

Excerpts from  
Prosecution Witness JOHN B. POWELL's Book  
"MY TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IN CHINA"

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(New York, The MacMillan Company, 1945)

Moscow in '35

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I was greatly impressed on my eleven-day trip across Russia by the great number of soldiers and officers, usually in new uniforms, who crowded the railway stations and trains and were seen in large numbers on the streets in every city and town I visited. I naturally was curious to know the size of the Russian army, and made frequent inquiries of Russian officials whom I met, as to the number of men under arms. I was always given the standard number, 600,000, which Russia supplied officially to the League of Nations when the League collected statistics on this subject from all countries. It seemed obvious to me that this number was a gross understatement, because the large numbers of men in new uniforms indicated that recruiting on a large scale had been going on for some time. Before I left Russia the truth was out. An official statement indicated that the army had been expanded to well over a million men. The expansion was apparent at the November Seventh Celebration in Red Square, where contingents from the various military branches, including light and giant tanks, were displayed. The same was true of the aviation corps.

A notable feature of the celebration in Red Square was an exhibition flight of the giant plane named Maxim Gorky, said to be the largest plane constructed up to that time. The plane was equipped with a radio and a giant amplifier for disseminating Government propaganda. The parade of military forces through Red Square lasted from 10 o'clock in the morning to late afternoon. Stalin and members of the cabinet stood behind a stone balcony on the top of Lenin's tomb, only their heads and shoulders being visible from the diplomatic reviewing stand, which was only about fifty yards distant. I was told that the Russian infantry units which marched through Red Square that day were among the best drilled and equipped soldiers in Europe of the time. No one who observed the exhibition could leave without the impression that the Russian revolution had taken on a pronounced military complexion. The parade of civilian workers through Red Square that day was enlivened by numerous caricatures of Germans and Japanese. The various unions of workers, including women, also marched with a military precision that indicated widespread military training.

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In addition to the military development which was obvious on all sides, the country seemed to be undergoing a rapid industrialization, and the personal comfort of the people was being sacrificed to the development of heavy industry. The only luxury article I was able to discover was a cheap brand of perfume which seemed to be on sale everywhere.