

Tuesday Dec 6 1927
Moscow

Dearest and Bimini: -

The first day's real work is over. It began in looking up the Russian words for breakfast, which is ЗАВТРАКЪ and pronounced zahf-trähk, egg and bread and coffee, ЯЙЦО (yahitsaw), ХЛѢБЪ (khlep) КОФЕ (kaifé) respectively and after practice sharpened by real interest, getting them successfully into the head of one of the help and so beginning the day by nice, well nourished. I'm not yet at the Hotel Savoy and no one speaks anything but Russian here. It's awkward but there's nothing to be done yet: I go to the Savoy for dinner and to ask for mail though nothing has come through yet in the way of letters.

There were some Christmas cards to mail - I had written 30 of them last night - and a telephone call to wait for (and thus it was 11 o'clock when I went over to the Narkomsdrav (Health Dept for the USSR) and started talking to a young MD named Cleftel. Having been a medical student in Rome and Genoa he spoke Italian by preference and he certainly had plenty to say for we were at it without interruption until 3:15 - I'd start him with a question and he'd

finish me with the answer! Then at 3:15 came Prof. Bronner, the chief of Medical Instruction under Lunacharski; the Commissar for Education; a hard intelligent direct realist who answered questions well and instantly corrected any inaccuracies on my part. Dermatologists are always like that - I've never met one yet who, having examined hairs for a living wasn't willing to shout "Wrong!" when ^{a hair} ~~one~~ was split incorrectly. Thus was ~~accepted~~ Bronner and until 5 when I bundled up again in blue scarf, black coat and overshoes, and slipping-slid over to the Savoy for a dinner I was quite ready for. Then after searching again for mail I went to look at the Kremlin and to walk a bit around streets that were fast thinning out and then back here to take an hour's nap after revising my notes of this afternoon's conversations.

Well, what of it all thus far? First it's not in Europe. Just as the town of Maceio in the State of Alagoas has houses like the houses elsewhere and superficial resemblances to Europe or ^{N.} America but yet isn't anything but North Brazilian at heart, so this place may have street cars and autos and glass windows and cement stairways and office buildings and not give deeper down any feeling

of our life at all. The tempo of life is different even when on the eight hour day it is imitating Europe. At eight AM the factories suddenly pour out smoke and steam and people hurry through the streets as though Asiatics were acting ~~the~~^a charade for ^{the word} industrial — I exaggerate but there's none of the dooped slopping routine of Belfast about it. Part of the liveliness is due to the cold — for everything is on sleighs except a few noisy big automobiles — and the people are bundled out in all directions about a foot from their probable bodies. Second everything is dirty and smelly and second hand looking. It really is a govt of workers — that is, the constant impression you get is proletarian — not because as in East side London they can't change or "rise", nor because as in Cripple Creek they're too hot after luck to trouble to wash up, nor because as in Naples some ^{other} hungry mongrel would tear them to pieces, nor because as with Baltimore coons they are shiftless — but just because there's no where that's its worth while changing to! There's nothing better — nothing! To me it is infinitely depressing, in fact I can't reflect

on it much without feeling caged. I am willing to admit that for the present generation who have known wage slavery and the abyss this present state of affairs may seem Utopian but children brought up in this - and young adolescents - will they take "no!" for an answer? It is beyond me - for I don't understand them probably anyhow.

The smells are simply historical! Things burning that ought not to be burned! Things that should have been thrown away two weeks ago. Sugar that tastes of cockroaches - yes I'm back at real travel again and for all the joy of seeing the Kremlins by moonlight there are, ~~draw~~ draw backs. Incidentally no lice or bugs yet though lots of house flies, which means all it implies.

Last night about 5 PM I saw Lenin lying in state - he's been there 3 yrs - with a huge queue of 300 or so waiting in the snow outside. And there right nearby a rough granite tomb over John Reed - whom I knew on the Lamppoon better than anyone else - one of the few people I've ever known to whom life never was a sham or a bore

and whom I admired ^{and} feared and felt motherly over all at the same time — he'd died of typhus as a Communist and here was I staring at his snow-covered tomb. I know where it all began with him — he knew a boy at school in Morristown who said what he thought. Jack told me he'd never dreamed of such a thing before but he vowed he'd do the same — and he said even as a Junior in college that he'd found it so exhilarating he couldn't stop but he didn't know or care where it took him. He told me his whole existence was around that single quest.

~~Darling~~ ~~like~~ left all the above apart from more I want to say to you. It's half past twelve — I don't write quickly unless there's little to say — and the town is as still as snow and winter and night could make the countryside miles and miles from here. Ringing with silence — except for a few stirrings

in this big building.

It most breaks my heart to see how cruel these people have been to each other. Just as when lightning strikes nearby you reach out to protect your own little bairns, I feel terrified at so much cruelty and misery and I want to reach out swiftly to you and say 'Oh dearest let's never dream of hurting anybody for any principle whatever. If you have somebody to love, you can see suffering without becoming hardened — and you have no idea how much during these days I shall be leaning on you to help me through all this. The faces here that are not mere wooden masks have a keen distrustful defeated look as of a person weary of torture — can't you imagine what it will be to see you again?

~~Dearest Goodnight~~
Alas.