

= Tintin in the Land of the Soviets =

Tintin in the Land of the Soviets ( French : Tintin au pays des Soviets ) is the first volume of The Adventures of Tintin , the comics series by Belgian cartoonist Hergé . Commissioned by the conservative Belgian newspaper Le Vingtième Siècle as anti @-@ communist propaganda for its children 's supplement Le Petit Vingtième , it was serialised weekly from January 1929 to May 1930 before being published in a collected volume by Éditions du Petit Vingtième in 1930 . The story tells of young Belgian reporter Tintin and his dog Snowy , who are sent to the Soviet Union to report on the policies of Joseph Stalin 's Bolshevik government . Tintin 's intent to expose the regime 's secrets prompts agents from the Soviet secret police , the OGPU , to hunt him down with the intent to kill .

Bolstered by publicity stunts , Land of the Soviets was a commercial success in Belgium , and also witnessed serialisation in France and Switzerland . Hergé continued The Adventures of Tintin with Tintin in the Congo , and the series became a defining part of the Franco @-@ Belgian comics tradition . Damage to the original plates prevented republication of the book for several decades , while Hergé later expressed embarrassment at the crudeness of the work . As he began to redraw his earlier Adventures in second , colour versions from 1942 onward , he decided against doing so for Land of the Soviets ; it is the only completed Tintin story not to have appeared in colour . Growing demand among fans of the series resulted in the production of unauthorised copies of the book in the 1960s , with the first officially sanctioned republication appearing in 1969 , after which it was translated into several other languages , including English . Critical reception of the work has been largely negative , with commentators on The Adventures of Tintin describing it as one of Hergé 's weakest works .

= = Synopsis = =

Tintin , a reporter for Le Petit Vingtième , is sent with his dog Snowy on an assignment to the Soviet Union , departing from Brussels . En route to Moscow , an agent of the OGPU ( Soviet secret police ) sabotages the train and declares the reporter to be a " dirty little bourgeois " . The Berlin police blame Tintin for the bombing but he escapes to the border of the Soviet Union . Following closely , the OGPU agent finds Tintin and brings him before the local Commissar 's office , instructing the Commissar to make the reporter " disappear ... accidentally " . Escaping again , Tintin finds " how the Soviets fool the poor idiots who still believe in a Red Paradise " by burning bundles of straw and clanging metal in order to trick visiting English Marxists into believing that non @-@ operational Soviet factories are productive .

Tintin witnesses a local election , where the Bolsheviks threaten the voters to ensure their own victory ; when they try to arrest him , he dresses as a ghost to scare them away . Tintin attempts to make his way out of the Soviet Union , but the Bolsheviks pursue and arrest him , then threaten him with torture . Escaping his captors , Tintin reaches Moscow , remarking that the Bolsheviks have turned it into " a stinking slum " . He and Snowy observe a government official handing out bread to homeless Marxists but denying it to their opponents ; Snowy steals a loaf and gives it to a starving boy . Spying on a secret Bolshevik meeting , Tintin learns that all the Soviet grain is being exported abroad for propaganda purposes , leaving the people starving , and that the government plans to " organise an expedition against the kulaks , the rich peasants , and force them at gunpoint to give us their corn . "

Tintin infiltrates the Soviet army and warns some of the kulaks to hide their grain , but the army catches him and sentences him to death by firing squad . By planting blanks in the soldiers ' rifles , Tintin fakes his death and is able to make his way into the snowy wilderness , where he discovers an underground Bolshevik hideaway in a haunted house . A Bolshevik then captures him and informs him , " You 're in the hideout where Lenin , Trotsky and Stalin have collected together wealth stolen from the people ! " With Snowy 's help , Tintin escapes , commandeers a plane , and flies into the night . The plane crashes , but Tintin fashions a new propeller from a tree using a penknife , and continues to Berlin . The OGPU agents appear and lock Tintin in a dungeon , but he escapes with

the aid of Snowy , who has dressed himself in a tiger costume . The last OGPU agent attempts to kidnap Tintin , but this attempt is foiled , leaving the agent threatening , " We 'll blow up all the capitals of Europe with dynamite ! " Tintin returns to Brussels amidst a huge popular reception .

= = History = =

= = = Background = = =

Georges Remi ? best known under the pen name Hergé ? had been employed as an illustrator at Le Vingtième Siècle ( " The Twentieth Century " ) , a staunchly Roman Catholic and conservative Belgian newspaper based in Hergé 's native Brussels . Run by the Abbé Norbert Wallez , the paper described itself as a " Catholic Newspaper for Doctrine and Information " and disseminated a far @-@ right and fascist viewpoint ; Wallez was an admirer of Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini and kept a signed picture of him on his desktop , while Léon Degrelle , who later became the leader of the fascist Rexists , worked as a foreign correspondent for the paper . According to Harry Thompson , such political ideas were common in Belgium at the time , and Hergé 's milieu was permeated with conservative ideas revolving around " patriotism , Catholicism , strict morality , discipline , and naivety " . Anti @-@ communist sentiment was strong , and a Soviet exhibition held in Brussels in January 1928 was vandalised amid demonstrations by the fascist National Youth Movement , in which Degrelle took part .

Wallez appointed Hergé editor of a children 's supplement for the Thursday issues of Le Vingtième Siècle , titled Le Petit Vingtième ( " The Little Twentieth " ) . Propagating Wallez 's socio @-@ political views to its young readership , it contained explicitly pro @-@ fascist and anti @-@ Semitic sentiment . In addition to editing the supplement , Hergé illustrated L 'extraordinaire aventure de Flup , Nénesse , Pousette et Cochonnet ( " The Extraordinary Adventures of Flup , Nénesse , Pousette and Cochonnet " ) , a comic strip authored by a member of the newspaper 's sport staff , which told the adventures of two boys , one of their little sisters , and her inflatable rubber pig . Hergé became dissatisfied with mere illustration work , and wanted to write and draw his own cartoon strip .

Hergé already had experience creating comic strips . From July 1926 he had written a strip about a boy scout patrol leader titled Les Aventures de Totor C.P. des Hanneçons ( " The Adventures of Totor , Scout Leader of the Cockchafers " ) for the Scouting newspaper Le Boy Scout Belge ( " The Belgian Boy Scout " ) . The character of Totor was a strong influence on Tintin ; Hergé described the latter as being like Totor 's younger brother . Jean @-@ Marc and Randy Lofficier stated that graphically , Totor and Tintin were " virtually identical " except for the scout uniform , also noting many similarities between their respective adventures , particularly in the illustration style , the fast pace of the story , and the use of humour . Hergé also had experience creating anti @-@ communist propaganda , having produced a number of satirical sketches for Le Sifflet in October 1928 titled " 70 percent of Communist chefs are odd ducks . "

= = = Influences = = =

Hergé wanted to set Tintin 's first adventure in the United States in order to involve Native Americans ? a people who had fascinated him since boyhood ? in the story . Wallez rejected this idea , which later saw realisation as the series ' third instalment , Tintin in America ( 1932 ) . Instead , Wallez wanted Hergé to send Tintin to the Soviet Union , founded in 1922 by the Marxist ? Leninist Bolshevik Party after seizing power in the Russian Empire during the 1917 October Revolution . The Bolsheviks greatly altered the country 's society by nationalising industry and replacing a capitalist economy with a state socialist one . By the late 1920s , the Soviet Union 's first leader , Vladimir Lenin , had died and been replaced by Joseph Stalin . Being both Roman Catholic and politically right @-@ wing , Wallez was opposed to the atheist , anti @-@ Christian , and extreme left @-@ wing Soviet government , and wanted Tintin 's first adventure to reflect this , indoctrinating its young

readers with anti @-@ Marxist and anti @-@ communist ideas . Later commenting on why he produced a work of propaganda , Hergé said that he had been " inspired by the atmosphere of the paper " , which taught him that being a Catholic meant being anti @-@ Marxist , and since childhood he had been horrified by the Bolshevik shooting of the Romanov family in July 1918 .

Hergé did not have the time to visit the Soviet Union or to analyse any available published information about it . Instead , he obtained an overview from a single pamphlet , *Moscou sans voiles* ( " Moscow Unveiled " ) by Joseph Douillet ( 1878 ? 1954 ) , a former Belgian consul to Rostov @-@ on @-@ Don who had spent nine years in Russia following the 1917 revolution . Published in both Belgium and France in 1928 , *Moscou sans voiles* sold well to a public eager to believe Douillet 's anti @-@ Bolshevik claims , many of which were of doubtful accuracy . As Michael Farr noted , " Hergé freely , though selectively , lifted whole scenes from Douillet 's account " , including " the chilling election episode " , which was " almost identical " to Douillet 's description in *Moscou sans voiles* . Hergé 's lack of knowledge about the Soviet Union led to many factual errors ; the story contains references to bananas , Shell petrol and Huntley & Palmers biscuits , none of which existed in the Soviet Union at the time . He also made errors in Russian names , typically adding the Polish ending " -ski " to them , rather than the Russian equivalent " -vitch " .

In creating *Land of the Soviets* , Hergé was influenced by innovations within the comic strip medium . He claimed a strong influence from French cartoonist Alain Saint @-@ Ogan , producer of the *Zig et Puce* series . The two met the following year , becoming lifelong friends . He was also influenced by the contemporary American comics that reporter Léon Degrelle had sent back to Belgium from Mexico , where he was stationed to report on the Cristero War . These American comics included George McManus 's *Bringing Up Father* , George Herriman 's *Krazy Kat* and Rudolph Dirks 's *Katzenjammer Kids* . Farr believed that contemporary cinema influenced *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* , indicating similarities between scenes in the book with the police chases of the *Keystone Cops* films , the train chase in Buster Keaton 's *The General* and with the expressionist images found in the works of directors such as Fritz Lang . Farr summarised this influence by commenting , " As a pioneer of the strip cartoon , Hergé was not afraid to draw on one modern medium to develop another " .

= = = Publication = = =

Prior to serialisation , an announcement ran in the 4 January 1929 edition of *Le Petit Vingtième* , proclaiming , " [ W ] e are always eager to satisfy our readers and keep them up to date on foreign affairs . We have therefore sent Tintin , one of our top reporters , to Soviet Russia . " The illusion of Tintin as a real reporter for the paper , and not a fictional character , was emphasised by the claim that the comic strip was not a series of drawings , but composed of photographs taken of Tintin 's adventure . Biographer Benoît Peeters thought this a private joke between staff at *Le Petit Vingtième* ; alluding to the fact that Hergé had originally been employed as a reporter @-@ photographer , a job that he never fulfilled . Literary critic Tom McCarthy later compared this approach to that of 18th @-@ century European literature , which often presented fictional narratives as non @-@ fiction .

The first instalment of *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* appeared in the 10 January 1929 edition of *Le Petit Vingtième* , and ran weekly until 8 May 1930 . Hergé did not plot out the storyline in advance ; he improvised new situations on a weekly basis , leaving Jean @-@ Marc and Randy Lofficier to observe that both " Story @-@ wise and graphically , Hergé was learning his craft before our eyes . " Hergé admitted that the work was rushed , saying , " The *Petit Vingtième* came out on Wednesday evening , and I often didn 't have a clue on Wednesday morning how I was going to get Tintin out of the predicament I had put him in the previous week . " Michael Farr considered this evident , remarking that many drawings were " crude , rudimentary , [ and ] rushed " , lacking the " polish and refinement " that Hergé would later develop . Contrastingly , he thought that certain plates were of the " highest quality " and exhibited Hergé 's " outstanding ability as a draughtsman " .

The story was an immediate success among its young readers . As Harry Thompson remarked , the

plotline would have been popular with the average Belgian parent , exploiting their anti @-@ communist sentiment and feeding their fears regarding the Russians . The series ' popularity led Wallez to organise publicity stunts to boost interest . The first of these was the April Fools ' Day publication of a faked letter purporting to be from the OGPU ( Soviet secret police ) confirming Tintin 's existence , and warning that if the paper did not cease publication of " these attacks against the Soviets and the revolutionary proletariat of Russia , you will meet death very shortly . "

The second was a staged publicity event , suggested by the reporter Charles Lesne , which took place on Thursday 8 May 1930 . During the stunt , the 15 @-@ year @-@ old Lucien Pepermans , a friend of Hergé 's who had Tintin 's features , arrived at Brussels ' Gare du Nord railway station aboard the incoming Liège express from Moscow , dressed in Russian garb as Tintin and accompanied by a white dog ; in later life Hergé erroneously claimed that he had accompanied Pepermans . They were greeted by a crowd of fans , who mobbed Pepermans and pulled him into their midst . Proceeding by limousine to the offices of Le Vingtième Siècle , they were greeted by further crowds , largely of Catholic Boy Scouts ; Pepermans gave a speech on the building 's balcony , before gifts were distributed to fans .

From 26 October 1930 , Tintin in the Land of the Soviets was syndicated to French Catholic magazine C?urs Vaillants ( " Brave Hearts " ) , recently founded by the Abbé Gaston Courtois . Courtois had travelled to Brussels to meet Wallez and Hergé , but upon publication thought that his readers would not understand the speech bubble system , adding explanatory sentences below each image . This angered Hergé , who unsuccessfully " intervened passionately " to stop the additions . The publication was highly significant for initiating Hergé 's international career . The story was also reprinted in its original form in L 'écho illustré , a Swiss weekly magazine , from 1932 onward . Recognising the continued commercial viability of the story , Wallez published it in book form in September 1930 through the Brussels @-@ based Éditions du Petit Vingtième at a print run of 10 @,@ 000 , each sold at twenty francs . The first 500 copies were numbered and signed by Hergé using Tintin 's signature , with Snowy 's paw print drawn on by Wallez 's secretary , Germaine Kieckens , who later became Hergé 's first wife .

In April 2012 an original copy of the first album was sold for a record price of ? 37 @,@ 820 by specialised auctioneers Banque Dessinée of Elsene , with another copy being sold for ? 9 @,@ 515 . In October the same year a copy was sold at the same auction house for ? 17 @,@ 690 .

= = = Later publications = = =

By 1936 there was already a demand for reprints of Tintin in the Land of the Soviets , with Lesne sending a letter to Hergé enquiring if this was possible . The cartoonist was reluctant , stating that the original plates for the story were now in a poor condition and that as a result he would have to redraw the entire story were it to be re @-@ published . Several years later , amid the German occupation of Belgium during World War II , a German @-@ run publishing company asked Hergé for permission to republish Tintin in the Land of the Soviets , with the intent of using it as anti @-@ Soviet propaganda , but again Hergé declined the offer .

From 1942 onwards , Hergé began redrawing and colouring his earlier Tintin adventures for Casterman , but chose not to do so for Tintin in the Land of the Soviets , considering its story too crude . Embarrassed by it , he labeled it a " transgression of [ his ] youth " . Jean @-@ Marc and Randy Lofficier believed that another factor in his decision might have been the story 's virulently anti @-@ Marxist theme , which would have been unpopular amidst growing West European sympathies for Marxism following the Second World War . In an article discussing Hergé 's work which was published in the magazine Jeune Afrique ( " Young Africa " ) in 1962 , it was noted that despite the fact that fans of his work visited the Bibliothèque Nationale to read the copy of Land of the Soviets that was held there , it " will never ( and with good cause ) be republished " . In 1961 , Hergé wrote a letter to Casterman suggesting that the original version of the story be republished in a volume containing a publisher 's warning about its content . Louis @-@ Robert Casterman replied with a letter in which he stated that while the subject had been discussed within the company , " There are more hesitant or decidedly negative opinions than there are enthusiastic ones . Whatever

the case , you can rest assured that the matter is being actively considered " .

As *The Adventures of Tintin* became more popular in Western Europe , and some of the rarer books became collectors ' items , the original printed edition of *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* became highly valued and unauthorized editions began to be produced . As a result , Studios Hergé published 500 numbered copies to mark the series ' 40th birthday in 1969 . This encouraged further demand , leading to the production of further " mediocre @-@ quality " unlicensed editions , which were sold at " very high prices " . To stem this illegal trade , Hergé agreed to a 1973 republication as part of the Archives Hergé collection , where it appeared in a collected volume alongside *Tintin in the Congo* and *Tintin in America* . With unofficial copies continuing to be sold , Casterman produced a facsimile edition of the original in 1981 . Over the next decade , it was translated into nine languages , with an English @-@ language edition translated by Leslie Lonsdale @-@ Cooper and Michael Turner published by Sundancer in 1989 . This edition was republished in 1999 for the 70th anniversary of *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* .

Sociologist John Theobald noted that by the 1980s , the book 's plot had become " socially and politically acceptable " in the western world as part of the Reaganite intensification of the Cold War and increased hostility towards Marxism and socialism . This cultural climate allowed it to appear " on hypermarket shelves as suitable children 's literature for the new millennium " . That same theme prevented its publication in Communist Party @-@ governed China , where it was the only completed adventure not translated by Wang Bingdong and officially published in the early 21st century .

= = Critical reception = =

In his study of the cultural and literary legacy of Brussels , André De Vries remarked that *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* was " crude by Hergé 's later standards , in every sense of the word " . Simon Kuper of the *Financial Times* criticised both *Land of the Soviets* and *Tintin in the Congo* as the " worst " of the *Adventures* , being " poorly drawn " and " largely plot @-@ free " . Sociologist John Theobald of the Southampton Institute argued that Hergé had no interest in providing factual information about the Soviet Union , but only wanted to indoctrinate his readers against Marxism , hence depicting the Bolsheviks rigging elections , killing opponents and stealing the grain from the people . According to literary critic Jean @-@ Marie Apostolidès of Stanford University , Hergé cast the Bolsheviks as " absolute evil " but was unable to understand how they had risen to power , or what their political views were . This meant that *Tintin* did not know this either , thereby observing the Soviet " world of misery " and fighting Bolsheviks without being able to foment an effective counter @-@ revolution . Literary critic Tom McCarthy described the plot as " fairly straightforward " and criticised the depiction of Bolsheviks as " pantomime cut @-@ outs " .

Hergé biographer Benoît Peeters was critical of the opening pages to the story , believing that the illustrations in it were among Hergé 's worst and stating , " One couldn 't have imagined a less remarkable debut for a work destined for such greatness " . He believed that *Tintin* was an existentialist " Sartre @-@ esque character " who existed only through his actions , operating simply as a narrative vehicle throughout the book . Where Hergé showed his talent , Peeters thought , was in conveying movement , and in utilising language in a " constantly imaginative " way . He considered the story 's " absurdity " to be its best feature , rejecting plausible scenarios in favour of the " joyously bizarre " , such as *Tintin* being frozen solid and then thawing , or Snowy dressing in a tiger skin to scare away a real tiger . Hergé biographer Pierre Assouline described the comic writer 's image of the Soviet Union as being " a Dantesque vision of poverty , famine , terror , and repression " .

Marking the release of Steven Spielberg 's *The Adventures of Tintin : The Secret of the Unicorn* film in 2011 , the British Broadcasting Corporation ( BBC ) commissioned a documentary devoted to *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* in which journalist Frank Gardner ? who considered *Tintin* to be his boyhood hero ? visited Russia , investigating and defending the accuracy of Hergé 's account of Soviet human rights abuses . In an article for conservative newspaper the *Daily Mail* , Gardner discussed his experience , stating that upon first reading the comic , he thought the drawings crude

and the plot improbable . However , during his trip to Russia , he learned from a Muscovite historian that the spirit of Hergé 's story was in keeping with what was going on in Russia at the time . The historian confirmed that one of the great tragedies of the 20th century was the wholesale persecution of the Kulak farmers by the Bolsheviks , where " literally thousands perished . " First airing on Sunday 30 October 2011 on BBC Two , it was produced by Graham Strong , with Luned Tonderai as producer and Tim Green as executive producer . David Butcher reviewed the documentary for the Radio Times , opining that Gardner 's trip was dull compared to the comic 's adventure , but praising a few " great moments " , such as the scene in which Gardner tested an open @-@ topped 1929 Amilcar , just as Tintin did in the adventure .