THOSE WERE THE DAYS

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Category: Opinions

An excerpt from Marietta Shaginian's "Journey Through Soviet Armenia"

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Stalin District

This new district has sprung up within the past few years in a place which was a wilderness. According to a recent estimate sixty per cent of Armenia's manufacturing industry is concentrated in this district. Visitors from Moscow and Leningrad are apt to think, when comparing it with their own cities, that Erevan is mall and image that a five minutes' ride by motor car will take them to the Stalin District. However, Erevan is by no means a small city; the ride to the Stalin District is quite a long one. And when you finally arrive in this large industrial area you find this so-called suburb with its main street--the broad Orjonikidze Avenue--with its bustling crowds, its speeding traffic of every description, the tall, stately buildings on the right and the left, looking much more like the central part of the city than the quieter and perhaps more dignified uptown section.

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This industrial area did not come into existence as a result of the re-planning of an old-time factory district. There was no factory district to re-plan in Erevan. This was a distinct advantage. It meant that there were no old, overcrowded, ill-equipped factory buildings to be pulled down, no smoke-filled streets, tumble-down shacks and dirty barracks to be completely swept away.

To re-plan and re-house areas that had been in existence before the revolution required long years and great exertion.

The Stalin factory district, with its newly laid-out Orjonikidze Avenue, was built approximately over a period of six years and is a tribute to planned building under socialism. The factories here are modern in every sense of the word. There are spacious, clean shops with plenty of light, designed with a view of utilizing all the latest inventions as well as the new methods which are constantly being introduced by Stakhanovite workmen. Around the factories are flower beds, fountains, and inviting-looking cottages, housing libraries, crèches and kindergarten. Workers' dwellings with their numerous verandas are immersed in a wealth of foliage.

Behind handsomely-wrought railing on Orjonikidze Avenue, stand the giants of Armenia's industries. Here are the Electric Machine-Building Plant, a young establishment, but already of countrywide reputation, with eighty per cent of its personnel of Komsomol age, yet working just as good if not better in some case than seasoned workers, the Dzerzhinsky Lathe-Construction Works, shipping its products to all parts of the Soviet Union, the Automobile and Tractor Parts Plant, one of the first to fill orders for the gigantic hydro-power developments now under construction in the Soviet Union. Other establishments are the Cable Works producing many kinds of cable; the Tyre Works--one of the largest of its kind in the Soviet Union noted for women workers who have distinguished themselves in Socialist emulation. The personnel of Erevan's Tyre Factory to start output are at present competing for higher production with their Yaroslav comrades and beating them at it.

Still other important works in the Stalin District are the Compressor Plant, sending its machines to various parts of the Soviet Union; a factory producing turbine generators for rural areas and exporting them to Central Asia and Azerbaijan; a precise electrical instrument plant, a carbide mill,

the second its kind in Erevan, the huge Kirov Chemical Mills, completely mechanized along modern lines, their staff almost entirely composed of highly skilled men and women who are either graduate engineers or trained technicians.

Apart from the major plants mentioned above, there are smaller factories, among them a splendid cloth factory, its fine samples of cloth, bearing the label "Erevan," are popular with Moscovites; a tobacco factory, a confectionery, two furniture factories, two shoe factories, a meat-packing plant, factories producing metal products, building materials, slaked lime, paints and varnishes. Add to this a railway station and railway depot, a Hippodrome, numerous building organizations, a permanently functioning agricultural fair and you will see that the Stalin District is really a big industrial town in itself.

Should you pay a call to the director of Erevan's Electric Machine-Building Plant--his name is Gurgen Cholakhyan--he will give you an outline of the plant's history which is rather typical of that of many other factories and mills of the Stalin District. The building of this plant was begun in 1940 but had to stop during the war. Only in 1947 was the plant set in operation and take over by the Electric Machine-Building Ministry. In 1950, though many were still under construction, its output for the period of eleven months was four times that of the year 1947. What mainly accounted for this was the improved technique and greater labour efficiency.

'Our plant ranks fifth among the Soviet Union's electric machine-building establishment such as 'Electrosila' and the Moscow Transformer and Dynamo Plants; and as soon as the new buildings are ready you'll be hearing about us," said Gurgen Cholakhyan and there rang in his voice a note of pride.

The scale of this plant's production may be judged by the fact that it produces per day more transformers and generators than all of the three Trans-Caucasian republics require in a year.

By the end of 1955 the plant will be producing scores of thousands of small-sized power stations for the rural areas. In 1950 the plant mastered the production of an extremely important item--the control panel. "We've been waiting for such panels for many years," say Armenian farmers. Today these neat oil-painted panels come in along with the generator sets and are being shipped in ever larger quantities direct from the plant's own railway station.

Erevan's Stalin District, even as is the whole city of Erevan, and the whole republic, is an example of what has been accomplished as a result of the far-seeing Communist policy of industrializing the backward outlying areas of the country.