

Wednesday

[Visit to Moscow when with WCC]

1. Taxi driver met me as I came out of the left at road of
Gare. Drove to airport by what I thought was a rather
long way round the edge of the town. I suppose he wanted
to go the long way round in order to earn a bigger fare.
In view of the early hour he had come I was quite
willing to pay him 10 francs for the trip.
2. I booked in as usual, paid the usual 3 francs
airport tax rather reluctantly. Discovered that I could
not book my luggage straight to Moscow as I had to
change airports in Paris - from Orly to Le Bourget
from which I would have to take off for Moscow.
3. The flight to Paris was short. We had hardly
pushed 'Cape Comorot' when it was announced that
we were now making the descent on Paris.
4. At Orly which I now know fairly well, I collected
my baggage and took the bus to Invalides - the
air terminal.
5. While I was there I phoned the Rappaport. I just missed
Sylvia who had already left for office, but I was
able to talk to his wife. I suppose this was one of the
few times when Gower was spoken on the phone. She
took the opportunity to warn me about the number
of African adventures in Europe who try to sponge on
fellow Africans. She mentioned in particular Ngidi and
Ambosi whom I had already met to my cost.
6. The trip to Le Bourget is quite a long one, taking
me clear across Paris. It is a much smaller
airport than Orly but the amenities are very much
the same. It took a few minutes to complete
the formalities after which I took my place
among the passengers going by flight SU 050.
7. The plane in which we travelled was a Conquest
which was full to capacity with happy faced
Russians apparently happy to return to their
home land. There was one other African besides
myself on the plane. I did not find out whose

he came from. He didn't look frightened either at the prospect of having to go to prison, although I had heard an Englishman say at Le Bourget, pointing at the gate through which passengers travelling by SUO50 had to go, "If you want to get your name in the papers go through that gate, in the usual Superior English manner."

8. The flight to M. was uneventful. Flying at that great height one could not of course see anything except that the sun was shining brightly above the clouds. Lunch was served during the flight. The meal seemed very simple compared with meals served by say Swissair or Air France. The best part of the meal was the coffee, the bread & the fruit. I credit ~~recognize~~ ^{identify} the meat we had to eat, but I suppose it was veal which is not one of my favorites. We reached Paris at 4.15 Paris time, the flight having taken just under 4 hours. Just as we picked up our bags & coats to get out of the plane, one young fellow got sick and made a thorough mess of the plane. I pitied the people who were going to have to clean up that mess. The passengers seemed excited & happy at having arrived at their destination. They didn't look like people returning to a land in which they were persecuted. I am sure I didn't look as they did when I landed in South Africa a month ago.

7. We were soon driven to the Waiting Room as it was called by the official who took away our passports. At the waiting room I was relieved to find that someone had come to meet me. It didn't take too long to get through the Customs & the officials were nothing like as fearsome as I had expected. I got back my passport, collected my baggage, & then drove off in a car to Moscow City. The interpreter informed me that my colleagues were all in Moscow except Douglas & I who had gone off to another part of the country. They had gone to see a play at one of the theatres & would return to the Hotel later in the afternoon.

7. The drive into Moscow in the early evening was quite impressive. We drove down Moscow Sorki Street which is a wide street bounded on each side by huge blocks of flats some occupied, some under construction. This City 'skit' was founded in 1147 was being modernised. We eventually reached Hotel Ukraine which is a massive structure some 10 storeys high, built in the 50's for the tourist trade. In the foyer people were milling around. They all seemed to be foreigners. I was struck by the number of British officers I saw in the crowd. I was assigned Room No 510 on the 14th floor.