ample breasts to a hungry beggar. 'You couldn't do that, Nancy,' said GBS to his flat-chested companion, and they passed on giggling.

Russia: IV

EUGENE LYONS

From Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (London: Harrap, 1938) p. 429. Eugene Lyons represented the American United Press agency in Russia. Experience of the Soviet system had eroded his earlier optimism, and his hostile view of Shaw's conduct in Russia typifies the majority reaction in western countries. Shaw himself dismissed claims that he had seen only what he was meant to see when he addressed an ILP summer school shortly after his return to England. 'The things I wanted to see were precisely the things I did see. I didn't want to see poverty and other remains of the capitalist system they have not been able to remove. I said I can see that within twenty minutes of my home in London' (*Manchester Guardian*, 6 August 1931).

It was a fortnight of clowning that ran us ragged. Since I reported for British United Press as well as the mother agency, I could not afford to miss a Shavian wheeze or sneeze. My secretary camped in the Metropole lobby, someone else trailed the party on its sight-seeing trips. Deftly Shaw skimmed the surface, careful not to break through the lacquer of appearances; if Lady Astor asked too many questions he neatly slapped her wrist. He judged food conditions by the Metropole menu, collectivisation by the model farm, the GPU by the model colony at Bolshevo,¹ socialism by the twittering of attendant sycophants. His performance was not amusing to the Russians, I happen to know. It was macabre. The lengthening obscenity of ignorant or indifferent tourists, disporting themselves cheerily on the aching body of Russia, seemed summed up in this cavorting old man, in his blanket endorsement of what he would not understand. He was so taken up with demonstrating how youthful and agile he was that he had no attention to spare for the revolution in practice.

NOTE

1. The GPU were the secret police; they ran a penal settlement for homeless boys at Bolshevo, which Shaw visited and approved.