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THE TIMES FRIDAY

The professional Snooker Pool Handicap Tournament was continued at Thurston's Hall yesterday. (p. 6)

The Rackets competition for the Noel Bruce Cup was continued at the Queen's Club yesterday. (p. 6)

#### FINANCE AND COMMERCE

In "City Notes" comment is made on:—  
 Huddersfield Loan Result; Note Circulation Expansion; Oil Company's Prosperity; Great Western of Brazil Debentures; Two Scottish Bank Meetings; Prices and the Pastoralist; and Changes in the Shipping Industry. (p. 23)

In the foreign exchange market francs were steadier, the French exchange closing at 147 17-64f. Dollars appreciated slightly to \$4.99½. Belgas and lire were cheaper. Gold remained at 139s. 9½d. per oz., £603,000 being sold. Silver was unchanged for spot at 18 11-16d. per oz., but the forward price fell ½d. to 18 1-16d. (p. 23)

Firm conditions prevailed in the Stock Markets yesterday, higher prices being established in most departments. Among the strongest features were leading Industrial shares and South African gold and Rhodesian copper shares. A further recovery took place in Americans. (p. 23)

#### THE RUSSIAN POLL

The Russian "elections" have passed off without jeopardizing their claim to inverted commas. They were an immense success. Out of an electorate of 93,639,478, no fewer than 90,319,346 voters went to the polls. It has not been officially announced whether, when they got there, they all voted for the official candidate; but, as there was no one else to vote for, the point is of purely academic interest. It is clear that the vast majority did as they were told and found the process exhilarating. M. STALIN himself established a new and glorious record in the history of democratic government by obtaining a poll of well over 100 per cent.—the surplus being due to the invasion of the Stalinski ward by enthusiastic supporters from other parts of Moscow. No Republic in the Union showed a return lower than 93.1. This relatively disgraceful figure came from Kazakstan, where the Kirghiz nomads—who are mostly shepherds—might have been expected to provide the electioneers with some valuable hints on technique. There was, it is true, one minor contretemps to mar the joyful though meaningless proceedings. Half a dozen eminent candidates had to be withdrawn at the last minute, including the Heads of the Air Force and the Tank Corps. But there were more than 1,100 candidates altogether, and the fact that only six of them have so far been unmasked as traitors is a tribute to the Ogpu's thoroughness in scrutinizing the records and antecedents of the new Deputies.

Of these roughly 70 per cent. are members of the Communist Party. All of them, according to *Pravda*, compare very favourably with the House of Commons, in which (the newspaper scathingly points out) "the so-called representatives of the English people are the noblemen, admirals, generals, industrialists, and merchants. . . . Only in our country are the people and their Deputies at one." Westminster will writhe under this lash. But it may be pointed

is nowhere else to place it. But outside Russia the "elections" have been an obvious failure. Their machinery was so childish and engineered and the prearranged results were acclaimed with so vast a volume of pure gush, that Russian prestige, which for more than a year the first squads have been busily destroying, has still further impaired. All dictatorships liable to seem drivel at times; but Russia widely advertised attempt to pass herself off as a democracy has provided a spectacle half-comic and half-pitiful.

Still, M. STALIN has done what he apparently set out to do, and there is nothing new in the fact that no one knows why he did it. The fact which he controls has exhausted the superlatives of an exceptionally rich language in his praise and undoubtedly one result of the gigantic campaign which is now over has been to stamp STALIN'S image even more firmly on the minds of his subjects. Another result, it may be conjectured, is the partial demotion of the Communist Party by the ostentatious creation of "Party and non-Party bloc." The theory—which electioneering propaganda was largely based—that a non-Communist may just as good a man as a Communist is a new one in Russia; and it probably owes its emergence to M. STALIN'S belief that a superabundance of demi-gods detracts attention from a god. His own status and methods are approximating more and more to the Tsarist tradition of semi-divine omnipotence; and it is now fairly clear that the Russian Revolution, as things have turned out, was fought and won to exalt and establish a cause or a creed or a method of government but a single personality. The danger—for Russia and perhaps for the world—of M. STALIN'S present position, and of the despotic tactics which it is being maintained, is in the long run the danger to which all dictatorships are liable. The burning, impersonal faith of the Old Bolsheviks has been replaced by a cold, personal opportunism. When LENIN died others took up the cause. There was no break in the continuity of purpose or the consistency of method; only, later, a gradual transformation as M. STALIN'S personality made itself felt. To-day, among the oligarchy at the top, the crusading spirit has gone and most of the crusaders have been shot. The Kremlin emanates an atmosphere charged with jealousies, suspicions, ambitions and rivalries, the atmosphere of a Khan's palace. It is no longer possible to regard the Russian experiment in its present form as an unquestionably permanent backcloth to the European stage.

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writhe under this lash. But it may be pointed out that, out of 1,143 Russian Deputies, 467 are leading bureaucrats whose lives are privileged and prosperous; sixty are "officials of the Commissariat of the Interior," an organization principally concerned with the secret police and the militia; 111 are soldiers and airmen, including twenty-eight generals and only twelve men below the rank of lieutenant; sixty-three are highly paid engineers and directors; and seventy-three are members of the liberal professions, including men of science, writers, and artists whose salaries are among the highest in Russia. In general, it will be seen, the proletariat is to be represented by its betters, by the privileged classes who have a good flat and one or more servants, who can get a licence to buy a car, who stay in the best hotels when they come to Moscow, who can buy a winter coat without spending six months' salary. The proletariat had no say in selecting these candidates; but it is quite possible that many of the voters—particularly the peasants, whose votes were given with an unexpected unanimity—entertain genuine hopes that their Deputies will be able to improve conditions. To what extent M. STALIN has been wise in arousing such hopes remains to be seen; and it also remains to be seen what effective powers, if any, the Deputies themselves will be allowed. The Soviet Constitution is a document which would be more impressive if its articles did not include several which are so obviously dead letters that they undermine confidence in the rest. Article 17, for example, proclaims that "The right freely to secede from the U.S.S.R. is reserved to each Union Republic." This is sheer humbug; and it is impossible not to wonder how many of the other articles (there are 146 in all) grant rights which exist only on paper.

The Deputies who now form the Union Council and the Council of Nationalities hold office for four years. Sessions will apparently take place twice a year, and there will presumably be some attempt to go through the motions of democratic legislation. In the light, however, of this week's "elections" it is almost unthinkable that the deliberations of the two Councils can be anything but a mechanical and pompous farce. The Russians have proved, apparently to their own satisfaction, their ability to hold elections in which no one has the power to elect; and they are now wordily celebrating a victory which they have not won. They are unlikely, in the circumstances, to experience difficulty in setting up a Parliamentary Government in which Parliament will be unable to govern; and the energies of the new Deputies are not likely to be taxed by anything more arduous than attendance at the periodic meetings of a mutual admiration society. Yet it is doubtful whether more than a small and impotent minority of Russians are yet capable of realizing the manner in which and the extent to which they have been hoaxed. M. STALIN has every reason to be satisfied with the internal effect of the "elections." Under a degree of persuasion amounting to compulsion the masses have returned a vote of confidence in the dictator and his associates. Much of that confidence is genuine and none of it can be called misplaced, for the simple but sufficient reason that there