was on the "black list"; and that anyone found whistling, playing, or singing that tune was to be arrested. It appeared that the Bolos had circulated a set of new words to it for the benefit of the White troops, to the effect that "Russian soldiers were dressed in English clothing, smoked Japanese tobacco, and were under a dictator at Omsk" - very trifling, perhaps, to our eyes, but capable of infinite harm to the White control of the political situation, and the tune was therefore ruthlessly suppressed.

To give another viewpoint: a Russian officer asked me for advice about his Feldwebel (sergeant-major), whom he considered was not supporting him in the control of the unit, and, being in a detached locality, he did not feel so keen on "putting on the mat". It was none of my business, but I realized that if he "went", I should probably "go" too; so made it my business to keep an eye on the Feldwebel, and found that he had quite a lot to say to the troops after parade hours, so took an opportunity one night to catch him on his own, and put it to him plainly that he "talked too much", and that it was a complaint that frequently ended fatally in civil wartime. He gave me a shrewd look, and we parted, but he was "adrift" at roll-call next morning, and I am convinced that he was a red. I am not suggesting that he was bluffed by me, but he probably thought that if the "mad English" had "tumbled to them" it was time to go. We Britishers carried a bit of weight in Siberia, and could get things done.

While all the "front" was going to pieces, we kept hard at work on our division to fit it for the line wherever it might happen to stabilize, but the situation was very disturbing, to say the least of it. Of course, the situation had taken a few months to reach the position it was now in, and I do not propose to cover all our activities during that period - it would take too long for one thing, and, probably, not be of very great interest after all these years. One thing we tried to do was to get the Russian officers to join in with their men playing games, etc., so as to establish a more comradely feeling between all ranks. Naturally, the Russian army had different ideas to ours in that respect, and we thought that there was too big a gap between the two grades; the officers never bothered about their men like we were trained to do. It used to annoy me to see a Russian soldier standing up motionless at the salute for five minutes or so while his officer "ticked him off" for some error or kept him awaiting his pleasure.

I will never forget the first time we introduced football to our section of the white army. We arranged for a company to be ready after reveille and turned up in singlets, shorts, and issue boots to find that, whilst the men had turned in somewhat suitable attire, the only concession the officers had made to the occasion was to leave off their spurs and swords! They refused to take off any more clothing, and pointed out that "it was not done" in their army. I've never seen such funny sights in my life as we saw that morning (or many other mornings). Every Australian kid is accustomed from his earliest days to kick a ball of some sort, but these husky Siberians had evidently never seen a football before, and the ludicrous efforts made by them to kick a ball in motion had made a cat laugh. They entered into the spirit of the thing, though, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and so did we. The officers stood on, but occasionally when the ball came near them would stroll condescendingly over to it and attempt to kick it; the private soldier who had been in pursuit of the ball "freezing" to attention as soon as he noticed their attention. We gradually broke them of that habit, and made them realize that they were "off parade" and that the best man was the man who could get the ball and kick it.

After the first football lesson the officers resented our attitude towards their actions, but we pointed out that, in the British army, the officer was expected to be able to do all that the man could do, and, if possible, do it a little better or a little quicker, and the man appreciated it. We improved their ideas in the long run, but they did not like "mixing up" with the troops. In other ways they get very close to their men, though. On certain special occasions the officers sit down with their men and dine under the same conditions, which, when you know the conditions, means a lot to people of their attitude. It must be realized that the officer class in Russia, as in Germany, was a "race apart" before the war, and exercised extraordinary power, so I suppose our rough and ready ways were a bit of a shock to them. The Russian soldier, at least, the Siberian variety, is a splendid chap. Cheery, long suffering, and responsive to good treatment, and is certainly not a "dope". I do not think any soldiers would have done any better under the conditions faced by the White army, who, until British equipment and clothes were issued to them, were facing the rigours of a Siberian winter in cotton clothing, with poor boots and a scarcity of greatcoats. Fancy one greatcoat to six men in the line with pay at the rate of 2/- a month! The British Mission had a supply of comforts, and I took the opportunity of presenting a pipe and a packet of tobacco to each NCO or man who did a job in an excellent manner. It was equivalent to more than three months' pay, and I often thought that I could have been a divisional commander if I had only got enough tobacco and pipes!

They do not think on the same lines as us, though. Running a prize shoot for them on the occasion on the termination of the training of a batch of new officers of the Military Academy, I detected one individual infringing the conditions, and promptly awarded the prize to the next man. There was great perturbation among the controlling officers, colonels, and suchlike folk. They approached me and wanted to know "why". I pointed out that he had done what he ought not to do, and thereby obtained an advantage over his comrades. They pointed out that it proved "how cunning he was", and, according to them, that seemed to be a desirable qualification. My contention that it was unfair, was not appreciated by them in the least, and we agreed to differ on the subject. It's all in the way you are brought up, I suppose!

Another happening: We had issued a unit with a complete set of British gear, and were surprised to hear rumours a few days later that Chinese storekeepers were selling some of the stuff. The C.O. was approached, and admitted having disposed of certain articles. His naïve reason being "that the men had only been accustomed to having one shirt, singlet, etc., so it was a waste giving them two, and the money had been handy for regimental requirements"! Can you beat it?

One of the most interesting items of my experience was a hunting trip to the Lena River district, in the company of a Buriat community. The headquarters of the Mission at Irkutsk were in possession of a motor car - a rare luxury for Siberia - and when an opportunity presented itself, "Toby" Jones and I managed to secure the use of it and made preparations for the trip.

The British gold-mining companies operating on the Lena River mines had, through the terms of their concession, to maintain a road to that area from Irkutsk. It was a jolly good road too, but the difficulty was get the car on to it, as there was a gap of about a mile of glutinous mud between the road and the town boundary. However, with local assistance we managed to get the car through and on to the smooth gravel road bound for the Buriat village 100 miles away.

These Buriats are a semi-Mongol people, very hospitable and streets ahead of the Russian peasantry with regard to agriculture, housing, education, etc. here, 100 miles away from a railway and 2000 miles from the nearest port, one saw up-to-date American farming machinery, pianos and well constructed dwelling made of sawn timber, with most of the modern conveniences common to an Australian farm. They have been exempt from military service on account of services rendered to the Russian Empire in bygone days, and exist in well organized settlements all over Siberia. A number of their children even attend the colleges in the coastal towns of China (founded by Dollar, the U.S. shipping magnate).

They made us welcome and we introduced the Rugby football to the lads of the village with satisfactory success. All work seemed to cease in the settlement as soon as the ball was kicked.

By this time (October) things had gone very badly for the White forces. The withdrawal of the Archangel and other northern groups had allowed the Bolos to concentrate on the purely White armies and deal with them in detail with devastating results. Our "front" could be said to have ceased to exist and a general chaotic condition prevailed. By this time also a large number of the Mission had been withdrawn from Siberia in conformity with the general British policy. Personally, I was very keen on continuing with the anti-Bolo groups and had succeeded in being selected a one of three officers to go to South Russia with Denikin's armies. My finish, however, was in sight... I eventually found myself in Vladivostok en route for Australia.

E. W. Latchford - *With the White Russians*. "Reveille", vol 6 to 12, August 1933 (pp 26-27) through to vol 7, no. 8, April 1934 (pp 23, 57).