

COMMERCIAL RUSSIA

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Commercial Russia by William Henry Beable

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WILLIAM HENRY BEABLE

**COMMERCIAL
RUSSIA**

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BY
WILLIAM HENRY BEABLE

WITH A MAP

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UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

TO
SIR FRANCIS H. BARKER
IN APPRECIATION
OF HIS ASSISTANCE IN MY EFFORTS
TO FURTHER FRIENDLY COMMERCIAL RELATIONS
BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND RUSSIA

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COMMERCIAL RUSSIA

I

INTRODUCTION

Two trips to Russia—Changes in recent years—Demands created by municipal developments—Improvement of domestic requirements—Germany's former advantage—Factors militating against Germany—Sympathy rather than exploitation—America and Japan—Demand for high-class goods—Britain's possibilities in Russia—Catalogues—The rouble and the exchange—Early investigation necessary—The commercial war.

IN the early part of 1916 the writer organized the Anglo-Russian Trade Commission for the purpose of investigating on the spot the possibilities of British manufacturers in Russia, the best methods to be employed for securing trade after the war, and as far as possible putting those represented into communication with reliable agents and responsible buyers.

Sufficient support having been given to the enterprise, he proceeded to Russia in April, and spent six months in that country. He soon found that in order to fully appreciate the conditions and possibilities of business, it was necessary to cover the country very thoroughly, and not to confine his investigations to the larger cities, such as Petrograd, Moscow and Odessa. In addition to these, he therefore visited Archangel in the North, the other towns of the Black Sea, Nikolaiev and Kherson, the important district of the Sea of Azov, including Rostov-on-Don, Taganrog and Novocherissk, Baku and Tiflis in the

lower Caucasus, all the principal towns on the Volga, including the Fair at Nijni-Novgorod ; Omsk, the principal town in Siberia, Ekaterinburg and the mining district of the Urals, and several other towns, such as Kiev, Kharkov, Vologda, Viatka, Kursk, Tula, Perm, in some of which the English language is seldom, if ever, heard.

Through the good offices of Mr. Runciman, then President of the Board of Trade, the Foreign Office instructed its Diplomatic and Consular representatives in Russia to give him all the help possible, and Baron Heyking, then Russian Consul-General in London, provided him with an open letter of introduction that proved invaluable in his investigations.

Mr. Henry Cooke, the Commercial Attaché at the British Embassy at Petrograd, a man whose previous consular experience and extensive travels in Russia enable him to speak with authority, enthusiastically received my mission as a step in the right direction, and, notwithstanding the meagre limits of office accommodation and clerical assistance, cheerfully placed his wealth of knowledge at my disposal and devoted considerable time in assisting me, not only in making my investigations, but also in gathering material for this book. Some at least of the Consuls and Vice-Consuls also rendered valuable assistance, and I especially acknowledge that given by Mr. Caruana at Kherson, Mr. Macdonnell at Baku, Mr. Bagge at Odessa, Mr. Randrup at Omsk, Mr. Preston at Ekaterinburg and Mr. Negroponte at Rostov-on-Don.

But perhaps the most valuable information obtained was from Russian manufacturers, merchants, agents, and more especially from the shopkeepers, not only in the larger cities, but in the smaller towns, such as Vologda, Viatka, Samara, Ekaterinburg, Ekaterinoslav, Tsaritzin, Astrakhan, etc., etc., from which one got a point of view not always obtainable in such places as Petrograd, Mos-