

MSS

RUSSIA No. 1 (1922),

**Correspondence**

with the

**Russian Soviet Government**

respecting the

**Imprisonment of Mrs. Stan Harding  
in Russia.**

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*Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.*

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**Correspondence with the Russian Soviet Government respecting the imprisonment of Mrs. Stan Harding in Russia.**

No. 1.

*The Marquess Curzon of Kedleston to Mr. R. M. Hodgson (Moscow).*

Sir,

*Foreign Office, September 3, 1921.*

I SHALL be glad if you will draw the attention of the Soviet Government to the case of Mrs. Stan Harding, which is giving rise to pressing questions in the House of Commons, and which, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, is of such a nature that the Soviet Government should meet it by exceptional measures.

2. Mrs. Stan Harding proceeded to Russia as the representative of the "New York World" in June 1920. In order to facilitate her journey, she first saw M. Litvinof in Copenhagen, with introductions from prominent German Socialists and Communist leaders. M. Litvinof gave her a letter to M. Gukovsky, the head of the Soviet Government Economic Mission at Reval. On presenting this letter on her arrival in Reval she was informed that permission had been received from the People's Commissary for Foreign Affairs for her to proceed into Russia. At the Soviet Mission in Reval she was introduced to an official of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, by name Rossinsky, and was informed that he would accompany her on her journey to Russia as English interpreter. A number of foreign delegates to the Third International also travelled with her. On arrival in Moscow, Rossinsky accompanied her to the Foreign Office, whence she was taken to a house where apartments are allotted to visitors from abroad. Later in the day Mrs. Harding was informed by M. Mogilevsky (who had also accompanied her from Reval) that, as she would probably be going to the Foreign Office every evening, it was thought that it would be more convenient for her to be allotted an apartment in a more central quarter of the city. This had been arranged for, and he pressed her to go at once. Prior to accompanying Mogilevsky, she was informed by Rossinsky that he had made an appointment for her to see M. Chicherin at 11 o'clock that evening. Mogilevsky then drove her in a car to the Lubyanka headquarters of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission. On arriving there he informed her that she was arrested. She was placed in a guard-room and stripped, the seams and hems of her clothes being opened and subjected to a search. She was then placed in a solitary cell, containing a verminous plank bed, without a chair. She was later subjected to an interrogation by Mogilevsky, lasting several hours, in the course of which he informed her that she was chief of the British Secret Service organisation in Russia. To this she replied that she was not, never had been and never would be, in

the British Secret Service. In reply, Mogilevsky jeered at her, and told her to "tell that to her grandmother." He appeared to base his charges against her on the following grounds:—

- (1.) That in 1911 to 1912 she had proceeded to China at a time when, he asserted, the country was closed to Europeans, and she must therefore have been engaged upon some secret work.
- (2.) That in the course of the year 1918, prior to the armistice, she proceeded to Germany, which he regarded as indicating that she was employed on secret intelligence service.
- (3.) Upon an article written by one Sefton Delmar, published in the "Daily News," suggesting that her activities in Germany were of far greater importance than was generally known.
- (4.) A telegram received by Mrs. Harding from Mr. Tuohy, the London representative of the "New York World," engaging her for that paper, stating what her salary would be, and that he was sending her copies of telegrams from Lincoln Eyre, who had previously been the correspondent of the paper in Russia, as a guide to the sort of copy that he wanted.
- (5.) That Lincoln Eyre had led Comrade Balabanova (a female member of the Petrograd Soviet, formerly an exile in Switzerland, and now a secretary to the Communist International) to believe that he was a Communist, and had subsequently made reports to the British authorities.

3. Mrs. Harding told Mogilevsky that his suggestions showed complete ignorance of the facts. (1) and (2) appeared to relate to a journey undertaken on the Upper Yang-tsze during the Chinese rebellion and to a journey in Germany in the autumn of 1918 for the purpose of obtaining a divorce from her husband, a German subject, from whom she had been separated for years.

4. Mrs. Harding asked to see M. Chicherin, to which Mogilevsky replied that the Minister for Foreign Affairs did not concern himself with espionage, finally adding, "You will never see Chicherin unless you come to terms with me, and the less you say about your introductions the better, because it is these introductions that make your case so very grave. They show that you possess the confidence of the German Socialists and the Communist leaders, and are therefore in a position to be a danger to us. If you tell us your mission and denounce your accomplices you will be released and allowed to live exactly as other journalists, only we shall require an undertaking from you that you do not concern yourself with the Third International, and if you break this undertaking you will be immediately rearrested."

5. Mrs. Harding again protested that she was not an agent and had no accomplices. Mogilevsky then offered to introduce her to two *Entente* agents, who, he said, were very well known; and when she said that she did not know their names, he added that she was lying and that these agents would tell her that the Extraordinary Commission kept its promises. She then asked him how he felt himself in a position to inform her that these people had come to an arrange-

ment with the Extraordinary Commission. He replied: "It is quite simple, Madam; because you will never leave the cell where you are now except to suffer the penalty of espionage in war-time—unless we hold you in our power."

6. Mrs. Harding was next accused of having assisted Mrs. Harrison (then representing the "Baltimore Sun" in Moscow) to obtain certain information, knowing that she was in the Secret Service. Mrs. Harding denied that she knew Mrs. Harrison was in the Secret Service, and said that any information she had given to Mrs. Harrison was of such a nature that it was in the interests of German Socialists and of the British and American public to have it.

7. A second and third interrogation followed at later dates, at the close of which Mogilevsky said: "Your case is closed. I have done what I can to save you, but you refuse to help me, and you have decided that you will remain faithful to the British Intelligence Service, and I can do nothing." She then applied for a trial, to which he replied that she would never be tried.

8. Mrs. Harding was imprisoned in solitary confinement for nine weeks, and was not allowed books or any other literature. The food provided daily during that time was described by her as tea or coffee—she was not sure which it was meant to be—1 lb. of black bread, herring soup twice a day, which she described as simply hot water with herring skins and eyes in it. A plate of porridge was occasionally provided.

9. The effect of solitary confinement for so long a time under conditions of such squalor and privation induced Mrs. Harding to decide that she would endeavour to concoct a story that she had been requested to obtain certain information on the raw materials of Russia from a fictitious Russian, who, she was informed, would introduce himself to her by a password when she got to Russia. By this subterfuge she succeeded in gaining access to M. Chicherin, who, however, left the room without listening to her appeal.

10. In September Mrs. Harding, as the result of frequent hunger-striking, was removed to the Butirka prison for a week, where conditions were better and medical aid was provided. Shortly afterwards she was subjected to further examinations, at the end of which Mogilevsky said: "The only condition upon which anyone in your position is ever released is that you undertake to help us in counter-espionage, and that you give a written declaration that you are prepared to do so." He explained to her that she would be required to act as a decoy to newly-arrived journalists, with a view to eliciting their real sentiments with regard to the Soviet Government. This Mrs. Harding declined to do.

11. Ten days later she again endeavoured to obtain a transfer from the Lubyanka (to which she had been sent back) to another prison, whereupon she was told that great leniency had been shown her in not shooting her, but that there was no reason to transfer her to another prison where the conditions were better. She was again asked to produce a document by which the Soviet Government could obtain a hold over her. Finally, Mrs. Stan Harding was transferred to the Butirka prison once more, where she made the acquaintance of a British subject, Miss Maxwell, who had been imprisoned by the Soviet Government on the ground of her alleged participation in a

conspiracy against the Soviet Government. Miss Maxwell was shortly afterwards released, and on her return to England gave information to His Majesty's Government, which resulted in steps being taken to procure the release of Mrs. Stan Harding, who finally left Moscow on the 26th November, 1920.

12. In approaching the Soviet Government on this matter, you are authorised to endorse Mrs. Stan Harding's repeated statements that she was not at any time a Secret Service agent. You should add that His Majesty's Government accordingly expect the Soviet Government to accept Mrs. Harding's claim for compensation commensurate with her sufferings during imprisonment on a false charge whilst visiting Soviet Russia with the explicit approval of that Government. You should not fail to point out the very unfortunate impression which would be created, in view of the wide notoriety of the circumstances of the case both in Parliament and in the press, should the Soviet Government not recognise the claim.

I am, &c.

CURZON OF KEDLESTON.

No. 2.

*Mr. R. M. Hodgson to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston.*

My Lord,

*Moscow, September 29, 1921.*

WITH reference to your despatch of the 3rd instant, I have the honour to report that, in accordance with instructions, I have made representations, both personally and in writing, to the Soviet Government in the matter of Mrs. Stan Harding's claim for compensation, but without success.

I am transmitting, herewith, copy of a *note verbale* from M. Litvinof on the subject.

In the course of conversation, M. Litvinof has maintained the view that at the time when Mrs. Harding arrived in Russia the country was to all intents and purposes still in a state of war, and that consequently foreign subjects entering the country must do so on their own risk and peril. Moreover, he asserts that he himself saw Mrs. Harding in Copenhagen, and advised her against continuing her journey, but that she refused his advice and obtained a *visa* in Reval.

I have, &c.

R. M. HODGSON.

Enclosure in No. 2.

*Note verbale.*

IN reply to the *note verbale* of the British agent, dated the 17th September, 1921, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs wishes to call his attention to the fact that Mrs. Stan Harding was arrested in June 1920, *i.e.*, prior to the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement. The competent authorities had reason to

believe that Mrs. Stan Harding came to Russia with a view to obtaining information useful to the enemies of Soviet Russia. Whether the authorities were justified in their suspicions or not, the Soviet Government could not consider the claims for compensation without putting forward claims on behalf of a great number of Russians who had suffered injuries at the hands of the British authorities prior to the Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement.

The People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs hopes, therefore, that the Foreign Office will concur with its view that no useful purpose would be served by raising now the question of considering such claims and counter-claims.

September 26, 1921.

No. 3.

*The Marquess Curzon of Kedleston to Mr. R. M. Hodgson.*

Sir,

*Foreign Office, December 2, 1921.*

I HAVE received your despatch of the 29th September, enclosing a copy of a *note verbale* from M. Litvinof, regarding the claim of Mrs. Stan Harding for compensation in respect of the disgraceful treatment accorded to her whilst in Russia on the invitation of the Soviet Government.

2 I cannot accept M. Litvinof's reply in justification of the incident and of his refusal to grant compensation. M. Litvinof himself does not attempt to deny that grave injustice has been done to Mrs. Harding. The information in the possession of His Majesty's Government is at variance with the verbal statement made to you by M. Litvinof that when he saw Mrs. Harding in Copenhagen he advised her against continuing her journey, but that she refused his advice and obtained a *visa* in Reval.

3. You should therefore inform M. Litvinof that His Majesty's Government earnestly hope that a satisfactory reply to their note of the 3rd September may be forthcoming without further delay. You should add that, in the absence of such a reply within a reasonable period, they will be compelled to communicate to the press the whole correspondence on this lamentable affair, which cannot fail to produce a most unfortunate impression. As the Soviet Government is already aware, Mrs. Stan Harding's case has excited widespread interest and sympathy in Parliament and in the press in this country, which His Majesty's Government fully share.

I am, &c.

CURZON OF KEDLESTON.

No. 4.

*Mr. Montgomery Grove to the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston*

My Lord,

*Moscow, January 13, 1922.*

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith copies of the *note verbale* which Mr. Hodgson addressed to M. Litvinof in accordance

with the instructions contained in your despatch of the 2nd December, and of the *note verbale* which I have now received in reply to the same.

I have, &c.

H. MONTGOMERY GROVE.

Enclosure 1 in No. 4.

*Note verbale.*

THE British agent presents his compliments to the Assistant Commissary for Foreign Affairs, and, with reference to M. Litvinof's *note verbale* of the 26th September last regarding the treatment accorded to Mrs. Stan Harding in Russia, has the honour to state, under instructions from His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, that the reply contained in the above note cannot be accepted in justification of the incident or of the refusal to grant compensation to Mrs. Stan Harding.

It is to be observed that Mrs. Harding received permission to enter Russia from the People's Commissary for Foreign Affairs through M. Gukovsky at Reval, for whom she had a letter from M. Litvinof, then in Copenhagen; that she travelled to Russia with the explicit approval of the Russian Government, which was fully cognisant of the object of her mission; and that, as is not indeed contested—she was the victim of gross injustice and was subjected to gross ill-treatment, which she had done nothing whatsoever to invite.

His Majesty's Government earnestly hope that a satisfactory reply to the representations made on their behalf by the British agent, under his note of the 17th September, will be forthcoming without further delay. In the absence of such a reply within a reasonable period, they will be compelled to communicate to the press the whole correspondence on this lamentable affair, which cannot fail to produce a most unfortunate impression. As the Soviet Government is already aware, Mrs. Harding's case has excited widespread interest and sympathy in Parliament and in the press in England, which His Majesty's Government fully share.

*Moscow, January 4, 1922.*

Enclosure 2 in No. 4.

*Note verbale.*

THE People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs presents its compliments to the British agent, and, in reply to the *note verbale* of the 4th January, 1922, would refer to its *note verbale* of the 26th September, 1921, in which it stated that it cannot consider Mrs. Harding's claim without putting forth counter-claims for unjustified imprisonment and sufferings caused to Russian citizens by various British authorities. In this connection, it is only necessary

to mention, for instance, the cases of M. E. A. Babushkin,\* who, as Russian consul in Meshed, Persia, was arrested with his whole staff by British military authorities on the 25th October, 1918, and held in prison under most unbearable conditions for over a year, and who have not as yet recovered from the injuries sustained by their arrest and detention, and of the many Russians recently imprisoned by the British authorities in Constantinople.

The People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs believes that should the British Government insist in considering such claims and counter-claims, the balance would not be in favour of the British Government.

*Moscow, January 10, 1922.*

\* *Foreign Office Note.*—M. and Mme. Babushkin were arrested at Meshed in October 1918 as undesirable aliens and taken to India, where they were interned until the autumn of 1920, when they were sent back to Russia via the United Kingdom. At the time of their arrest the war was still in progress, and British forces in North Persia were endeavouring to prevent German intrigues in Central Asia. M. and Mme. Babushkin were sent back to Russia when an agreement was concluded for the exchange of prisoners. The Russians imprisoned in Constantinople were arrested by the Allied Commander-in-chief under martial law as disturbers of the peace.

