

Meet the Man

MICHAEL SHOLOKHOV, the author of "And Quiet Flows The Don," is fair-haired, ruddy-cheeked and sturdy, with an observant twinkle in his eyes. He talks quietly and unassumingly about his work, because he cannot think of his work in any other way than as a part of the great social movement which began in Russia in November, 1917.

"As a writer I am a child of the Revolution," he told me. "It has shaped and influenced all my work. It is my work, in fact."

"And does the Socialist revolution assist the development of free, creative writing?" I asked. "You may think the question a curious one, but Mr. H. G. Wells is very insistent, after his week's visit to Moscow and Leningrad, that it does not."

"Perhaps I could best answer that by saying that a great part of my time is spent in helping young writers from the factories and farms of my Socialist country who send me their manuscripts for advice. Every Soviet writer has an immense amount of such work. I do not think there is any country in history where the masses take such a direct, enthusiastic part in literary activity. Not only are there circles of young people learning to write in all our big factories and collective farms, but the mass of workers themselves take the liveliest interest in the work of our established writers.

"I, personally, hate leaving my home on the Don. The workers at a big Leningrad factory, knowing this, held a meeting and elected two delegates to visit me and bring me back to them at all costs! After a week they succeeded in per-

from the Don

Michael Sholokhov
comes to London and
Ralph Fox

*interviews this famous Cossack for
readers of RUSSIA TO-DAY*



MICHAEL SHOLOKHOV IN LONDON: Autographing copies of his famous book, "And Quiet Flows The Don," at Collet's bookshop, Charing Cross Road

suading me and I went to live with them at their factory for a couple of weeks, arranging lectures and discussions with the workers every day, during which time they also saw to it that I got to know all the problems of their work in the factory."

"Is there freedom of criticism for a Soviet writer?"

"Of course, we should not allow anyone to publish a book directed against our Socialist society of agitating for a return to capitalism. Public opinion would be overwhelmingly against the appearance of such work. However, we not only freely criticise individuals, deficiencies and inadequacies and our work, but such criticism is demanded from us by the workers themselves.

"I, myself, am a good example of the falseness

of the ridiculous stories about 'Artists in Uniform' spread by Max Eastman and others. Big extracts from my last novel, 'Virgin Soil,' have been printed on the front page of the Paris White Guard newspaper, 'Regeneration,' as anti-Soviet propaganda—of course, out of context and slightly changed."

"What is the present position of the Don Cossacks?"

"I have tried to express, in my books, the gradual transition, as a result of the Revolution, of the old life of the Don Cossacks to a new existence in the Socialist family of our country. This change is the result only of violent struggles and the overcoming of very great difficulties. But the triumph of Socialist farming is now assured. In this respect 1934 was a turning point. The good harvest and excellent work of the farms, the great help given by our Government in the shape of credits, new stock for the peasants, and so on, have had their effect. The collective farms of the Don are now entering a full and prosperous life."

"Does this mean that the old Cossack life is entirely dead?"

"Oh no. We have kept the good features of our old life. In remaking the Cossack we have had to fight against many backward, feudal and barbarian features, but there is no likelihood of this struggle turning our Socialist Cossacks into featureless machines. The old Cossack vitality is enriched by new Socialist blood."