

An old colonel, a political prisoner working in the prison office, was expecting his release owing to the Tenth Anniversary Amnesty. He was asked what he would do for a living and he replied that he had requested to be allowed to keep his prison job and to live with relatives in Moscow. No religious services are allowed in prison, but at the Moscow Lefortovo Prison a priest is serving a sentence as a political prisoner, and the delegates saw an altar set up in his cell, with lighted candles. The priest was in his vestments saying mass. He said that his parishioners provided him with candles, etc.

Another prison visited was in Baku. This was, in Tsarist day, a military prison, and is now known as a "House of Correction." Conditions in relation to food, accommodation, holidays, wages, etc., were similar to those in Moscow prisons. Trades were learnt by both men and women to be of use to them when released. Every facility was given to talk to prisoners, and we have no hesitation in declaring that, compared with prison conditions in either Britain or Ireland, these are as day to night. Amongst those who visited this prison were several who had been prisoners in American, Irish, English and Scottish prisons, and therefore we could judge better than ordinary visitors. To see a man who was doing a ten years' sentence for murder, who was illiterate when the offence was committed, displaying photos that he had taken and pointing out the processes, gave an idea of the superiority of the Soviet methods as compared with the degrading tasks imposed in British prisons. Every member of the party was given a bust of Lenin that the prisoners had made, in order to demonstrate to those who imagine that our statement is overdrawn that real artistic work can be developed where the opportunity is given. Prisoners wear their own clothes, have their own dramatic circles, orchestra, wireless sets, etc., and in every aspect of the prison life, those in charge are using every endeavour to demonstrate that a real, lasting change can be made in the character of prisoners provided they are given proper opportunities. To see prisoners smoking, playing chess and dominoes, and sitting in rooms that have 6 to 12 beds as against the single cell with its wooden bed on the floor in British prisons, is an indication of the tremendous change in the outlook on the treatment of crime. We are prepared to state here what we signed in Baku, that prison life in Soviet Russia is better than the conditions that many British miners have to endure to-day.