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# OUR SOVIET ALLY





# 'OUR SOVIET ALLY

ESSAYS

*by*

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Edited for the Fabian Society

*by MARGARET COLE*

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## NOTE ON THE CONTENTS

A WORD is perhaps needed on the arrangements and contents of the contributions to this book. As I say later, our purpose is not to cover the whole field of Soviet life, but to deal with those features of it which are of particular interest and significance to British readers. This has involved, *inter alia*, giving up any attempt to describe in detail, or to make more than the barest general reference to, the agricultural system of the U.S.S.R., the collective farms (*Kolkhozes*) etc. Indeed, to treat that subject adequately would take a long book, such as Sir John Maynard's *The Russian Peasant*, which in two large volumes has not said the last word; but even had we had the space, the experiences of an enormous country of peasants, with vast spaces of land hardly cultivated at all at the time of the Revolution, has not much relevance for a small country with a tradition of high farming and no room to expand. Nor, to our regret, have we been able to include more than references to that remarkable experiment, the Red Army.

What we have done is to take three great divisions of life—politics, economics, and education and culture. In politics, we describe the Soviet political system, endeavouring to make clear wherein it differs from our own, and, more important, what the Soviet citizen, himself, gets from and gives to his own political system; we follow this with a special study of one of the most remarkable of present-day political phenomena, the way in which the Soviet Union has succeeded in bridling and harnessing the modern devil of “nationalism.” British people, with the problems of India and the colonies ever before their eyes and destroying their credit with some, at least, of their allies, must be deeply interested in the reasons and methods of the success of the U.S.S.R. in this field.

We continue with an account of the institutions of Soviet economic life, the principles on which they are based, and what they mean in people's everyday life—what can a Soviet citizen “own,” how is he paid, how does he buy, and how does his State arrange to produce what he buys?—what do savings, banks, trade, investment, and so forth mean in a planned society; and to this we append a special study of a topic most important to British workers (and often mis-

understood), the rôle and organization of Trade Unions in the same society.

Finally, we turn to the subject which is perhaps the most fundamental of all—education ; for viewed in one aspect, the whole of the U.S.S.R. is a vast project for educating man to live in a new form of society. In Great Britain, we are barely beginning to guess at what education for real social purpose could mean, though we are beginning to see that we must somehow achieve it. Accordingly, we proceed with a chapter which describes the education of the U.S.S.R., official and semi-official, and shows its connection with the past history of Russia ; and the last section deals with its results on human life. In some ways, I would suggest, Chapter VI is the most important of all, because it relates the old with the new ; it shows how a country may pass through a great revolutionary change without losing or destroying the value of its own past, but can build a new and real national life, in which millions can newly participate, upon a “synthesis” of what is best in itself.

It only remains to add that we, the contributors, being drawn from both nationalities, trust that we have succeeded in combining accuracy about Soviet affairs with readability for Britons.

MARGARET COLE.

# OUR SOVIET ALLY

## INTRODUCTION

by MARGARET COLE

THE purpose of this book is to tell the public of Great Britain something of what they want and need to know of that great ally of theirs whose territory covers one-seventh of the land surface of the globe; and if the occasion of its writing were to be put in one word, that word would be Stalingrad. Not only because the book was planned when Hitler was still shouting that Stalingrad would infallibly be taken, nor because it was written during the months when the astonishing defence was slowly turning into a resounding disaster for the Germans, but because the Defence of Stalingrad and its sequel have at last finally established in the eyes of the ordinary Briton the picture of the Soviet Union as a continuing reality—perhaps the solidest, as it is certainly the most dynamic, reality in the modern world.

The U.S.S.R. has been in existence for over twenty-five years, but for by far the greater part of these it has not seemed quite real to the people of this country. This is, of course, partly accounted for by the fact that it is a long way off, that its people speak a language which is difficult and very unlike our own, that they have had a very different history, and that contacts between the two peoples are rare. But the chief reason lies not in language, distance, or history, but in the enormous difference of political, economic, and social ideas between our system and the system which we call Soviet Communism, a difference so great that the latter



was long regarded as a myth or a monster—anything but a real country in which people lived, worked and died.

The British upper classes, with very few exceptions, looked upon it as a monster. From the moment of its birth, they recognised, with a foresight which one wishes they could have displayed upon other occasions—such as the advent of Hitler—that the very existence of a Government which was aiming to abolish both the class-system and the sacred motive of private profit was likely to administer profound shocks to the basis of their own power and position. So they endeavoured first to destroy it by direct force and when that proved impossible, partly because of the resistance of the British working class, to hasten its downfall by other means. The attempt to destroy it directly did not last long, though it is well that we should now remember, as the Russians most certainly do, that the last war fought in democracy's name ended with the Allies marching not to Berlin but to Archangel. But even when the invasions were over their authors tried to cut Russia off from the "civilised" world, in the hope that the Russians would be starved into counter-revolution; and when the counter-revolution failed to materialise they did not, for a very long time, abandon the hope of the death of the U.S.S.R.; they tried to wish-think it out of existence. One of their economists went so far as to deny that a country which proposed to ignore capitalist economics could survive at all; ergo, it has presumably ceased to exist. This state of mind, this stubborn refusal to regard the U.S.S.R. as anything but a monster, persisted throughout the years: it was responsible for the denigration of Soviet science and Soviet industry made in many quarters, and above all for the conviction, often sincerely held, that there was no stability about the Soviet régime, and that in

a war it would crumble and come to pieces. It can still lead Sir James Grigg, the head of a body with the record of the British War Office, on the very day which saw the surrender of the last Germans in Stalingrad, to utter the ineffable remark, "I am not anti-Russian". No doubt Canute, also, was not anti-sea.

But not only to its enemies, but to its friends as well, the U.S.S.R. was not quite real. Those whose hearts leaped highest in November 1917, who believed most passionately that the principles of the Revolution were right, felt an equally strong conviction that they must also be successful in practice and were not really prepared—as Lenin was—for the Revolution to learn by experience, since that involved making large-scale mistakes and admitting them, either avowedly or by changing the policy. As we know, large mistakes were made and corrected, often to the accompaniment of loud public propaganda which seemed strange and unnatural to the British, who have a strong prejudice against openly admitting that they are in the wrong; but the sympathisers were not really sufficiently certain in the depths of their minds that the Revolution was being successful—only that it *must* be—to accept mistakes and partial failures as necessary conditions of experiment, and therefore reassured themselves by declaring that anything done at any time in the U.S.S.R. was wholly admirable. The glee with which enemies of the régime pounced upon and advertised any case of failure provided them with some justification, but the result was to strengthen the impression that the U.S.S.R. was not quite real, but in part, at any rate, a creation of sympathetic imaginations. The ordinary man sceptically scratched his head and suspended belief in the real existence of a country populated exclusively either with omniscient archangels or with devils with horns and tail.

Since June 1941, however, and still more since November 1942, all that has changed. Everyone who knows anything at all knows now that the U.S.S.R. is a magnificent reality, that it has held up and beaten back the full weight of a modernised army that went through the old civilisation of France like a knife through soft cheese ; and knows, moreover, that there is nothing phoney about this achievement and that only technical efficiency and patriotic enthusiasm greater than Hitler can command would have made it possible. As a result, on all quarters, in the Forces and in the factories and outside, people are asking " How did they do it ? What is their secret ? What are these allies of ours like, and what sort of society do they really live in ? "

We, to whom the Fabian Society has given the task of writing this book, are endeavouring to give an answer to these questions. By this I do not mean that we are trying to give a full description of the new society in the U.S.S.R. ; to do that it would be necessary to write another book as long or longer than the Webbs' *Soviet Communism*. What we have done is to select and put before our readers the vital ways in which Soviet society differs from our own in its purpose and its institutions. This has involved leaving out some of its aspects altogether, and laying exceptional stress on others whose importance seems to us to be insufficiently emphasised in some of the works already published ; it involves also some consideration of the national roots from which it springs. For the U.S.S.R. is not only Socialist ; it is Russian as well, and many of its characteristics derive directly from Russian history and the Russian character. Whatever its merits, it is not a model to be set up for unimaginative imitation by the nationals of other countries with a different heritage.

It might therefore be supposed that a book on the

Soviet system of to-day should begin with a section on the history of Russia. This book does not, because in the space at our disposal it is no more practicable to include a history of Russia than it would be to compress into four or five thousand words a history of the British Empire. Those who wish to understand it must consult the invaluable works of Sir Bernard Pares and Sir John Maynard<sup>1</sup>; indeed they are strongly urged to do so. For the needs of war seem to have aroused in the Soviet citizen a consciousness of the past of his country as strong as any Anglo-Saxon has of his, and Stalin to be appealing, no less than Churchill after Dunkirk, to an ancient common heritage of his people, as well as to their pride in their present. In the meantime, however, the following brief summary of facts is essential to the understanding of subsequent chapters.

The U.S.S.R., as already stated, covers an enormous area; it is more like a continent than a single country. It contains not far short of two hundred million persons of many varying races, languages and cultures,<sup>2</sup> of which the Russians were, until the Revolution, the dominant and oppressive partners. Under the Tsars, this great territory was economically very much under-developed as compared with Western nations; the majority of its population lived off the land, in a primitive state of cultivation. The standard of living was low, the percentage of illiteracy very high; and the political system so far from the Western conception of democracy and liberalism as to make Anglo-Saxon liberals very uneasy about the pre-1914 Triple Entente between France, Great Britain and Russia.

Nevertheless, the very common impression of Tsarist Russia as a completely Dark Continent of oppression is

<sup>1</sup> Pares, *History of Russia*: Maynard, *The Russian Peasant*.

<sup>2</sup> See below, Chapter II.

wide of the mark. Both economically and politically, she was developing. More than that, and more important for our present purpose, there were, in old Russia, institutions which were to prove of the greatest importance for the future. To mention only a few there were in existence :

- (1) a communal village association (the *Mir*) which preserved in Russian agricultural life a tradition of collective responsibility which had been lost in England since the last Labourers' Revolt ended in the graves at Micheldever. This tradition, passing through many vicissitudes, has proved the basis for the collective farm and rural soviet organisation which is so strongly established to-day.
- (2) an industrial organisation of Trade Unionism in the cities which, small though it was in relation to the whole population, was the hard core of the striking power which made the Revolution a reality. The abortive revolution of 1905 was led by the Soviet (= Council) of the workers of St. Petersburg ; and the idea of the soviet continued in being until in 1918, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies took control of the Revolution.
- (3) a very high development of revolutionary political sentiment and organisation. Space does not permit a description of the Socialist Parties of pre-revolutionary Russia, of which the Bolshevik (in 1918 re-named Communist) Party is now in the U.S.S.R. the sole survivor, or of the enormous influence exercised by such thinkers as Tolstoy and Kropotkin (himself a Socialist) ; suffice it

to say that there was a strong tradition of political opposition, and resistance to the government and that, moreover, this resistance was maintained in an atmosphere of ever-menacing physical persecution. The Tsarist *Okhrana* (= secret police) was, of course, nothing like as efficient or as all-pervasive as Hitler's Gestapo ; nevertheless, it is true to say that those who led the Revolution were trained in a disciplinary school of terrorism to work for the destruction, not the reform, of their own State. During the first world war Lenin and his associates hoped actively for the defeat of Tsarism. In this past history lies the clue to much of what has since happened in the U.S.S.R.

In November, 1917, the Communists did not succeed to the pre-war Tsarist economy ; they succeeded to an economy already half broken down by war and governmental inefficiency, and soon to be further reduced by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk imposed by the Germans,<sup>1</sup> and by the civil wars, in which counter-revolutionary " White " generals, with active assistance from the Allies, raised revolts in all parts of the Union. During the period up to the summer of 1920, when with the conclusion of the Polish war, the brilliantly improvised Red Army might be said to have done its work, the level of production, both industrial and agricultural, and consequently the standard of living, was appallingly low. It was a people almost literally starving<sup>2</sup> which set out to build its new society ; but it should be made clear that the basic principles of the Revolution were established

<sup>1</sup> March, 1918. The terms of Brest-Litovsk were far more nakedly harsh than those subsequently imposed upon Germany at Versailles.

<sup>2</sup> Even more so in the following year (1921), when nature lent a hand in the shape of the great famine.

in its first and hardest years—and not the economic principles merely. Alongside with the nationalisation of land, banks, foreign trade, industry, etc., went also such measures of Socialist humanitarianism as the eight-hour day, equal rights and equal pay for men and women, laws for the protection of child labour, and an attack on the huge task of universal education. Under the circumstances of the time, of course, some of this was promise rather than performance ; but the intention was proclaimed. The twenty-five years that have followed have been years during which the U.S.S.R., not without setbacks and mistakes, has been implementing those promises and building up a political and social machine which is capable of carrying them out.

In this book we are not concerned with the history of the twenty-five years, and the ways in which the Soviet leaders have tackled the basic problems of increasing food supply, socialising the land, building up a modern industry without the help of foreign capital, and creating a stable and efficient government to carry out the task of Socialist construction ; our subject is their results to-day. Two things, however, should be said by way of general comment :

The first is that the Soviet régime has based itself, from the first, on the need for using to their full powers all and every citizen within its borders who accepts the Revolution.<sup>1</sup> Lenin once said that “ every kitchen-maid must take a hand in running the State ” ; and acceptance of this principle has meant that an enormous amount of technical and organising ability, which under normal conditions of capitalist class-society lies dormant as the village Hampdens in Gray’s *Elegy*, is called into active

<sup>1</sup> This now means practically the whole population ; the disfranchisement of certain groups such as priests, Kulaks, and former counter-revolutionaries was ended in 1936.

service. The proportion of Soviet citizens—and of *young* Soviet citizens<sup>1</sup>—who play a definite and purposeful part in the running of industrial or political or social affairs of their own society is far higher than anything we know here.

The second is the menace of war. The Revolution was born in war, immediately after its birth it was attacked on all sides; even when these attacks were beaten off the leaders could feel no security that they would not be renewed at the earliest opportunity; and hardly had the hostility of the older capitalist countries died down to the point at which it might have been safe to discount it when a new menace appeared in Nazi Germany, whose head openly and definitely proclaimed his intention of wiping out the horror of Judæo-Bolshevism from the world, and who employed, to that end, all the methods of propaganda and penetration whose success was so apparent in 1940. For the whole of its existence literally, the Soviet Union has either patiently been, or believed itself to be, a beleaguered city menaced by assault from without; and no judgment of its actions can have any validity which fails to take that fact into account.

We in Great Britain have had no such bitter experience; we have neither the difficulties of the Russians nor their advantages. We can work out in our own way, consonant with our own traditions and our own history, the machinery for running society which modern conditions demand. What is necessary is that we should set our wits to work quickly. The British people are not political fools; time and again they have shown themselves abundantly capable of intelligence and initiative. But

<sup>1</sup> "Young" because the average age in the U.S.S.R. is low. It is calculated that about 70 per cent. of all its citizens have no recollection of anything earlier than the Revolution.



of late they have let their political ability rust and have behaved, during the recent frustrated years, as though they were paralysed in face of Fascism. Now, having seen with their own eyes in 1940 and again in 1942 that the Nazis are not invincible, they are beginning to wake up, and one sign of their waking up is the enormous interest they are showing in the institutions and life of that other great people which has pricked the balloon of Hitler's bluff. It may be, as Chesterton said,

It may be we shall rise the last, as Frenchmen rose the first,  
Our wrath come after Russia's wrath, and our wrath be the  
worst.

If this should happen, the more we know about the efforts and achievements of our predecessors, the better.

PART I

*POLITICAL LIFE*

CHAPTER I

POLITICS AND THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

by MARGARET COLE

ASSUMPTIONS

THE subject of this chapter is politics and political life in the U.S.S.R. ; but it is necessary to state clearly at the outset that in the U.S.S.R. there is no hard-and-fast distinction between political life and any other sort of life. The distinction we have made in this book is purely arbitrary, for convenience of description, and because of the terms in which English-speaking readers naturally think. In Great Britain and the United States --as indeed in any capitalist country--there exists a long tradition that "politics" is something separate, which be considered apart from economic and social life. This is perhaps shown best in some revealing phrases. We hear of someone "taking up politics" or "leaving industry for politics"; persons or groups of persons are charged with "dragging politics into education",<sup>1</sup> or with making something or other into "a political issue". In pre-war France, at any rate, "Oh, that's *politics*" was an argument frequently used either to silence an opponent or to dispose of a whole issue as unimportant or shady. The general nineteenth-century feeling was that "politics" was necessary and even vital in its proper

<sup>1</sup> As the London County Council was attacked for observing, when its opinion was asked, that it considered the public-school system was socially and educationally bad.

sphere, but that its sphere was and should be strictly limited.

This type of tradition dies hard. We know, of course, that, whatever people may say, this absolute distinction is less and less true of any modern community, that political life is not, as a matter of fact, conducted in a kind of rarefied chamber apart from economic life ; but there are not wanting persons who, without going the full length of Sir Ernest Benn and his Individualists, still feel in a muddled way that " politics " ought not to meddle too much in other spheres, and that the less " politics " we have the better.

In the U.S.S.R., however, the distinction is obliterated. The Constitution of 1936, which lays down firmly and explicitly the basic principles of the new State, does not confine itself to matters which we should call political, but is just as strongly concerned with others, for example, the right of all citizens to full employment ; and the associations and groupings within the U.S.S.R. deal with matters political and economic almost indifferently. A member of the Moscow City Soviet would be hard put to it to say which of his activities were political and which economic ; it is a question of expediency in practical working, and not of principle. Thus, to take the most outstanding example, the Communist Party is included in this chapter as the most important political institution of the U.S.S.R. But the range of the Communist Party goes far beyond what we should call political matters ; in industry, in trade, in education, and in the government of nationalities, its rôle is of equal importance. This integration of politics with other aspects of life derives naturally from the Russian conception of a Socialist planned economy ; but the political institutions cannot be understood unless it is continually borne in mind.

There are other ways in which the Russian conception

of political life differs so deeply from the traditional British conception that it is necessary to explain them further. They arise out of the very different history of the two countries. British democracy was born out of a struggle of individuals and groups to defend themselves and to secure small parcels of "rights" and "liberties" against arbitrary power.<sup>1</sup> It has been said, and it is not far from the truth, that the British people has never fought for liberty but only for specific "liberties", for the right to grumble, the right to strike, the right to publish newspapers or to hold a meeting in Trafalgar Square; and if only one person demanded those rights, British public opinion has always been inclined to give him a hearing. The result of this is that the agents and the heroes of democratic struggle in Britain have been the small groups or the lone individuals who stood up against the might of the Executive, not with the intention of bringing it down, of making a revolution, but of forcing it to do something which it did not want to do. The very names taken by the groups which made our history tell us something of that—*Dissenters*, *Independents*, *Non-conformists*, *Passive Resisters*, the *Independent Labour Party*; the Trade Unions themselves grew out of the Methodist dissenting chapels as well as out of the need for economic combination. In the extreme case, as I have said, individuals fought; the names of Richard Carlile, whose centenary we have just celebrated, Lord Shaftesbury, Thomas Clarkson, Samuel Plimsoll, Charles Bradlaugh, Josephine Butler, are only a random handful of those in our annals who have fought a specific issue throughout their lives, with allies when they could find them, but if they could not, alone.

It is a long roll, and a roll of which we have reason to

<sup>1</sup> Not necessarily purely "political" rights; religious and economic rights were fully as important.

be proud. But one result of fighting on specific issues and for specific liberties is that when the battle is won and the concession gained there is no reason to go on fighting ; the militant group becomes absorbed in the general life of the country, and the militant individual, unless he is one of the restless crusading spirits who are always "agin" something or another, turns into a respectable member of society.

So the dissenting chapels slowly lost their vigour after the political discrimination against dissenters had been removed ; the grant of adult suffrage took the bite out of the women's organisations ; and so on. Even in the greatest political *émeute* of last century, the agitation which produced the 1832 Reform of Parliament, the leading Reformers did not want to overturn the constitution or to destroy the governing classes. They wanted a specific concession—admission to the governing body ; and when that was conceded they settled down to carry on with the most stable political system in the world of the time. The tradition, however, endures, and can be seen both in the half-instinctive mistrust of "Government" in the mind of the ordinary British citizen, and in the licence generally allowed and the tenderness shown to "protestants" of every kind. However he may support his government, and even vote for it, the average Briton still thinks of it as something external to him, which is always liable to do something it shouldn't or neglect something it should. An Opposition is therefore an essential feature in Parliament ; when it is suspended, as now, we are conscious of something wrong ; we fear our liberties may be lost. And the Parliamentary fuss which can, even in war-time, be created over individual cases of injustice does not bear a simple relation to the social importance of the person affected. It is a last relic of Protestantism.

Russian history has been very different. Religious dissent in Russia followed a course very different from that of the warring Protestant Churches in England ; and Russian thought did not exalt the legal political <sup>1</sup> rights of the individual as did English. There was not the traditional resistance of groups aiming at a limited objective, nor did any people or part of the people obtain a responsible control of the legislature comparable with that gained by the British Parliament. It is a matter of speculation whether, if the war of 1914-18 had not intervened, some sort of responsible parliamentary system would eventually have been established ; as it was, those who wanted change had to work for revolution. At the same time, Russia preserved, particularly in the villages, a communal organisation of life with a sense of positive general responsibility which English local society had lost in the individualist scramble of the industrial revolution. The Russian conception of active life was not to be an energetic member of the League to Promote (or to Prevent) So-and-so, or a single Athanasius defying the world, but to be a member of a collective community (which Sir John Maynard, in *The Russian Peasant*, calls a "congregation") and to be in harmony with it. An understanding of this fact is the key to much in Russian political life.

Further, the origin and history of Western democracy has meant that its written charters and expositions are peculiarly negative in character. It asserts *rights* ; it assumes that every citizen, if not prevented by some misbehaving political power, can exercise those rights ; it forbids the State to interfere with those rights, but it

<sup>1</sup> The emphasis is on the word "political". All Russian literature shows a deep sense of the human personality of anybody, however poor or however much of a misfit, which is not particularly apparent in its English contemporary. (But a legal member of the House of Lords would uphold the right to compensation of a coal-miner whom otherwise he regarded as a dangerous Red and a blot on the landscape.)

says nothing of how the rights are to be exercised or of any duties which should go along with them. This "negativeness" belongs both to our ancient, slow-changing society and to the "young democracy" of the United States. Great Britain has no Constitution, no single declaration of principles; but Magna Carta and the Habeas Corpus Acts, which comprise our palladium of liberty in most people's minds, are all negative. The King shall *not deny* right and justice to any man; the Executive shall *not* arbitrarily hold a man in prison. Even the Constitution of the United States, which has no king, after stating that its positive object is

to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity,

soon goes on to a list of things which the government of the United States is not allowed to do. Apparently even in 1787 it was still felt to be sufficient that a government should be created which was based on sound principles and given sufficient powers to govern; the citizens could then be trusted to look after their own rights.

But whatever may have been the case in 1787, we know now that it is not sufficient to promise men the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness",<sup>1</sup> unless you also secure to them the conditions under which it is possible to exercise it. The right to work, and to be paid for work, is a hollow mockery when there is no work for a man to do, and the right to life is a poor boon if it does not carry with it the right to food, to education, and to those things which make life worth living. But these "means to the exercise of rights" can, in a modern community and under modern con-

<sup>1</sup> *American Declaration of Independence.*

ditions, be provided for the mass of the people by the State and the State alone.

#### THE BASIS OF THE CONSTITUTION

Accordingly, the Constitution of the U.S.S.R., in Articles 118 to 128, explicitly promises certain basic necessities to its citizens and states the conditions of their fulfilment. The promises are as follows :

(1) " The right to work, that is, the right to guaranteed employment and payment for their work in accordance with its quantity and quality," this to be secured by

The socialist organisation of the national economy, the steady growth of the productive forces of Soviet society, the elimination of the possibility of economic crises, and the abolition of unemployment.

This, Sir William Beveridge's Freedom from Want, is the first principle of Soviet society, and it will be observed that the State takes full responsibility for securing the conditions under which it can be rendered possible.

(2) The right to leisure, secured by establishing a short working day, holidays with pay, and sanatoria, rest homes and clubs for the working people.

(3) The right to material security in old age and sickness, provided by social insurance, free medical services, and health resorts.

(4) The right to free education.

(5) Equal rights as between all citizens of whatever nationality or race, and as between men and women in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life ; the latter secured by giving equal pay, conditions and opportunity of work to both sexes, and by the nationwide system of pay during and after pregnancy, crèches and kindergartens, etc.

(6) Freedom of religious worship (and of anti-religious propaganda), freedom of speech, freedom of the press,



freedom of meetings and assemblies, freedom of street processions and demonstrations.

(7) Freedom of organisation. The actual clause is worth quoting in full, both as showing what a wide variety of organisations are to be found within the Union and as one of the only two clauses, in the whole Constitution, which mention the Communist Party.

In accordance with the interests of the working people, and for the purpose of developing the organised self-expression and political activity of the masses of the people, citizens of the U.S.S.R. are ensured the right to unite in public organisations—trade unions, co-operative associations, youth organisations, sport and defence organisations, cultural, technical and scientific societies; and the most active politically conscious citizens from the ranks of the working class and other strata of the working people unite in the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks), which is the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to strengthen and develop the socialist system and which represents the leading nucleus of all organisations of the working people, both social and state.

(8) Freedom from arrest “except by an order of the court or with the sanction of a State attorney”.

(9) Inviolability of the homes of citizens and secrecy of correspondence are protected by law.

No one, of course, would venture to assert that the rights laid down in this Constitution are fully in operation at this stage in the world's history. During a world totalitarian war there are some rights, such as freedom of the press and secrecy of correspondence, which no State, however libertarian in intention, can possibly maintain. Also, the 1936 Constitution, though conceived in a time of comparative peace, was not passed until the war-clouds were already gathering fast, and in many respects it is a declaration of the intentions of the State rather than a statement of existing facts. As a

declaration it should be judged and compared either with the social conditions of Britain or with the wording of the Atlantic Charter, when it will be apparent that Britain promises far less to her citizens, and that the Charter, while promising rather more, omits to give any indication as to how its promises are to be implemented and the rights it speaks of made attainable.

#### RIGHTS AND DUTIES

Soviet politics do not speak merely of rights ; they speak also of duties. Older constitutions, such as that of the U.S.A., make no mention of duties ; they seem to suggest that the State exists to guarantee the citizen certain rights, in return for which he does nothing whatever. Of course, as a matter of historical fact that was never the case ; the upper and middle classes of Great Britain, for example, have a long record of unpaid public duty performed as an essential of citizenship. It was not laid down by law ; it was expected of them by society, and if the record of the poorer classes was less impressive that was partly because they could not afford it, but even more because their assistance was not wanted by their superiors. Magistrates and high officials from the working class were only less welcomed, in Great Britain, than generals and admirals of working-class origin ; emphatically we did not want " every kitchen-maid to take a hand in running the State ". The Soviet Union does. The same chapter of the Constitution which deals with rights deals also with duties, and besides stating that military service is compulsory and it is the duty of every Soviet citizen to defend the fatherland, adds that

It is the duty of every citizen of the U.S.S.R. to abide by the constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to observe the laws, to maintain labour discipline, honestly to perform public duties and to respect the rules of socialist human intercourse. . . .

. . . to safeguard and fortify public Socialist property as the sacred and inviolable foundation of the Soviet system, as the source of wealth and might of the country, as the source of the prosperous and cultural life of all the toilers.

An earlier clause in the Constitution lays down that

Work in the U.S.S.R. is a duty and a matter of honour for every able-bodied citizen, on the principle : He who does not work shall not eat.

“ Honestly to perform public duties ” is a short phrase, but a pregnant one. For the obligation to take a share, over and above one’s day-to-day occupation, in building, helping and strengthening the Soviet system is one which runs right through Russian life. In factories, farms, offices, schools, blocks of flats—in fact, in any and every grouping there are bits of public duty to be done, and it is part of the job of any committee (and of the Communist Party) to see that they are done, and that people come forward to do them. And that an immense number do so come forward can be seen from the information provided by the Soviet Press, particularly the minor press. Certainly there must be some recalcitrants, some who hate public affairs, and some who simply shirk. But the general tendency of Soviet political life is to regard the man who simply ’tends to his own concerns and plays no part in the organisation of society in the same light as did the ancient Greeks—who called him an *idiot*.

#### THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE UNION

With this general atmosphere in our minds, we can turn to the actual institutions of Soviet political life

First, its structure.

The U.S.S.R. is a federation of sixteen Soviet Socialist Republics, of which the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, which contains the capital and

stretches from the Baltic to the Pacific, is by far the largest. Originally the number of constituent Republics was much fewer ; they have been altered and added to from time to time, and certain territories have been "stepped up" into the status of Union Republics. There are, however, various conditions to be fulfilled in the case of any territory becoming a Union Republic, of which one is that its geographical position must be on the periphery of U.S.S.R. territory. For the Constitution reserves to the Union Republics the right of secession, though it is extremely improbable, in view of the influence exercised by the All-Union Communist Party and other All-Union institutions such as the Trade Unions, that any Republic will suggest secession in the near future ; but clearly secession would be impossible for a territory which was surrounded on all sides by Republics of the Union. There are, also, *within* the Union Republics, other national divisions, called variously Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics, Autonomous Regions and National Regions, with varying degrees of autonomy. The R.S.F.S.R. at the time of the passing of the Constitution, contained 17 autonomous republics, 6 autonomous regions, and 5 national regions. All these lesser authorities are represented on the Soviet of Nationalities (see below) ; but otherwise they need not detain us here.

The Constitution of the U.S.S.R. is *in form* federal, like that of the United States ; a clause in it lays down that the All-Union Government, like the American Congress, possesses only the powers definitely assigned to it by the Constitution, the remainder residing with the Union Republics. But this statement needs important modifications. In the first place, the first three clauses of the Constitution lay down the basic nature of the State, explaining that it is a socialist state of

workers and peasants and that its political foundations are the soviets of workers and peasants, and no constituent republic can alter that. Secondly, the U.S.S.R., as a federation, is far more centralised than the U.S.A. Apart from the control of the centralised Communist Party, the mere list of powers assigned to the All-Union Government runs to twenty-three paragraphs in the Constitution and includes, besides the obvious items of war and peace, defence, international relations, supervision of the constitution, and admission of new republics, such important features as foreign trade, the national economic plan, banking and credit and currency, transport, law, insurance, and "the establishment of the fundamental principles" in the use of land, in education, public health and labour legislation. The main concern of the Union Republics is with health and education, within "the fundamental principles", though they naturally make and administer their own economic plans and local services, in conformity with the Plan for the U.S.S.R. as a whole.<sup>1</sup> The possibility of a clash between the law of the U.S.S.R. and the law of a constituent Republic, which causes such constant trouble in the United States—as when, for example, the police forces of "wet" states refused to help in the enforcement of the Prohibition Act—is summarily dealt with in a clause which says, "In the case of conflict between a law of a constituent republic and a law of the Union, the all-Union law shall prevail."

#### REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

The constitutional authority for this huge population, living in these vast territories, is one which bears a considerable formal resemblance to a Parliamentary system, but in practice works very differently.

<sup>1</sup> See further, Chapter III.

The highest organ of State power is the Supreme Soviet. This is an assembly of two houses : the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities. The Soviet of the Union is elected by ballot from the population as a whole, by geographical constituencies, on the basis of 1 member to every 300,000 electors <sup>1</sup> ; the Soviet of Nationalities is made up of representatives from all the Republics, provinces and regions mentioned above, on a basis of 25 to a constituent republic, 11 to an autonomous republic, 5 to an autonomous region and 1 to a national region. The two houses have equal rights, and there is provision made for the event of their disagreeing. According to the Constitution the Supreme Soviet should meet twice a year, and should elect, at a joint sitting of both houses, a Presidium of thirty-seven members to act as its interim representative. Besides this, there is the Council of People's Commissars (roughly corresponding to our Cabinet Ministers) who are chosen by the Supreme Soviet. In practice—so far as practice can be said to have been established—the Supreme Soviet elects the Chairman of the Council, and he at a later stage presents the full list of Commissars for approval. The functions of the Presidium are among others to keep a watch on the actions of the People's Commissars and of the national republics and see that they do not do what they should not, or abrogate the fundamental laws of the Union.

Similar constitutional arrangements—omitting, naturally, the Soviet of Nationalities—are prescribed for constituent and autonomous republics, and these have to provide for the election, also by ballot vote, of soviets both for the smaller areas of nationality (regions and autonomous provinces) and for what we should call

<sup>1</sup> This is a change from earlier days, when "class-enemies" were disfranchised, and the towns had a larger representation proportionately, than the country districts.

“ local government areas ”, i.e. regions, cities, rural districts, villages and even hamlets. The smallest of the “ populated places ” so often mentioned in the war news has its local soviet.

#### WORKING OF THE SYSTEM

So far, so simple. Allowing for certain obvious differences, the system on paper looks not unlike the British parliamentary system ; in fact, it is different. Apart altogether from the effect of war, which profoundly alters the working of any political system, by suspending the operation of parts of the constitution, the first differences which must strike anyone are (a) that the Supreme Soviet is a much larger body than the British House of Commons, and (b) that it is not in permanent session.<sup>1</sup> It meets, receives, reports and projects, discusses, votes and goes away again, leaving the Presidium and the Commissars to carry on. It is not, therefore, a legislative body in the sense in which the House of Commons is, discussing in detail the texts of Bills and the items of budgets (and failing to discuss most of them owing to the limits of time) ; it is more like the General Meeting of an organisation. This does not mean, however, that it does not discuss very fully proposals and reports, particularly Budget proposals, by means of committees elected from its numbers. The printed material distributed to each of its members as agenda makes formidable reading.

The second difference, however, is much more important. In the U.S.S.R. there is no Party system, and therefore no Opposition with a capital O. The Communist Party—which is not a political party in any British sense of the term—is discussed in a later section

<sup>1</sup> This is not the case with the minor organs of government, such as city soviets, which sit much more constantly. See below.

of this chapter ; for the moment it will suffice to say that the last organised Opposition died rapidly away after 1927, with the closing of the Trotsky controversy ; and there seems little present likelihood of another developing, war or no war. This statement is not true only of the All-Union Government ; it applies equally to the soviet of any republic, town or village. A representative assembly, in the U.S.S.R., is not composed of two or more groups advocating different programmes, each struggling for power and each trying to manœuvre the others into awkward positions, to score points, or to gain concessions ; it is a gathering of people whose minds are made up on the general questions of policy, and who are discussing *on the same assumptions* the best ways of carrying that policy out.

This is very different from Parliament. If there are no opposing parties, the rational basis for much of present Parliamentary procedure disappears at once—the questions designed to put Ministers in a hole or to force them to give information which they do not want to give because it will put their Party in a hole, the use of Parliamentary procedure to obstruct the Government (or conversely to shut up the Opposition), the moving of motions in order to be annoying, the forcing of a division when the result is not in doubt, and the rest of what is termed “parliamentary tactics”. The atmosphere is altogether different, and the Englishman, or the American, has been so long habituated to the party system in his central legislature that he cannot imagine how any free discussion can exist without it. Yet it should not be so difficult. Both Britain and America are swarming with assemblies in which free discussion takes place, but which do not have a party system. To take one example of a large organisation, the Trades Union Congress has no party system, but no one has ever suggested that its



discussions were not free. Indeed, though we are not discussing here the merits or demerits of the party system as a political device, everyone who has ever sat in Parliament or on a local Council where a party system was in force, knows that it can actually be a bar to free discussion, when members' lips are closed for fear of the Party Whips.

But if there is no party system, there can be no contested elections, in the sense in which we know them here, where each of the major parties puts up a candidate for as many constituencies as it can afford to finance, and where our tradition of individualism is still so strong that anybody, no matter who he is or what his qualifications are, can stand for election anywhere provided he possesses or can get hold of enough money to pay his election expenses <sup>1</sup> and a fine of £150 if he makes a very poor showing. The U.S.S.R. does not *forbid* contested elections ; but it is obvious that without a party system the running dog-fight of a British General Election is not likely to exist. The probability is that for the vast majority of seats there will be only one candidate, and the question of how that candidate is chosen becomes of vital importance. (British political parties, at the moment of writing, seem to be just beginning to think that they might do well to consider this problem.)

Every citizen of the U.S.S.R. who is over 18, unless he or she is insane or has been legally condemned to deprivation of electoral rights, is eligible to stand for election—this includes citizens serving in the Army. But the right of nomination rests not with the individuals but with “ public organisations and societies of working people ; Communist Party organisations ; trade unions ; co-operatives ; organisations of youth ; cultural societies ”. How do these discover and select their candidates ?

<sup>1</sup> In the U.S.S.R. election expenses are paid by the State.

Like Great Britain—though unlike the U.S.A.—Soviet Russia does not hold general elections in war-time ; and there has only been one general election since the new Constitution came into operation. This election, moreover, was held under rather peculiar circumstances. It followed closely on top of the big purges and treason trials, which had undoubtedly caused great political anxiety throughout the Union ; so that, as well as being the first election under the new Constitution, with secret voting, it was also the occasion of a vote of confidence. The electors were being asked whether, at a time of political difficulty and growing international danger, they trusted Stalin, in much the same way as the organisers of the Institute of Public Opinion from time to time ask the people of Britain whether they trust Churchill—and with much the same result. On that occasion, it seems probable that most of the candidates, by whomsoever put forward, had in fact to be approved by the Communist Party. But a tremendous effort, under Stalin's guidance, was made to get candidates of high quality. Leading men of science, Stakhanovists,<sup>1</sup> persons who had distinguished themselves in every rank of life, were persuaded or induced to stand, in order that the first Soviet elected by ballot should make a brave showing.

This was a national election. Of lesser elections, both to political and to other bodies, which take place more frequently, we know rather more. Nominations can be sent in by any of the bodies mentioned above, and a local electoral conference then meets to discuss their several merits, which discussion includes a close examination of their records. In the case of the elections to smaller bodies, we hear sometimes of an "examination day", on which all the candidates appear before the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 119.

electors and there is a full and frank discussion of their merits in their presence, the actual election taking place at a later date, when the electors have had time to think things over. Shop committees and Trade Union committees are frequently chosen in this way. Clearly, if a single organisation like the Communist Party is in the last resort responsible for the choice of the majority of the candidates, very much depends on the sagacity and public spirit of the members of that organisation. As to that, time will show ; it does not appear that they have failed so far.

The elected person is obliged by law to report to his electors on the work which he has done and the work of the Soviet of which he is a member—no such obligation is laid on a British M.P., though some do report periodically to their constituents as a matter of grace. Elaborate instructions as to their work are given to deputies by their electors, nominating organisations, or electoral conferences, and they are asked searching questions as to why they have not carried out their instructions or fulfilled their electoral promises. The Constitution also contains a provision for the recall of any deputy by a majority of those who elected him ; this does not appear to have been operated to any extent of late years, though in some cases elected members of a Soviet have been deprived of their seats through the intervention of a higher authority.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The All-Union Government, and the Governments of the Republics, are very important. But they do not make up the whole of Russian political institutions. Besides them, there is the whole vast network of local Soviets referred to earlier, which are certainly of just as much importance in the work of the country as a whole,

and excite just as much public interest <sup>1</sup> as do the national bodies. Here again a partial resemblance to British institutions masks a deep difference.

The chief characteristics of British local Councils, as they strike anyone who has ever served on them are first, that the scope of their work is severely and meticulously restricted by law. Secondly, that they are so largely independent of one another <sup>2</sup>; the County Council is much larger and richer and may think itself much larger beer than the Rural District Council, but it cannot therefore order the latter about, except to a very small extent, nor can the L.C.C. order about the Metropolitan Borough Councils of London. Thirdly, the working of all Councils, even where there is not a strict party system in existence, is coloured and almost conditioned by a perpetual struggle about money—between those who want the Council to spend and those who want the rates kept down. Fourthly, there is in Britain a very hard dividing line between the unpaid elected members of the Council, who are the masters, and the paid officials who are their servants. An elected member of a Council is not *required* to do any work in connection with the Council's activities other than attend its meetings—that he often does go round and look at the schools or help to manage a hospital does not alter the principle; whereas the paid official in theory takes

<sup>1</sup> The average vote for local Soviet elections as a whole is said to be somewhere between 80 and 90 per cent.—a figure almost incredible to anyone who knows British local government. Voting is easier, because there are no rules about qualifying periods of residence; anyone who lives in a particular district gets his vote without more ado. Nevertheless, the percentage is astonishing, especially when one considers that the periodic election of a town Soviet, say, cannot be made an occasion of great patriotic excitement, as a national election can.

<sup>2</sup> And also, to a great extent, of the National Government. Parliament does, it is true, pass legislation affecting local authorities, and the various Ministries can exercise some control, mainly by financial means. But the Ministry of Health cannot *order* the Oxford City Council to build a new swimming-bath.

no part in the determination of policy, speaks at Council meetings, if he does speak, only by permission of the elected members, and would cause a major scandal if he tried to stand for election. None of this is true of the U.S.S.R.

Take first the question of finance. There is no rating system in the U.S.S.R. (though there are local levies raised for particular purposes), and the budgets of the different areas are part of the national plan. This does not mean that the cities, etc., have no say in what should be spent in their areas or how it should be spent, for they make their own plans, subject to confirmation, and themselves take part in the making of the national plan. What it does mean is that, subject to these limitations, the city can distribute its budget as it decides, and that the pull-devil pull-baker business between those who wish to spend and those who wish *as a policy* to cut down spending is entirely eliminated. Which must save a tremendous amount of time, at least.

The position with regard to powers is logical and easily intelligible. Within the broad limits of the national plan, any soviet, even the smallest, can do anything it chooses, subject to the right of a superior soviet to give it positive or negative orders. A district soviet can give orders to a village soviet; Mossoviet, which rules the city of Moscow, can give orders to the district soviets of the city, and so on. The deadening principle of *ultra vires*, under which British local Councils are prevented from experimenting in many ways because no law exists to say that they may, has no place in the U.S.S.R. A village soviet which wanted to open a shop or laundry would open it, subject only to the possibility that the district soviet, if it disagreed, could order the shop or laundry to be closed. But as the whole present tendency of the U.S.S.R. is to expand enterprise and activity all over the Union,

such prohibition does not in practice occur very often.

Local soviets, in fact, have a very much wider range of work and activity than British local authorities. They do the jobs which the British do ; they attend to public health and education ; they run trams, and buses, build houses, libraries and concert-halls ; they pave and light and clean the streets. In addition, they are agents for carrying out the national plan for their particular area ; if the plan says that in the coming year the output of boots and shoes and the supply of comfortable flats for workmen must be greatly increased, they must put that in the forefront of their own programme.

It should not be imagined, though, that this involves centralisation of the type to be found, for example, in pre-war France, where the local prefects were actually appointed by the government in Paris. Officials in Moscow and Leningrad may be carrying out the policy of the central government as a part of their work ; but they are appointed by the city.

But, besides all this, the local soviets undertake as a regular task all manner of work which in our society is performed by private companies and jealously kept from the hands of local authorities. They run local industries of a great many types ; they run shops and restaurants, and they print and publish books and newspapers. Some idea of the range of interests covered by a soviet in a large city can be gathered from the list of the twenty-five " sections " which were under the charge of members of Mossoviet in 1935.<sup>1</sup>

The list runs as follows :

- Agriculture
- Anti-aircraft defence
- Building

<sup>1</sup> From E. D. Simon and others, *Moscow in the Making*—the only good study in English of Soviet local government.

Communal economy  
 Communications  
 Courts, prosecutions, police and fire  
 Culture  
 Defence  
 Elimination of adult illiteracy  
 Finance  
 Fuel  
 Homeless children  
 Housing  
 Local industry and co-operation  
 Local trading  
 Main drainage  
 Metro  
 Motor and horse traffic  
 Public feeding  
 Public health  
 Railway transport  
 Roads, bridges, and river banks.  
 Schools  
 Sewage, lighting, green belt and parks (all in one !)  
 Tramways.

It would seem, from the foregoing, that the work of a local soviet deputy must be very much more interesting, more varied, and more fully responsible than that of his British counterpart. It is also harder ; though the soviet deputy is unpaid, for he must be given time off from his work at full pay in order to attend to his public business, he is not underworked. The full Soviet meets for discussion only at 6 to 8-week intervals, but every deputy is expected to take part in the work of one of the sections (not more, because it is not considered that a deputy would have time to devote proper attention to more than one) ; and the list of eighty-five questions and requests raised by different groups within the city, ranging from " to finish the construction of the Metro " to " to produce a larger assortment of toilet soaps ",<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Simon, *op. cit.* The full list—too long for quotation here—is extraordinarily interesting.

which formed part of the Instructions to the Members of the Moscow Soviet in 1935, shows that their job is no sinecure.

They do not, however, do it all alone. As already related, many of the elected deputies are themselves paid officials of the Soviet, and absolutely no distinction is drawn between them and the deputies who work for other enterprises. But in addition there are an astonishing number of persons who voluntarily give part of their spare time to assisting in the work of local government. These "activists", as they are called, have a faint resemblance to the co-opted members whom we find on some of our local government committees; but they are far more numerous. The Moscow section of public health, for example, contained in 1935, 600 deputies and 1,000 "activists".

## THE PARTY

It seems pretty clear that whatever views may be held about the central political system of the U.S.S.R., its local forms are admirably adapted to get the maximum amount of work done, to arouse the maximum interest and energy, and produce the minimum of unnecessary friction, provided that all the local bodies are working to a common end, and with a common general policy in view. We must now ask how the U.S.S.R. sets out to achieve that common purpose.

The Instructions to the Members of the Moscow Soviet, referred to on the preceding page, were drawn up by the Moscow Committee of the Communist Party during the elections to the Soviet; and they form as good a peg as any for a discussion of the most important and the most dynamic political invention of the Russians—the Communist Party. The Communist Party is the ruling



force in Russia, and it is an institution which has no parallel in this country.

To begin with, it is not a political party like the Labour or Conservative (or the Communist) Party of Great Britain ; and it is a trifle unfortunate that it should bear that name, because it tends to confuse British readers. It is not a " party " because it is unique ; it has no rivals. And it is not a " party " because it does not tout for members, but on the contrary, severely restricts entry to its ranks. It is a college or legion, composed of picked and trained personnel—trained for what the Webbs have called " the Vocation of Leadership ". Its present membership is, naturally, not known ; in 1939 it was estimated at about 4 millions, i.e. something under one-fortieth of the total population of the U.S.S.R. To this number must be added the membership of the League of Young Communists (*Komsomols*),<sup>1</sup> if we are to arrive at the total of active Communists in the U.S.S.R. This does not imply, of course, that the rest of the people are not active or that they do not hold the Communist faith. The conditions of entry to the Party are stiff and the standard of public duty required of a Party member high, so that many strong supporters of the principles of the Revolution never dream of applying for Party membership. One of the constant tasks of groups of the Party is to take hold of these " non-Party Bolsheviks " and other non-political minds, and induce them to serve on committees and accept offices—to play their part, in fact, in the running of society.

Formerly, a great deal of attention was paid to the " class-origin " of candidates for the Party ; one whose father was a *kulak*, or a priest, or a former member of the bourgeoisie, had little chance of acceptance. As the Revolution has stabilised, this has become a thing

<sup>1</sup> About 5½ millions in 1935.

of the past : it is sufficient for a candidate to have won the recommendation of three Party members and to have served a year of probation—which is not by any means a formality—for him to become a member, though further periods of varying length must elapse before he becomes eligible for certain offices.<sup>1</sup> When he becomes a member, what sort of organisation does he find he has joined ?

In the first place, what he has joined is not a local society, or a national society, but an All-Union Society. This is very important. The Party has, naturally, local and national groupings, but the first loyalty of a member of the Communist Party of Moscow or of the Ukrainian or Georgian Communist Party is not to Moscow or to Georgia or to the Ukraine, but to the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. ; and part of his duty is to keep the administrators and deputies of his own particular area straight on the lines of Party policy. In practice, Party members have been moved about, like soldiers or missionaries, to the localities where their services were immediately required. Without this nation-wide discipline and guidance, exercised through the Party, neither the system of local government described in this chapter, nor the planning machinery and the machinery for national self-government described in Chapters II and III, could be worked at all. The guidance of the All-Union Party is all-important.

#### ORGANISATION OF THE PARTY

The actual organisation of the Party, of which our hypothetical member finds himself a unit, follows much the same lines as the general political organisation within the U.S.S.R. He will be enrolled in a Party *cell* or

<sup>1</sup>“Purges”, i.e. wholesale expulsions of members of the Party, were also frequent in the disturbed years immediately before the war ; but they seem to be a thing of the past.

*nucleus*, which is the basic grouping. Above that will be local Party Committees, which serve the needs either of particular places or of large factories, etc. ; above them again will be District Committees ; and so on, until we reach the last stage, that of the All-Union Congress of the Party, which is the supreme governing body. This All-Union Congress elects a central Committee (*TSEKA*) and an executive, *Politburo*, and such other sub-committees as it may decide. The *Politburo*, which is in continuous session, is the body which decides the day-to-day working of the Party and hence of the whole of the U.S.S.R. Its decisions may be discussed by the Congress of the Party, or they may not. But whether or not they have been discussed, they are binding ; for discipline in the Party is strict. Every lower centre must obey the orders issued by a higher centre, and individual Party members must obey the orders of their own centre. This discipline was established in the early days, when the Party was proscribed, and no " free voting " was practicable or sensible.

Party members act together, in whatever organisation they find themselves. The Party members of a Trade Union Committee, for example, or of a local soviet, meet and discuss together as a Party " fraction ", however few in number they may be, and forward Party policy within the group, on matters with which the group is directly concerned. But the discipline still holds good ; the Party " fraction " must act under the instructions of the Party Committee of appropriate rank. The Instructions to Mossoviet, which have already been mentioned, were drawn up by the Moscow Party Committee and were presumably obeyed by the Party " fraction " in the Soviet.

This is the shape of the organisation. More important, however, are the purposes which the Party has set before itself. Of these the essential ones are :

First, Party members are expected to set an example of socialist standards and socialist energy in all walks of life. In the early days, this was underlined by a maximum income fixed for all Party members. This rule has since been relaxed, but members of the Party are still expected to do more than other citizens of the Union, and to volunteer for any jobs of danger or difficulty. In the dark days of the siege of Leningrad, to give an example, the number of applicants for entry to the Party in Leningrad went up rapidly. Party Members are the shock troops of the U.S.S.R.

Second, they are required to give the necessary political leadership to *all* organisations, of whatever kind, which are functioning within the Union. This is an immense task. It does not mean that the Communists must be in a majority on the governing bodies of every local soviet, every factory, every collective farm in the U.S.S.R. ; there are not enough Party members to make that possible. As a general rule, the more important the organisation, the higher the proportion of Communists to be found in it. The high offices of the State are all Party members ; but as we descend the scale the proportion declines rapidly. In *Pravda* of January 5th, 1940, the following percentage figures were given for the lower grades of soviets :

<i>Type of Organisation.</i>	<i>Percentage Party Membership.</i>
Territorial soviets . . . . .	72
Regional soviets . . . . .	70
District soviets . . . . .	61
Town soviets . . . . .	51
Urban district or ward soviet . . . . .	49
Village soviet . . . . .	24

The proportion of Party members falls very low when we reach the village soviets which (the U.S.S.R. being still so largely rural) make up a big proportion of the

whole ; but the Party members, however few, are still expected to guide and frame their general policy. It should be noticed, however, that the control of policy by Party members is not prescribed by law or secured by a mechanised marshalling of a row of voters, but by the influence exerted over the undecided or the half-educated by people whose minds are made up, who are prepared to work harder than anyone else, and who have trained themselves in the technique of organisation. Sir John Maynard, in *The Russian Peasant*, tells how, during the process of agricultural collectivisation, Communists were sent from village to village, not because they had any special knowledge of agriculture, but because they were good chairmen or good organisers, because they could provide the drive for getting anything done. In this light, the Party might be described as the transmission belt which enables the mechanism to run. This leads us on to its third function, viz. :

To draw into political life and political co-operation as many as possible of the mass of the people. Here we find the Party educating and training at least as much as guiding and directing—a job which, so far, no one in this country has yet undertaken, for no one as yet wishes to draw “the mass of the people” into political life. It is Lenin’s kitchen-maid again, but this time the precept is being translated into practical application ; the U.S.S.R., wanting to enlist the services of anyone who is capable of any service at all, uses the Communist Party as instructor.

The fourth function is perhaps the most essential of all. The Party has “to use its constant contact with the mass of the people to be the eyes and ears of the leadership and so to make possible correct political leading”—in other words, to be a kind of permanent **Mass-Observation**—but a Mass-Observation under the

direct control of the State. In this quotation, it may be, we can find the secret of both the stability and the elasticity of the Soviet political system. Soviet politics, like Soviet planning, is a two-way affair. The leaders issue their decrees ; but they do not issue them without having received reports from their intelligence officers throughout the Union. These officers, however, are not outside enquirers, like the emissaries of Mass-Observation or the Institute of Public Opinion, nor State employees maintained by the central government and posted to different areas. They are, to a very large extent, the people who are actually doing the responsible work in the places in which they live—for example, the members of the Presidium of the Moscow City Soviet ; and they unite, therefore, their practical day-to-day experience with their sense of what the application of Party principles require. It is their business to know and to warn the leaders when a particular policy or piece of policy is proving or likely to prove so unpopular as to result in failure<sup>1</sup> ; and, conversely, when the opposition, however vocal, is one which will not in the last resort make trouble and can therefore be overridden. It seems probable that a calculation of this kind was made in the case of the anti-abortion law passed in 1936, which was preceded by a nation-wide controversy, in which the outside observer received the impression of mass opposition so strong and so vocal as would certainly have sufficed to put off any British Cabinet from introducing so “controversial” a measure. The Russians have made a very realistic study of the practical facts about “public opinion”, that is, the opinion of *everybody*, not merely those who read and write newspapers ;<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> For example, the first violent efforts towards agricultural collectivisation in 1929-30.

<sup>2</sup> It is an unfortunate fact, which derives from our class system of education, that in Britain the means of public expression of opinion is practically

they have discovered that the intensity with which an opinion is held matters as much if not more than the number of those who hold it. Most practical politicians in Britain must also have some idea of this truth ; if they had not they would be most unpractical politicians. But quite apart from the complications which are introduced by the existence of persons whose opinions are weighted by their possession of large blocks of money power, our individualist respect for The Vote tends to hide the facts from the many who are not politicians. The advocates of Proportional Representation are an example of reformers who have fallen into the trap of measuring opinion by quantity only and not by strength. The Russians take an enormous deal of trouble to find out just what is the reaction of the mass of people to orders, to proposals, and to officials, and the principal body whose duty it is to find this out is the Party ; it may well be, also, that the secret police, who were once a separate department under the name of the G.P.U., and are now part of the Commissariat of Home Affairs, are concerned as much with investigating what we generally call the *morale* of the people as in smelling out disaffected persons.<sup>1</sup>

#### POPULAR CONTROL

How much, in all this, is there of popular control ? It is very difficult to say, particularly in war-time ; and at the risk of being tedious, we must remind readers that the war-time atmosphere in Russia goes back at least to 1936. The Russians cannot change their government as a whole, even if they wanted to ; for no alternative confined to the ten per cent. or thereabouts who have received an upper-class education, and who are continually giving the name " public opinion " (in all good faith maybe) to the views of themselves and their own immediate circle. A really democratic statesman would discount a deal of this.

<sup>1</sup> The British war-time Censorship, to a very small extent, performs this function. So we learn.

government is allowed to offer itself. This goes for local as well as national governing bodies, though it is possible for a village soviet—and for a factory management—to be sacked for incompetence or unpopularity by a higher authority, as a result of representations made from below. They cannot get rid of a Commissar whom they do not like, save by indicating to the authorities that he is so unpopular or so incompetent that in the interest of everyone he had best be got rid of. Nor can the British people get rid of a Cabinet Minister whom they do not like; but the British people have much more opportunity of saying that they do not like Sir James Grigg than the Russians of saying that they dislike Mr. X. An Englishman may even say publicly and with legal impunity that Churchill ought to be hanged; a Russian who said the same of Stalin would be executed himself.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, it is much easier for a Russian to criticise and to ensure the removal of officials of lesser rank. He is not confronted with either the absolute irresponsible power of the manager of a factory in private industry or the anonymous security-from-dismissal of a Government official. In the U.S.S.R. both managers and officials are liable to dismissal on grounds of public policy, which includes their treatment of those under them as well as their impersonal conduct of their jobs. (Dismissal is, of course, easier in a society which possesses both full employment and social security, so that dismissal does not carry with it an incidental additional penalty of starvation.) There is a continual watch kept to ensure that persons in authority do not abuse their positions or neglect their work, and complaints by individual workers or workers' committees are treated with the

<sup>1</sup> But it should be remembered that an Englishman who says Churchill ought to be hanged does not really mean it; he is only saying in rather strong language that he does not like him. It is different in a country which has gone through a revolution. Russians *have* plotted to kill Stalin.



utmost seriousness. In this work, the State-owned and Party-owned newspapers, as well as journals run by groups, play an important part. Since the beginning of the first Five-Year Plan, *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, and the rest of them have maintained a large network of correspondents whose business it is to report continually upon the progress of socialist planning and the lets and hindrances which arise. The workers in a factory whose manager is inefficient and dictatorial can lodge a complaint with *Pravda* or some other newspaper; and if the newspaper takes it up and no satisfactory changes are made, the results can be very unpleasant. No newspaper in this country has anything like so definite a function in public policy as have the newspapers of the U.S.S.R.

During the formative years of the Union, while experiments, some of them magnificently unsuccessful, were being made on all sides, we used to hear accounts of immense *chistkas*, "cleansings", in which the entire personnel of errant towns and factories was put in the dock, and made confession of its sins, in the manner of the accused at the treason trials<sup>1</sup>—a proceeding strongly abhorrent to Englishmen, who do not like public confession and prefer "not guilty" as a plea. Subsequent control of administration has been somewhat less dramatic; but the continual investigation of complaints goes on notwithstanding. Whether freedom to criticise the Prime Minister, the judges or the police, or freedom to complain of the works manager or the local rationing official with the definite possibility that if the complaint is established the complaineé will be dismissed, is of the more importance to the ordinary person, is for the ordinary person to judge.

Something of the same difference between the two

<sup>1</sup> See Maurice Hindus' *Under Moscow Skies*, for a vivid reconstruction of one such "cleansing".

countries is seen in the discussion of questions of policy. British citizens, with very slight exception, have absolute freedom to discuss and to question any political issue ; and provided they do not excite a disturbance or fall foul of the police they may persist in raising again and again an unpopular issue, whether the Government likes it or not. No subject is finally closed ; anyone can re-open at any time the issue of 18b or of the Sunday opening of theatres ; and people can hold clamorous meetings even on the question of war strategy, demanding a Second Front in Europe or the instant bombing of Rome. " I hate and detest what you say ; but I will defend to the death your right to say it "—even to an American newspaper correspondent.

None of this would be tolerated in the U.S.S.R. for a moment. You may not criticise or call in question the basis of the Soviet State or the principles of Communism ; you may not agitate for a return to private enterprise. I am not aware of any law dealing with discussion of military policy ; but I can imagine what would have happened to anyone who suggested in the autumn of last year that the defence of Stalingrad was being unnecessarily costly and that diversions ought to be made elsewhere. Nor are Russians encouraged to discuss the war with foreigners, as correspondents discovered between 1939 and 1941. " Better fifty angry correspondents ", Philip Jordan was told, " than fifty dead Russians." Furthermore, when a question of importance has been finally settled, it is settled, and no one is allowed to raise it again unless the rulers change their minds. It is treason to raise again any of the issues on which Trotsky was beaten in 1927 ; it is also not permitted to try to repeal the anti-abortion law, though the working of the law is still discussed in scientific societies. It would be possible to compile a list of other subjects which are now

considered "closed". Even within the ruling Party itself this principle more or less holds, and it is noticeable that during the last few years open and nation-wide discussion within the Party has decreased. This may be partly due to war conditions ; it is worth mentioning that the 1939 edition of the Party Rules lays down explicitly that :

free and positive discussions of questions of Party policy in individual organs of the Party, or in the Party as a whole, is the inalienable right of every member of the Party.

On the other hand, the Soviet citizen can criticise to his heart's content, verbally or in print, the views and behaviour of those responsible for running shops and factories. If he believes the manager of his factory to be a fool, a bully, or a crook, he can say so, whereas his opposite number in Britain would be sacked on the spot and anyone who repeated the charge, or took up his cause publicly, would be liable to be broken on the wheel of the libel laws. Once again, it is a question of which kind of free speech one values most—and the answer will depend largely on the mental climate in which the answerer has grown up.

" DEMOCRACY " ?

It will be observed that in this discussion I have not used the word democracy, nor attempted an answer to the question so frequently asked, " Is Russia a dictatorship or a democracy ? Is it more, or less democratic, than Great Britain—or than the U.S.A. ? " The omission is deliberate. Such a question is peculiarly ill-timed at the moment when the two Allies have both, single-handed, defied the forces of barbarism ; it tends anyhow to futility of discussion, because so few persons agree on what they mean by the word. Its ancient inventors, the Greek city states with their mass of slaves and unfr-

chised aliens and women, would strike modern democrats as possessing a very undemocratic society ; and we know that the Athenians thought it an essential of democratic practice to choose their judges and magistrates by lot. If by "democracy" we mean, as democrats should, "a system which gives the best chance of development to every single one of its citizens" we shall have to take into account much more than the actual forms of "political" government. We shall have to consider whether the institutions of a particular society make for personal freedom, for equality of opportunity and the utilisation of the talents and capacities of all its citizens, for individual security and individual happiness, and whether they can inspire confidence and enthusiasm in those who live under them. Judged by this standard, no system of to-day is perfect—probably none ever will be. If the Soviet system were perfect, the Russians would not have made so many changes in it in the course of twenty-five years ; as Lenin said, they are learning the art of politics by practising it. If our own were perfect, we should not find so much irritation, disillusionment, and sense of frustration as we do on every side. I do not feel that a system which still needs to maintain a large force of secret police can be regarded by anyone as ideal ; nor, on the other hand, could I give that name to one which permits a hundred-odd comfortably-off gentlemen comfortably seated in Parliament to cast, without check or question, the votes of between half a million and a million others against giving a decent wage to hotel and restaurant workers.

To every people its own problems and its own solutions ; and it may well be that the citizens of each particular country bear most easily the defects and faults with which they have grown up. Old English Radicals have said that they felt unable to breathe in the Soviet Union,

owing to the lack of the atmosphere of free and fierce political criticism in which they have been bred, and to the ruthless enthusiasm of the Soviet leaders in enforcing any policy on which they have made up their minds. Russians, at the moment, say less about Britain ; but the eloquent silence of our last year's visitors on what they found in the war factories said more than words.

What is established beyond all question, particularly in the last two years, is that the citizens of the U.S.S.R. have unbounded confidence in and enthusiasm for their own government, and that their social security, and their opportunity for education, service and self-development is immensely higher than that of the majority of people in this country. Whether, as time goes on, they will add to that a freer and more confident right of fundamental discussion and choice of rulers I do not know, any more than I know whether we in Britain, recovering from the long years of frustration, will rediscover that gift for political organisation and experiment which we once possessed so strongly, and will learn from the first socialist society in the world the lessons which we could apply to our own. If we do not, there is little hope that those now fighting will come back to anything better than they left.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SOVIET NATIONALITIES

by DR. N. BAROU

THE U.S.S.R., like Great Britain, has a problem of nationalities ; both comprised within their boundaries peoples of the most varying culture, from the highest to the lowest. To-day, therefore, when the "colonial problem" of Britain is giving very serious food for thought to every liberal and socialist thinker in this country, the experiences of the Soviet Union are of vital interest. The question of the subject nationalities was one of the first tasks of the Revolution. But merely to say that the U.S.S.R. has "solved the problem of nationality"—if it has—is not sufficient ; we have to enquire how it has done so. This involves examining, not merely the basic facts and the basic principles, but also the methods which have been employed to give reality to a paper proclamation of independence—in particular, the economic development of the backward areas as part of a comprehensive Union plan, the stimulation and deliberate cultivation of national languages as vehicles of real communication and real culture, and the all-Union discipline and guidance of the Communist Party. These methods, as well as the facts, are the subject of this chapter.

#### I. IMPERIAL POLICY

Tsarist Russia was a vast Empire ruled by one of the most autocratic Governments in Europe and built on the suppression of numerous non-Russian nationalities. Economic pressure came first : land was taken for the Russian settler, mineral resources were appropriated by

the State without compensation ; education and health of subject nations were neglected, and they were given no chance of self-government, being dominated by the Tsarist bureaucracy which regarded them as objects of colonial rule.

The Empire grew by conquest and by the spontaneous movement of the population from west to east. At first the East was an escape for fugitives from serfdom, from justice or from religious persecution, a refuge for men with free minds or adventurous characters, who wanted to live and worship in their own way.

With the establishment of a centralised State, colonisation of the East became one of the most important aims of the Tsarist administration. The semi-feudal rural economy based on a low standard of peasant life produced a considerable surplus of agricultural population. Small wonder that agrarian dissatisfaction and peasant insurrections were the order of the day among the Russian population and among subject peoples.

Many insurrections of the subject peoples were suppressed in a sanguinary manner by wiping out whole villages and expelling thousands of peasants. The history of Russian colonisation throughout the centuries contains many a page of suppression of riots.

The Tsarist administration and the landed aristocracy did their best to quell these peasant revolts, but it was not so easy to find a genuine solution for the "land hunger" of the peasantry without impairing the economic interests of the landed gentry. A solution was found in the settlement of the "superfluous" peasantry at the expense of the native population ; thus providing convenient material for an army of occupation at a low cost. The inevitable result of this policy was the erection of national barriers between the Russian settler and the native peasant. Thus, the bulk of the resettled Russian

peasantry had been involuntarily pressed into being the mainstay of a system of colonial exploitation, of an Imperialist administration which relied on the settlers to act, if need be, as an active instrument of suppression. The administration was often disappointed in those expectations, having to face revolts in which the native and the Russian population rose hand in hand against their oppressors.

It is difficult to speak of a rational economic management in Tsarist Russia, where the whole national economy was much neglected and mismanaged. The national regions suffered mostly from a policy which paid little attention to their industrial development. The Tsarist administration was afraid that industrialisation would be accompanied by growing resistance of the population against the colonising régime, resulting from the formation of a local working class and of a popular movement for liberation.

Yet it was not impossible entirely to neglect economic development in the colonised regions. The Empire was in need of raw materials—cotton, wool, leather, timber and other goods, and the national regions had to serve as a base for production of raw materials for Central Russia.

Hand in hand with economic exploitation went cultural domination. The native population was still more illiterate than the Russian, and the Russian language, being the only medium of culture, served through the policy of Russification as the main weapon of the cultural enslavement of the non-Russian population. This policy was applied most vigorously: Russian as the only recognised State language and the predominance of Russian personnel were the main methods of Imperial administrative policy.

The Russian language dominated urban life, partly



because a great part of the urban population was Russian, partly as a result of Russification. Even in 1926—eight years after the Revolution—the great majority of the urban population in some of the autonomous republics and regions recognised the Russian language as their own language. For example

<i>District</i>	<i>Percentage speaking Russian.</i>
Mari, Karelian, Volsk . . . . .	90
Chuvash . . . . .	88
Bashkir, Crimean . . . . .	70
Kabardino-Balkarian, Kazakh . . . . .	62
Komi . . . . .	50

Russification was applied not only to the subject nationalities but also to peoples of common Slav origin with the Great Russians—the Ukrainians and Byelorussians. Between the two censuses of 1897 and 1926—during the last twenty years of Imperial Russia and the first eight years of the Soviet State—the number of Ukrainians increased by 74 per cent. Only half, however, of this population used the Ukrainian language, because the other half had undergone the process of Russian linguistic assimilation.

The Byelorussian language suffered even more : though the numbers of Byelorussians increased by 33 per cent. the use of their own language shows, as compared with 1897, a decrease of nearly 3 per cent.

Such was the state of affairs at the formation of the Soviet State, which had to face the problem of nationalities, as one of the most acute and complicated on the agenda of the Revolution.

## II. SOVIET POLICY

The October Revolution made a fundamental change and brought a new approach to national problems. The leaders of Soviet Russia recognised very early that it was

essential to add "national liberation" to the other slogans of the revolution—"peace, land and socialism".

The new approach was expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia, published on November 16th, 1917—the second week of the Revolution. This declaration has served as a corner-stone of the Soviet policy towards former subject peoples and has been incorporated in the Constitution of the Union. It proclaimed :

1. The equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia.
2. The right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination.
3. The abolition of all national and religious privileges of one nation over another.
4. The free development of all national minorities and ethnographical groups inhabiting the territory of Russia.

The new government firmly believed that the slogan of "national resurrection" would appeal to the oppressed nationalities, and it did not hesitate to make full use of it. It issued a proclamation promising wide autonomy to the nations and creeds who supported the Revolution.

The appeal was successful and helped considerably in the mobilisation of the Red Army and in the fight against intervention. At the XII Party Congress Stalin acknowledged the decisive part played in winning the Civil War by the new policy towards nationalities :

Let us never forget [he said] that had we not had allies in the rear of the so-called "alien nations", who disrupted the enemy with their silent sympathy with the Russian workers—silent sympathy, comrades, is an invisible factor, but how decisive in its effects : had we not had this sympathy we should never have beaten the generals.

The third All-Russian Congress of Soviets on January 24th, 1918, adopted the Declaration of Rights of the Toiling and Exploited Peoples, which stated that "the

Russian Soviet Republic is established on the basis of the free Union of free nations, as a Federation of Soviet National Republics ”.

The next step was made on July 13th, 1923, when the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics announced in its appeal to all the Peoples and Governments of the world that

at the Congresses of the Soviets which took place recently [December 30th, 1922], the people of the Soviet Republics unanimously decided to form the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, forming one united State. This union of equal people remains voluntary, excluding national oppression and constraint of any people to remain in the bounds of this State and granting every republic the right of free secession from the Union. At the same time all the Socialist Soviet Republics, including those which may be established in the future have the right freely to join the Union.

The Constitution of the Soviet Union declares that equality of rights of all nationalities is a fundamental principle of Soviet political life. Article 123 of the Constitution of 1936 reads :

The equality of the rights of the citizens of the U.S.S.R. irrespective of their nationality or race, in all aspects of economic state, cultural, social and political life, is an in-defeasible law. Any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of, or conversely, the establishment of direct or indirect privileges for citizens on account of their race or nationality as well as the advocacy of racial and national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt, is punishable by law.

The Soviet Union consists at present of 16 Union Republics, which include 20 Autonomous Republics, 9 Autonomous regions, 34 regions, 12 national districts and 5 Territories. The main distinction between a Union and an Autonomous Republic is that the former has the right of secession from the U.S.S.R.

Autonomous Republics or regions are established in places where non-Russian nations comprise a considerable proportion of the population or form the leading National group. Autonomous regions enjoy the same rights as other regions in the U.S.S.R. but in addition they have the right to use their native languages in schools and public institutions. Otherwise, national districts have the same rights as national regions, though they are usually smaller in size.

In the territories of the extreme north it was deemed more expedient to unite many small national groups into larger regional units, whilst larger nationalities, such as the Yakut and Komi, have been united in Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republics.

Equality of rights is expressed in the composition of the highest organ of the State—the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., in which all laws must be passed by the two chambers, the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities.<sup>1</sup> In 1939 fifty-nine national groups were represented in the Soviet of Nationalities by 574 delegates.

It is clear that the U.S.S.R. combines the high degree of centralisation exercised by its Union Government with a considerable amount of decentralisation and regional autonomy. The centralised machinery of the Government of the U.S.S.R. is strongly reinforced by the fact that there is a united Communist Party for the whole country. The same applies to the Trade Union organisation.<sup>2</sup> This gives the multi-national state a great flexibility and ensures unity of policy and action.

The Soviet Union, as we have seen, is a country of one party only. This party—the Communist Party—takes full responsibility for the Soviet general policy and controls the personnel of all the elected bodies and the

<sup>1</sup> See ante, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 128.

whole administration. It also controls all publications, cinemas and radio. Although a very great proportion of the members in all elected bodies of the Union, and especially the local Soviets, Co-operatives and Trade Unions, are not members of the Party, every one of them has to be approved by the respective Party unit before he or she is elected.

Immediately after the Revolution the majority of members of the Party were Russians, because its main recruiting-ground lay among the industrial workers of the Central regions. Since then, however, tremendous efforts have been made by the Party both to educate non-Russian nationalities and to recruit Party members from all of them ; and this policy has developed so far as to make it possible to have All-Union Communist policy presented to these nationalities by their own nationals and in their own tongues.

The main factor which has made this development possible has been the development of industry in the national republics—of which more hereafter. This results in the creation, in every territorial unit, of a national urban working class which becomes in turn the vanguard of Party policy and of Soviet development for each nationality. Similarly, collective agriculture opens the way for Party activity among the peasant populations of even the most backward national groups. The point which should be clearly understood is that the strong foundation of the life of nationalities under the Soviet Government is the creation in each of a planned economic life which is part of a planned whole. Party members and intellectuals of all nationalities find scope in working hard for the political education and cultural development of *their own people as part of the Union* ; and upon this basis has grown up that strong sense of fused patriotism for the U.S.S.R. which has astonished so many spectators.

There have been no quislings in the Soviet Union ; furthermore, the patriotism of the individual nationalities in this war is definite and positive. Listen to *Pravda*, putting it lyrically :—

The fighter in the Red Army whether he be Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Latvian, Georgian, or any nationality, has clearly understood, has felt with all his heart, that just now, facing grave military dangers, he is not alone : he is cared for, he is loved. The soldiers of the Red Army at the front and the Soviet citizens in the rear are fighting with him for his national freedom, for his honour and dignity. He would not be able to hold out alone : he would be crushed by the military might of Hitlerite Germany, but together with his other brothers, he will never be beaten.

This enthusiasm and confidence in the results of the national policy of the Soviet Union is well justified. It is evident that the policy is successful. Stalin emphasised it, declaring on May 1st, 1942,

We are fighting a just war of liberation for our Fatherland. We have no aim to conquer foreign people or to annex foreign territory. Our aim is clear and noble. We want to liberate Soviet soil from the German fascist invaders. We want to liberate our brother Ukrainians, Moldavians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, and Karelians from the ignominy and humiliation which they are suffering at the hands of the German fascist rascals.

The following pages describe in more detail the policy which has produced this result ; but first it is necessary to set down a few facts about the numbers and distribution of the various nationalities within the Union.

### III. NUMBERS AND DISTRIBUTION

The U.S.S.R. is a country covering an unbroken area of 8,220,000 square miles, stretching over Europe and

Asia. According to the latest census (1939), it contained 170 million persons belonging to no fewer than 189 ethnic groups. The vast size of the country, in relation to its present population, is very important in facilitating economic growth and development.

Most of the ethnic groups are, however, very tiny ; only forty-eight of them number more than 20,000 persons. These forty-eight we set out in order of size on the table on p. 57, from which it can be seen that only the leading ten include more than 1 per cent. of the total population. Nine per cent. of the total covers the remaining 179.<sup>1</sup>

The population was distributed in 1939 between the Union Republics as follows :—

	%
Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic	64
Ukrainian S.S.R. . . . . .	18·1
Uzbek „ . . . . .	3·8
Kazakh „ . . . . .	3·6
Byelorussian „ . . . . .	3·2
Georgian „ . . . . .	2·1
Azerbaijan „ . . . . .	1·9
Tadjik „ . . . . .	0·9
Kirghiz „ . . . . .	0·9
Armenian „ . . . . .	0·8
Turkmen „ . . . . .	0·7

Between the two latest censuses, 1926 and 1939, the population of the national republics increased more rapidly than that of the other parts of the Union. The Union population as a whole went up 15·9 per cent. that of the autonomous republics within the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic by 23 per cent. and that of the autonomous regions by 58 per cent.

<sup>1</sup> In 1939 there were only eleven Union Republics in the U.S.S.R. During 1940 five others were formed, called respectively the Karelian-Finnish, Moldavian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian Republics ; the addition of these brought the total population to over 190 millions.

**TABLE I.**  
**NATIONAL COMPOSITION OF POPULATION OF U.S.S.R.**  
 (Returns of 1939 All-Union Population Census)

		%
Russian . . . . .	99,019,929	58.41
Ukrainian . . . . .	28,070,404	16.56
Byelorussian . . . . .	5,267,431	3.11
Uzbek . . . . .	4,844,021	2.86
Tartar . . . . .	4,300,336	2.54
Kazakh . . . . .	3,098,764	1.83
Jewish . . . . .	3,020,141	1.78
Azerbaijan . . . . .	2,274,804	1.34
Georgian . . . . .	2,248,566	1.33
Armenian . . . . .	2,151,884	1.27
Mordovian . . . . .	1,451,429	0.86
German . . . . .	1,423,534	0.84
Chuvash . . . . .	1,367,930	0.81
Tadjik . . . . .	1,228,964	0.72
Kirghiz . . . . .	884,306	0.52
Nationalities of Daghestan . . . . .	857,371	0.50
Bashkir . . . . .	842,925	0.50
Turkmen . . . . .	811,769	0.48
Polish . . . . .	626,905	0.37
Udmuri . . . . .	605,673	0.36
Mari . . . . .	481,262	0.28
Komi . . . . .	408,724	0.24
Chechen . . . . .	407,690	0.24
Ossetian . . . . .	354,547	0.21
Greek . . . . .	285,896	0.17
Moldavian . . . . .	260,023	0.15
Karelian . . . . .	252,559	0.15
Karakalpak . . . . .	185,775	0.11
Kabardinian . . . . .	164,106	0.10
Finnish . . . . .	143,074	0.08
Estonian . . . . .	142,465	0.08
Kalmyk . . . . .	134,327	0.08
Lettish and Latgalian . . . . .	126,900	0.07
Bulgarian . . . . .	113,479	0.07
Ingushetian . . . . .	92,074	0.05
Adygei . . . . .	87,973	0.05
Karachayev . . . . .	75,737	0.04
Abkhazian . . . . .	58,969	0.03
Khakass . . . . .	52,602	0.03
Oirot . . . . .	47,717	0.03
Kurdish . . . . .	45,866	0.03
Balkarian . . . . .	42,666	0.03
Iranian . . . . .	39,037	0.02
Lithuanian . . . . .	32,342	0.02
Chinese . . . . .	29,620	0.02
Chechich and Slovakian . . . . .	26,919	0.02
Arabian . . . . .	21,793	0.01
Assyrian . . . . .	20,207	0.01
Other Nationalities . . . . .	807,279	0.48
	<u>169,519,127</u>	



These increases are partly due to the growing pace of the movement from west to east, for during the years 1926-39 over 3 millions of people went to Ural, Siberia and to the Far East from other parts of the country ; but it is also a result of improvement of health and living conditions in the national republics.

During the first twenty years of Soviet rule, the spread of infectious diseases was considerably reduced. Compared with 1913, smallpox infection had decreased in 1938 by 98 per cent., typhoid by 71 per cent., diphtheria by 80 per cent., syphilis by 85 per cent., etc. Trachoma, the terrible eye disease, which used to ravage the Tartars and Kalmyks, was reduced in the Tartar A.S.S.R. by 89 per cent., in Chuvash A.S.S.R. by 61 per cent., and in the Kalmyk A.S.S.R. by 75 per cent. The mortality rate decreased as compared with 1913 by 40 per cent. The average weight of Soviet youth increased between 1927 and 1935 by 5·6 lb.

The urban population of the Soviet Union more than doubled itself between 1926 and 1939. The increase was even more rapid in national regions where industry had been under-developed and town population had been small. The lowest proportion of urban to rural population in 1926 was in the Kazakh republic—9 to 100. Between 1926 and 1939, however, the growth of urban population in Kazakhstan was the most rapid in the whole Union.

The average increase in town population over the whole Union was 112·5 per cent., but the urban population in the Union republics grew as follows : Kazakh 228·7 per cent., Turkmen 204·0 per cent., Tadjik 137·6 per cent., Kirghiz 121·2 per cent., Armenia 119·3 per cent., R.S.F.S.R. 118·4 per cent., Ukraine 108·3 per cent., Georgia 79·5 per cent., Azerbaijan 78·7 per cent., Byelorussia 61·9 per cent. and Uzbek 42·8 per cent.

As a result of a speedier growth of the urban population in the republics of Kazakh, Turkmen, Kirghiz and Armenia the ratio between the urban and rural population became more balanced.

The best method of understanding the great progress made by the Soviet nationalities is to compare their present-day economic and cultural position with that under the Tsarist rule.

#### IV. ECONOMIC CONSOLIDATION

Notwithstanding the initial success of the new national policy it soon became evident that the smaller nations could not be brought into the general line of Soviet developments without considerable changes in their economic structure. As early as 1921, Stalin formulated the new requirements, in the following manner :

The essential point of the national question in the R.S.F.S.R. is to eliminate the backwardness (economic, political and cultural) of the nationalities, which they inherited from the past, and to give those nations the opportunity and possibilities of catching up with Central Russia in respect of political, cultural and economic development. . . . The substance of national inequality consists in the fact that we, as a result of historical development, have inherited from the past conditions under which one nationality, the Great Russian, was more advanced in regard to politics and industry than the others. This is a source of inequality which cannot be shaken off in one year, but which must be eliminated by giving economic, political and cultural assistance to the backward peoples.

On the part of Great Russians such a policy required a complete change of heart. They, who had been expected to serve as the backbone of the imperial colonial exploitation system, were now to become the main prop of the new equalitarian policy. The Russians lived up

to the task and the results of the first twenty-five years of the existence of the Soviet Union show astonishing changes in the life of its numerous nationalities. These changes became specially apparent during the last fifteen years when the movement of the population to the east was organised within the framework of Soviet planned economy with its new scientific and progressive approach to national problems.

The strong point of this policy lies in the fact that it is not satisfied with formal equality of rights, but endeavours that each nationality should make full use of them. It is assumed that each nationality must have its own territory and establish industries and an organised working class of its own. In such a way cultural nationalism can find its economic foundations.

The Jews are the only nationality in the Soviet Union who were not settled in any large numbers on their own territory. The Soviet Government tried to remedy this by creating a few Jewish national districts in the south of Ukraine and Crimea, and by establishing Birobidjan as the place for Jewish concentrated settlement and a future Jewish autonomous unit. These territories, however, contain less than 10 per cent. of the Jewish population of the U.S.S.R.

Nearly half of the Jewish population, totalling 1,300,000, lived in six towns, including Moscow with 400,000, Leningrad with 275,000, etc. All the prophecies that equality of rights would lead to dispersal of Jews all over the vast country proved wrong and an opposite tendency manifested itself towards concentration in few towns.

The occupational distribution of the Jewish population in the Soviet Union in 1939 was as follows : workers 30 per cent., employees <sup>1</sup> and liberal professions 41 per cent., agriculturists 6 per cent., artisans 20 per cent., and

<sup>1</sup> Administration, clerical, etc., non-manual workers (see p. 83).

miscellaneous 3 per cent. When compared with the occupational distribution of the whole population of the Soviet Union it shows that the proportion of artisans amongst Jews is six and a half times and employees two and a half times higher and that of agriculturists eight times lower than the average for the whole country.

One of the most difficult tasks with which the Soviet Union was confronted was the settlement of the nomadic peoples. These peoples, for the most part engaged in cattle-breeding, had to be settled in definite places of residence, from which their economic activities could be organised on a permanent basis. The nomad was entirely dependent on natural conditions and on the state of the grazing places in a certain region and at a certain time of year. Settlement requires a higher degree of economic development by which a man, or more exactly his tribe, can maintain larger herds during the whole year, relying not entirely on ground fodder, but supplementing this by stores put by for that time of the year when ground fodder begins to run out, or it becomes difficult and unprofitable to move to new places. The settlement of the nomads and semi-nomads was a very complicated operation, but the mastery of it was an important condition for the introduction of planned economy in many national regions.

The industrial heritage of the Soviet Union as a whole was slight. The vast spaces of Eastern European and Asiatic Russia contains less than 10 per cent. of all Russian industry, of which nearly one-half was in the Urals. But during the past twenty-five years a complete change has taken place in the distribution of industries and power stations over the Union, a change which can be measured by comparing the rates of increase of gross industrial production in the Union Republics between 1913 and 1937.

Republic.	Increase. (times)
R.S.F.S.R.	8
Ukranian S.S.R.	8
Usbek	6
Kazakh	15
Byclorussian	16
Georgian	23
Azerbaijan	6
Tadjik	187
Kirghiz	110
Armenian	14
Turkmen	15

It will be observed that in some of the republics, such as Tadjikistan and Kirghizia, there was practically no industry before the Revolution, which accounts for the very high rate of increase in those areas; but other territories beside these two have developed at a very high rate. After 1937, during the third Five-Year Plan, the rate of increase was accelerating considerably until it was interrupted by the outbreak of war.

Industrial regrouping has been conducted with an eye to defence requirements and to the necessity of maintaining two separate armed forces; one in Europe and one in the Far East. In addition to the two great European industrial regions—Ukrainian and Central Russian—two great new regions have been developed around the Urals and in the Kuznetzk Basin and a third is being established in the Maritime Province in the Far East. The mineral resources of these regions and especially those of Magnitogorsk and Kuznetzk have been developed with great speed, thus providing new sources of supply for coal, iron ore, oil, copper, aluminium, and other metals. Great new blast furnaces, rolling mills, machine-tool, tractor, tank, motor-car, aircraft, rolling stock, chemical, and other factories of all types have been built in these new industrial regions. Industrial pro-

duction has been shifting rapidly to the east, especially since the outbreak of war.

The setting up of industries in the Eastern Republics of the U.S.S.R. meant solving many a transport problem by locating production in close vicinity to sources of raw material. The plans for establishing new industries took into careful account the industrial and agricultural potentialities of the new areas and their natural resources, allotting to each a specific part in the industrial make-up of the Union.

The introduction of collective agriculture and collective farming has helped the peasant population, even of the most backward national republics, to develop a new type of rural life, and has created an economic foundation for national cultural development in rural districts. Thus, the collective farms and machine-tractor stations had, in 1939, over 4,000 tractors in the Kirghiz Republic, over 7,000 tractors and 3,000 harvesting machines in Tartar, and over 5,500 tractors in Azerbaijan.

Increased production of specialised crops as part of the national development is encouraged by heavy capital investment. The investment per collectivised farmstead in the national republics in 1938 was three times higher than the average for the whole Union. To take an example, Georgia has now become the Union's biggest supplier of sub-tropical plants. Tea and tobacco plantations as well as orange groves cover the countryside. In 1938, 25,250 acres were growing oranges, lemons and tangerines, as against only 400 acres in 1913.

Tea plantations before the revolution were insignificant in size : by the year 1938, however, they had grown to cover an area of 109,500 acres, producing in 1937 60 million pounds of green tea.

The tobacco plantations of Georgia are situated mainly in the province of Abchazia and cover an area of more

than 52,500 acres. Oil and other produce-yielding trees are intensively cultivated—tung trees, the juice of which is extremely important to the shipbuilding industry as it is used to prevent rust on the underwater parts of the hulk—now cover an area of 30,000 acres, whilst as recently as 1930 only 2½ acres had been planted as an experiment.

Great economic progress has been achieved in the Central Asiatic Republics—Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which are rich in minerals and metals and especially suitable for growing cotton. These republics, being originally inhabited to a considerable extent by nomadic people, had first to settle and then to train hundreds of thousands of industrial workers and collective farmers. We give a few outstanding examples of their success in detail.

1. *Kazakhstan*, with an area of over a million square miles, became the chief new industrial centre of the Union. It is the second largest oil centre and produces 60 per cent. of the copper, 50 per cent. of the nickel, 75 per cent. of the lead of the whole Union, as well as large quantities of coal, phosphorites and chromites. The establishment of these new industries was made possible by a great development of the railways and waterways. Important new railways included the "Turk-Sib" railway of over 1,000 miles, opened in 1930, from Arys to Semipalatinsk, now the centre of the largest meat-packing combine of the U.S.S.R. The annual output of the Karaganda coal-mines, the biggest in Kazakhstan has been increased from 10,000 tons in 1928-9 to 4 million tons in 1938. The total of irrigated land in Kazakhstan had risen to 2,726,250 acres in 1939 as against 1,740,000 acres in 1915.

2. Another example is *Uzbekistan*, one of the poorest and most neglected parts of old Russia, which has now

over 100,000 industrial workers, mainly in textiles. Over 50 per cent. of these workers, skilled and unskilled, are of Uzbek nationality.

Uzbekistan is an important cotton producer, her fields accounting for 57 per cent. of the Union's production of raw cotton in 1938. The repairing and improvement of the existing irrigation system and the cutting of new canals, including the famous 270-kilometre Fergana canal, enabled the area sown under cotton to be increased from 639,000 acres in 1924 to 2,296,250 acres in 1938, and the yield per hectare was doubled in the same period. In Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, there is the giant Stalin cotton mill, a large plant for the manufacture of agricultural machinery, and many food and light industries; a copper-smelting combine has been established at Alamlyk and a large fruit-canning plant at Fergana, the centre of the fruit-growing region.

3. The three Transcaucasian Republics, *Georgia*, *Armenia* and *Azerbaijan*, present another example of rapid progress. These regions have enormous water-power reserves; new power and irrigation installations have laid a firm foundation for great industrial and agricultural enterprises.

Harnessing of the rivers is being co-ordinated with irrigation planned to expand the cultivation of cotton and other crops. An outstanding example is the Lake Sevan scheme in Armenia. This country, mercilessly exploited under the old régime, now has hydro-electric plants producing power for factories and smelting works, and supplies the Soviet Union with copper, synthetic rubber, etc. Large canning, cotton and textile industries have been built in these territories. The Lenin textile works, the Kirov chemical plant, the cement factory at Davalu, the synthetic rubber plants at Erivan, and many others testify to the extraordinarily quick growth of industrialisa-



tion in a country that up to recently had been predominantly agricultural. One of the biggest synthetic rubber plants in the Union, the "Sovpren," is established in Armenia. This factory is worked with local raw materials, a type of Armenian limestone.

In Azerbaijan, the textile industry has expanded to considerable proportions, owing to the favourable conditions for cotton growing. Azerbaijan now ranks as the second cotton centre in the U.S.S.R. with a total production in 1938 of 189,240 tons. In Korobadge, new cotton mills have sprung up and the second largest silk plant in Europe is now situated in Hooqe. At Stepanakert another great silk factory has been established, whilst the old Lenin textile plant in Baku has been modernised and expanded.

The fertile lands of the south allow considerable development of food industries in Azerbaijan, meat stores in Baku, canning plant at Lenkoran and Ordubat, biscuit factories at Baku and the biggest soap-producing centre of the Union at Kirovabad. Important oil wells and hydro-electric resources favour the growth and expansion of power stations all over the Republic. The biggest and most powerful station is the "Red Star" in Baku. Baku, the greatest oil centre of the Union, has considerably increased its production which is now about four times larger than before the revolution.

4. In *Bashkiria*, the few out-of-date factories bequeathed by the Tsarist administration have now been modernised and put into operation again. A great number of completely new plants and oil refineries have been erected wherever new sources of oil have been located, as in Ishimbai and in Tuymaz, and great refineries.

Relying on the local supply of timber, giant timber works have risen—the Chernichov timber plants and the Sterlitomak timber mills in the vicinity of Ufa, the capital

of Bashkiria. Ufa itself has grown immensely in size, thanks to the industrial expansion of recent years. One need only mention some of the factories that have sprung up in the vicinity, i.e., match factories, meat stores, leather, canning plants, grain mills, a meat factory in Sterlitomak, etc. An important motor plant fed by the high-quality metals of the Urals produces tens of thousands of tractors, lorries and other vehicles for local industries and agriculture. Of great importance are the newly built factories for paper-making machinery, so badly needed to supply the evergrowing demand for printed matter.

5. Our last example is the *Buryat-Mongolian Republic*. This used to be one of the most backward parts of Eastern Siberia. Cattle-breeding was almost the sole occupation of its nomadic inhabitants ; and needless to say there was scarcely any industry worth mentioning. In Buryat-Mongolia the revolutionary change has been greatest of all, and the results most marked.

Cattle-breeding has been organised under a collective system ; nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes have been settled and the introduction of machinery for such purposes as haymaking has made possible the stocking of fodder to meet any contingency. By the end of 1938 there were 1,248 tractors and 275 combine-harvesters in operation as well as many other types of agricultural machinery. The most phenomenal growth, however, occurred, naturally, in the industrial field.

The most important plants are metal-casting works, a large glass factory, the giant locomotive works in Ulan Ude, and meat-refrigerating stations. In the Djidinsk Taiga (marshy forests) a whole town has been built around the production of wolfram ; and there are steadily expanding timber and dairy industries. The fisheries on Lake Baikal have been reorganised ; a new railway line (Ulan Ude-Naushki) has been built which

in combination with new motor roads has helped to bring this distant area of the Union into line with the more advanced regions of the west.

We have presented this survey in some detail in order to illustrate with actual facts the economic development of the nationalities of the Soviet Union. Let it be emphasised, once again, that this development is not left to the play of accidental forces, but part of the general plan for the whole. Agricultural possibilities, for each republic and region, have been scientifically studied. New techniques of cultivation, new crops and plants have been introduced and grown on a wide scale ; while at the same time local resources, particularly mineral resources, have been surveyed and developed. As a result, each of the republics has gradually acquired an industrial aspect of its own, and has been able to develop its own national life on a broad basis of reality, which has made possible the cultural nationalism described in the next section.

## V. CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

In the cultural field, as we have seen, the policy of the Tsarist Empire left the Revolution a very heavy task to face. The first few years were spent in improving educational and cultural conditions in general, so far as was possible when the revolution was fighting for its life. At the same time local languages were given political recognition, and foundations were laid for the establishment of elementary cultural institutes on Soviet lines. These activities were mainly confined to the nationalities which were to be found within the boundaries of the R.S.F.S.R.

The development of culture among nationalities of the Union can be divided into two periods : the first dating from the Revolution to the middle of the first Five-Year

Plan (about 1930), and the second subsequent to it. During the first period the foundations were firmly laid by the introduction of the Latin alphabet to many backward nationalities, by the running fight against illiteracy, and by the introduction of compulsory primary education. During the second, as the economic developments described in the preceding section gradually came into effect, the material basis for advanced national cultures was assured. Hundreds of new towns were built all over the Unions, and schools, colleges, and other institutions for advanced education were centred in them.

As is well known, one of the curses of Tsarist Russia was illiteracy. Of those living within the 1939 borders of the U.S.S.R., no fewer than 76 per cent. were illiterate in 1897. Naturally the percentage was highest among the small subject nationalities; among the Kazakh, Kirghiz, Buryat and Yakut, for example, less than 1 per cent. could read or write, and many other nationalities showed less than 10 per cent. literate—this only a generation and a half ago.

The figures of the 1926 census, which there is no space to quote, showed a good deal of improvement, largely owing to the introduction of the Latin alphabet for non-Slavonic languages. At first there was considerable opposition, notably in the Crimea, Kazakstan and Uzbekistan; but Latinisation has steadily won the day<sup>1</sup> and by 1931 Latin characters were in use for fifty-seven languages, of which nearly one-third had never before been written down at all. Even Turkish and Mongol dialects, including the Chinese spoken by Russian subjects in the Far East, were written down in the Latin alphabet.

This made it very much easier to print and publish

<sup>1</sup> Not, of course, for Russian itself, though the Communists simplified the Russian alphabet.

books in the various languages. In 1925 the U.S.S.R. published books in forty-three languages, this number had increased to 80 by 1931 and to 111 by 1938. A reference back to the figures on p. 56 will show what a huge proportion of backward peoples must by now be able to have books in their own tongues. For not merely did the *number* of languages in current use increase, the *proportion* of books issued in non-Russian tongues increased also—from 6 per cent. of all books published in 1925 to 37 per cent. in 1931. To give specific instances, books published in Russian were one and a half times more numerous in 1931 than in 1925; but whereas in the latter year six books were published in Uzbek, in 1931 there were 1,054, and in Tadjik the corresponding figures were 2 and 149. British readers, accustomed for generations to ready access, in so far as their purses have permitted, to books and periodicals which they could read, will have to make an effort of imagination to appreciate what this means; but it is surely clear that no one can become really educated or cultured in the modern sense unless he can read in his own language. A Tadjik, for example, could not; for before the Revolution there were no books printed in Tadjik.

During the same period great efforts were made to establish primary and secondary education for children, and to organise adult education in the national republics and regions. Take, for example, the Buryat-Mongol Republic already mentioned. Before the Revolution very few people in Buryat-Mongolia could read or write, and there was no secondary education whatever, and no daily press. By January 1931, the percentage of illiteracy was down to 56½, and in the following year there were listed thirteen higher technical schools, four institutes for adult workers' education, three local universities and seven institutes for scientific research.

There were circulating three central and eleven local newspapers—and newspapers do not circulate if there is no one to read them. This is simply one case out of many; it illustrates how energy on the part of the rulers and desire for education among the masses went hand in hand.

The districts of the Far North had to face peculiar difficulties, in dealing with an exceptional number of small backward groups inhabiting an area of vast dimensions and lacking communications. In order to cope with these difficulties, the Institute of the Northern Peoples at Leningrad started special courses for teachers, instructors and welfare officers. These were attended by young people from the Far North who when they had completed their training went back to their own villages to educate their own kinsmen. Gradually, also, schools and training centres were established for these peoples nearer at hand, where children and adults alike were taught to read and write in their own languages and learnt the rudiments of science. Training centres for artisans and mechanics were successfully established in a number of Polar observation posts, and a network of schools, libraries, and recreation centres spread gradually over those frozen and desolate wastes.

The progress that was made, during this first period, in the teaching of national languages can be observed in the following table.

Nationality.	Percentage of Children being taught in their own language.
Kazakh . . . . .	100
Tartar . . . . .	96·9
Mari . . . . .	94
Moldavian . . . . .	84·2
Buryat-Mongol . . . . .	79·3
Kalmuk . . . . .	74·5
Finns . . . . .	48·5
Poles . . . . .	47
Jews . . . . .	42·4

By the end of the second period, the progress registered was very great indeed. In 1939, 90·8 per cent. of all men and 72·6 per cent. of all women were literate, and the "target area" for further improvement had been almost reduced to the very old and the very young. The majority of present-day illiterates are over fifty years of age, and three-quarters of them are women. The table below gives in very summary form the progress made during thirteen years both in combating illiteracy and in establishing secondary and higher education. It should be remembered that the greater the amount of higher education in any national republic the more rapid is the progress of that republic to general self-reliance, as it is thereby enabled to train its own teachers and administrators and to dispense with the tutelage of Russians in these jobs.

TABLE II.

Republic.	Percentage of Literates over 9 years old.		Percentage in 1939 with Higher or Secondary Education.
	Dec. 1926.	Jan. 1939.	
R.S.F.S.R. . . . .	55	81·9	8·3
Ukrainian S.S.R. . . .	57·5	85·3	10·8
Byelorussian „ . . .	53·1	78·9	8·25
Azerbaijan „ . . . .	25·2	73·3	8
Georgian „ . . . .	47·5	80·3	12·5
Armenian „ . . . .	34·5	73·8	8·7
Turkmen „ . . . .	12·5	67·2	4·9
Uzbek „ . . . .	10·6	67·8	4·2
Tadjik „ . . . .	3·7	71·7	2·9
Kazakh „ . . . .	22·8	76·3	6·5
Kirghiz „ . . . .	15·1	70·0	3·5
U.S.S.R. . . . .	51·1	81·2	8·4

In order not to weary the reader with too much detail, let us see what this means in practice in a single republic—Turkmenia, which reduced its illiterates from seven-eighths of the population over 9 years to less than a third. Tsarist Turkmenia had fifty-eight schools, instructing between 6,000 and 7,000 children. Turkmenia of 1939 was teaching 204,600 children in 1,347 schools; it was employing twenty-six times as many teachers—in some rural areas a hundred times as many.

It is not surprising that by 1931 it had needed to set up its own teachers' training centre, to be followed by a second four years later; it had also established its first Agrarian Institute in 1930, its first medical school in 1932, and nine scientific research institutes by 1938. In the year 1938-9 there were 2,355 students attending various faculties in the higher educational institutions of the Republic, of whom 95 per cent. were in receipt of State scholarships; and to these should be added a fair number of young Turkmens taking university courses in Moscow, Leningrad, and other outside cities.

So far we have been considering figures merely—of literacy and of education. But culture means much more than percentages, and one effect of the Soviet policy towards nationalities has been to find living homes for many old cultures which had never secured organised modern expression. Everyone has heard of the Russian theatre and the Russian ballet; but not everyone realises that national theatres are now blossoming in dozens of new towns throughout the Union. A Soviet writer—Grigoriev—writes of a Gipsy theatre, the theatre of the most "nomad" people in the world:

The musical gifts of the gipsies, their love of poetry and ability to create it are well known. In the course of their thousand-year-old history, this people, often persecuted, wandering over the face of the earth in poverty and trouble,



have created epic and lyrical works of great beauty which have been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation.

The Gipsy Theatre in Moscow is the only one in the world. It is the mature outcome of that culture which the gipsy people has acquired in the Soviet Union's schools, technical institutes, collective farms, factories—in short, wherever they have shared in the joint task of building the new life and the new state.

For the first time they have acquired here a written language, become a settled instead of a nomad people, felt the ennobling influence of collective labour, of complete national equality and civil liberty. A quarter-century of education and citizenship lies behind this splendid gipsy theatre.

But the gipsies are not the only case. Before the Revolution there were no theatres at all in Armenia, Turkmenia, Tadjikistan, or Kirghizia. Now these republics have respectively 23, 11, 23, and 21 theatres; and other cultures show corresponding increases. Briefly, the new towns which Soviet industrialisation is setting up in its national areas are no longer Russian towns dominated by Russians; they are now towns of dual personality, which are Soviet and Russian on the one hand, and on the other are becoming more and more Ukrainian, Armenian, Tadjik towns within a Soviet whole.<sup>1</sup>

The principle of the rights of nationalities is one of the basic items of the Soviet Constitution. Basic principles apart, however, the Soviet leaders have expended what to outsiders may have seemed an altogether disproportionate amount of effort on the development and education of small and backward nationalities, and some have been inclined to ask whether this effort has really repaid itself.

<sup>1</sup> This is of great interest to Britons. We might, if we had chosen, have done the same thing for the towns and the old cultures of India. [Ed.]

The answer is that the profit-and-loss calculation is made in terms of a very much wider purpose—the gigantic task of “sovietising” an immense, poor, illiterate and backward country. Soviet leaders early understood that they could not build their new civilisation without making a quick and radical change in culture, particularly among the non-Russian nations, by making them soviet-minded and collective-minded.

It was essential to transform tribal life into the collective solidarity of a new Soviet type ; and this could be done most speedily and with least resistance by using the nations’ own past, their own background—however poor they were—their own languages and their own historical and cultural associations, so that their own life, however it might be civilised and improved, could still remain in a very real sense their own. Appeals for patriotism and sacrifice, courage and initiative, are best understood if they are made in one’s own tongue and touch the imagination by recalling the heroes of one’s own, not someone else’s past.

So, alongside with the revival of the great figures of Russian history and legend, such as Alexander Nevsky, has gone a keen awakening of interest in the heroes of the other Soviet nationalities. Old literary “treasures” have been, not merely revived, but translated into Russian and many other languages, used in schools, and read by thousands. Schota Rustaveli, the national Georgian poet, has become an all-Union figure ; Tariela and Avdantilla, who are the heroes of his great poem *The Warrior in a Tiger-skin*, are known throughout the lands of the Soviet ; so are the men of the thousand-year-old Armenian epic *David Sasunski*. From the Kalmuk plains came riding the heroes of the legends of Djangar, and those of the *Mansara* from the mountains of Kirghizia ; the treasures of the poetry of Navor, the genius of the

Uzbek people, have been rediscovered. It is as though British children, in British schools, were to have for daily reading the songs of Indians and Africans.

Nor is this *rapprochement* confined to traditional or historical works. Soviet writers of to-day write in and for nationalities other than their own. Ten years ago, for example, Ivan Lee the Ukrainian went to Uzbekistan and produced an Uzbek novel, *Mejigorie*; and this was only the first. Now Georgians write novels of Byelorussia, and vice versa; Russians write about Turkmenistan, and the Armenian Marietta Shaginyan learned Ukrainian and wrote a book on Taras Chevtshenko, the great poet of the Ukraine. Alongside this, of course, goes a great deal of translation of books written in Russian into other tongues; the works of Gorki, for example, are available in sixty-eight different languages. Russian is still the *common* language of the Soviet Union, but it is no longer the *exclusive* language. It has been transformed from a barrier into a bridge, over which passes a two-way intellectual traffic to enrich the cultural life of those who live on either bank. It is retaining its position as the common language of the Soviet nations. It is studied as the second language in all national schools, it is the language of the army, it helps to preserve the unity of the Soviet political and trade union movements. Russian culture remains the leading culture of the Union, but it is greatly enriched by the inflow from the numerous new cultures of the non-Russian nations.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The world can learn instructive lessons from Soviet experiences in developing backward areas and nationalities. These lessons apply in three different spheres—the human, the economic and the political.

In the human field it is most important to learn that racial prejudices and aversions must be eliminated in the relations between the leading nations and the smaller nations and full collaboration must be established between them. It is not enough to declare equality of opportunities for all the nations but the leading nation must help the smaller in overcoming the difficulties of their development. It is evident that the national republics and regions of the Soviet Union would never have been able to achieve their successes without the guidance and support of the Russian people and of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic.

In the economic sphere the experience of the Soviet Union has made clear the great advantage of a large economic body in which the composite republics are complementary and represent parts of a planned and organised economic system. By making full use of local power, mineral and other natural resources, and by establishing industries built on local raw materials and agricultural products, the new republics are able to balance their economies and to create a firm foundation for cultural advancement.

The introduction of scientific, collectivised and mechanised agriculture with maximum application of co-operative methods develops a feeling of responsibility among the population of the new republics and educates them for collective action and public institutions.

In the political field two main lessons can be derived from the experiences of the Soviet Union. Firstly, that equality of rights and status must be secured not only *de jure*, but also *de facto* for the smaller nations. They must supply the bulk of the local administration and trade unions, personnel and co-operative leaders.

They must gain their own experience in administration even by paying a price for initial mistakes, but the

Federal Government must stand by and not let mistakes become disasters.

Secondly, cultural and educational policy must take into consideration national and local cultural peculiarities, beliefs, customs and institutions: though the introduction of uniform political and economic institutions has been accomplished in the Soviet Union with great success, any attempt merely to translate the culture of the leading nation into local languages is doomed to failure.

The experience of the Soviet Union in organising the life of its numerous nationalities points to the solution of national and colonial problems throughout the world. But it cannot be achieved by capitalist methods in a competitive world economy: only planned, organised, complementary and collective economy built on the principles of co-operation and collaboration among nations can serve as the foundation for a successful solution of national and colonial problems.

## PART II

### *ECONOMIC LIFE*

#### CHAPTER III

### THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SOVIET ECONOMIC SYSTEM

*by* I. NARODNY

#### INTRODUCTION

I AM writing this chapter not for economists but for ordinary, rank and file citizens trained neither in the "great wisdom" of economic theory nor acquainted with the managerial technique of the functioning of "high" economic institutions such as the Treasury, Board of Trade, Bank of England or trusts and cartels, etc. Consequently I intend neither to enter into a discussion of theoretical differences between the principles on which the capitalist system and the Soviet system are based nor to describe the machinery of the institutions which plan, direct and administer the national economy in the U.S.S.R.

I am writing for those readers who, without being interested in or able to appreciate the differences between the organisation of the Board of Trade in this country and the Commissariat of Trade in the U.S.S.R., the functioning of the Treasury here and the Commissariat of Finance in the U.S.S.R., etc., *know*, however, that from one side, the hideous aspects of economic and social inequalities in the capitalist society are due to the existence of profit, interest, right of inheritance, private ownership of the means of production, direction of production by profit

motives, by market-price mechanism, etc. ; know, too, that the crises which are periodically repeated in a capitalist economy are accompanied by a decrease in the consumption of the large mass of the population and by unemployment, that these crises are due to disproportion in production and distribution, etc ; but who, from the other side, have also read that in spite of the fact that in the U.S.S.R. private ownership of the means of production in general is liquidated and economic development is "planned", in the U.S.S.R., too, there exist banks, taxes and *horribile dictu* indirect taxes, "profit", interest, right of inheritance, differences in wages and salaries. There are possibilities of saving and investment in State loans on which interest is paid, i.e. possibility of deriving an income from capital, etc. And people who are not acquainted with the main *principles* on which the Soviet economic system is based ask themselves why in the U.S.S.R., which claims to be a socialist state, there exist all those economic categories which are characteristic of a capitalist economy. What is the difference in this case, they ask, between the principles on which the capitalist economic system is based and those of the Soviet economic system? In what way does the Soviet economic system differ, in principle, from the capitalist system?

Other questions and fears of ordinary Anglo-Saxon citizens are—the bogey of "Communism" as a negation of the much-cherished individualism ; is it true, as so many writers on the U.S.S.R. assert, that in the Soviet Union the State has absorbed the economic rights of the individual to such an extent that to the individual is left only the rôle of an impersonal, small wheel in the State mechanism? Is it true that the economic rights of Soviet citizens sharply differ from those of the citizens of other countries, and if these differences exist, in what way do they differ essentially?

These are the controversies and questions which I want to try and answer. Let us begin with the last.

## PROPERTY RIGHTS

What is the position as regards property rights in the U.S.S.R. ?

The Soviet Constitution of 1936 declares that :

The economic foundation of the U.S.S.R. is the socialist system of economy and the socialised ownership of the implements and means of production, firmly established as a result of the liquidation of the capitalist system of economy, the abolition of private property in the implements and means of production and the abolition of exploitation of man by man.

But there are two kinds of socialist property :

Socialist property in the U.S.S.R. bears either the form of State property (the possession of the whole people) or the form of co-operative and collective farm property (property of separate collective farms and property of co-operative associations).

To the State belong :

The land, mineral deposits, waters, forests, mills, factories, mines, railways, water and air transport systems, banks, means of communication, large State-organised agricultural enterprises (*Sovkhozi* or State farms, machine and tractor stations and the like) as well as municipal enterprises and the principal dwelling-house properties in the cities and in industrial localities,

but not all the dwelling-house properties in cities and none in villages.

To the co-operative form of property belong :

Public enterprises of collective farms and co-operative organisations with their livestock and implements, products raised and manufactured by the collective farms and co-operative organisations, as well as their public



buildings. . . . The land occupied by collective farms is secured to them for their free use for an unlimited time, that is, for ever.

[i.e. the land formally belongs to the State but is, in fact, in the free, unlimited use of collective farms. I.N.]

What remains for private property?

Every collective farm household, in addition to its basic income from the public collective farm enterprise, has in personal use a plot of land attached to the house and, in personal ownership an auxiliary establishment on the plot, the house, produce, livestock and poultry, and minor agricultural implements—in accordance with the statutes of the agricultural artel (i.e. the statute of the *Kolkhoz* of which the household is a member).

Alongside the socialist system of economy, which is the predominant form of economy in the U.S.S.R., the law permits small private economy of individual peasants and handicraftsmen based on their personal labour and precluding the exploitation of the labour of others. . . . The right of citizens to personal property in their income from work and from savings, in their dwelling-houses and auxiliary household economy, their domestic furniture and utensils and objects of personal use and comfort, as well as the right of inheritance of personal property of citizens, are protected by law.

And that is not only a declaration of the Constitution but an actual fact.

Thus citizens of the Soviet Union may own, possess, buy, sell, donate, lend, and borrow *consumer* goods in the broadest sense of the word without limitations.

I quoted at such length from the Soviet Constitution because what I have quoted is not the expression of "desires" which ordinary constitutions comprise when they speak of what they intend to guarantee, for example, freedom from want, but a very condensed description of the *actual* situation as regards division of property and the economic rights of Soviet citizens.

## *The Framework of the Soviet Economic System* 83

According to the 1939 census of population the total population of the U.S.S.R. was composed of the following groups :

	Total including Families.	Percent- age of Total.
Workmen in towns and villages . . . . .	54,566,283	32·19
Employees * . . . . .	29,738,484	17·54
Kolkhoz farmers . . . . .	75,616,388	44·61
Individual peasants . . . . .	3,018,050	1·78
Home-craft workers and handicrafts- men organised in co-operatives . . . . .	3,888,434	2·29
Independent home-crafts workers and handicraftsmen (not members of co-operatives) . . . . .	1,396,203	0·82
Non-working population . . . . .	60,006	0·04
Without indication of social standing	1,235,279	0·73
Total . . . . .	169,519,127	100·00

\* Administrative, clerical, etc., non-manual workers.

Thus nearly half (49·7 per cent.) of the population of the U.S.S.R. consists of the families of workers and employees. All of them are employed either in State enterprises and institutions (majority) or in co-operatives, i.e. exclusively <sup>1</sup> in the socialised sector of the national economy of the U.S.S.R. The income of this group is derived entirely from wages and salaries.

The second largest group of the population of the U.S.S.R. consists of *Kolkhoz* farmers and their families. These account for 44·6 per cent. of the total population. The *Kolkhoz* farmer or *Kolkhoznik* has two sources of

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of a very trifling group of persons employed as "domestic workers", that is, as help in private households. The labour status of "domestic workers" is similar to that of other workers.

income, one being derived from his work in the collective farm or *Kolkhoz* as member. Members of a *Kolkhoz* divide the results of their production (after fulfilment of delivery of the fixed quotas of agricultural products to the State at fixed prices) among themselves according to the quantity of "working days", that is, in accordance with the quantity and quality of work (for every kind of work there exist fixed schedules) performed by each member of the *Kolkhoz*. His second source of income the *Kolkhoznik*, derives from his private farmstead, i.e. from the agricultural produce raised on the plot of land which is in the private use of his household, from his private livestock, poultry, etc. Up to the outbreak of war the greater part of the country's livestock belonged to *Kolkhozniks* as their private property. The *Kolkhoznik*, after delivering fixed quotas of agricultural products to the State at fixed prices, can dispose of the products of his "farmstead" unrestrictedly. On "*Kolkhoz* markets", i.e. local markets on which agricultural products are sold, *Kolkhozes*, *Kolkhozniks* and individual independent peasants sell their products at free prices determined only by the so-called law of supply and demand. Thus the *Kolkhoznik* seen from one side, is a member of the co-operative productive organisation, the *Kolkhoz*, and from the other, an independent peasant running his private, small, productive and consumer household.

As the above census figures show there were in 1939 in the U.S.S.R. still over 3 million peasants, including their families, who were not members of a *Kolkhoz* and who ran their economy on the same principles as the small peasant farms in other countries (except, of course, that they had not the right to sell the land in their use or to employ hired labour). They represent the private sector in the agricultural production of the U.S.S.R. The above-mentioned 1.4 million independent home-

craftsmen and handicraftsmen, too, carry on their business on the same principles as their counterparts in other countries. The home-craft workers and handicraftsmen organised in co-operatives are united in about 80,000 *productive* co-operative units of every kind. The latter are completely voluntary, self-governing enterprises of citizens who pool their productive skill, funds and work and divide the income from their work among their members.

These co-operatives run home-craft plants, timber mills, fisheries, produce toys, artistic wood and metal objects, embroider lace, run repair-shops and produce all sorts of commodities and household articles, render a variety of services as tailors, watch-repairers, carpenters, painters, plumbers, etc. They are forbidden to use hired labour ; but their equipment belongs to them as well as all their output, and they run numerous wholesale and retail shops for the sale of their products.

There also exist in the Soviet Union men practising free professions such as physicians, dentists, writers, artists, etc. They usually work in the appropriate State institutions on a salary basis ; but at the same time they derive a substantial additional income from private practice. Finally there still exists a very negligible group of non-working population—the 1939 census registered only 69,000 people belonging to this group—which is composed of the “remnant” of private traders, persons without definite occupation or income, criminals, etc.

Such is, in general, the division of property and of the population of the U.S.S.R. in different groups. Even from the above description it can be seen that, in general, Soviet citizens enjoy the same personal property rights as the rank-and-file citizens in other countries. They can choose any kind of occupation, and that more freely than in other countries owing to the absence of an army

of unemployed, the scarcity of qualified labour which has constantly existed in the U.S.S.R. during the last ten years, and the facilities provided for the training and re-training of labour. They can acquire in unlimited quantities anything that is for sale ; they can accumulate every kind of personal property, any kind of consumer goods in the broadest sense of the word. They can save and perform all kinds of personal money transactions ; they can join co-operatives, productive and consumer, they can even run private, small-scale businesses provided they do not employ hired labour, and work in their enterprises only with the help of their families.

Thus the actual position of Soviet citizens as regards personal economic rights looks quite different from the common, cheap, popular print of the bugbear of " Communism " with which so many authors, not only Goebbels' collaborators, tried and still try to frighten Anglo-Saxon " individualists ". Farther on, in the paragraph describing the rôle of labour in the Soviet economic system, I shall deal with some other aspects of this question.

#### MAIN DIFFERENCES IN ECONOMIC RIGHTS

But, on the other hand, the economic rights of Soviet citizens differ very substantially from the rights of citizens in other countries.

1. Soviet citizens do not enjoy (or suffer from) " power of the purse ". There do exist shorter and longer purses in the U.S.S.R., since wages and salaries vary considerably according to profession, quality and quantity of work. The incomes of unskilled and skilled workers and employees and especially the incomes of successful writers, artists, inventors and so on, differ very considerably ; in 1940 the yearly average wage for all workers and employees was 3,467 roubles, but some Stakhanovists, engineers, doctors, etc., had an income of over 20,000

roubles, directors of State theatres over 36,000 and a few writers even over 50,000 roubles.

Income tax considerably cuts down the higher incomes. Soviet income tax is not only built up on a progressive schedule but is different for incomes derived from different sources. For example, in 1938, yearly incomes of workers and employees below 1,680–2,400 roubles for different categories were exempt from income tax; higher incomes were taxed at from 4·6 per cent. to 6·1 per cent. (income tax plus levy for the improvement of culture and living conditions); for incomes derived from free professions the exempt yearly minimum was much lower, between 900 and 1,200 roubles and the rate of taxation was between 5·8 per cent. and 23·1 per cent; for handicraftsmen not members of co-operatives, the exempt yearly minimum was only 500 to 800 roubles and the rate was from 15·2 per cent. to 50 per cent.; for unearned incomes there existed no exempt minimum and the rate was from 20·4 per cent. to 87 per cent. income tax plus from 18·0 per cent. to 24 per cent. levy for the improvement of culture and living conditions. For unearned incomes an income of 5,000 roubles a year pays tax at 20·4 per cent. plus 18·0 per cent; one of 10,000 roubles at 35·8 per cent. plus 24·0 per cent.; one of 20,000 roubles at 54·65 per cent. plus 24·0 per cent; and one of over 24,000 roubles at 87 per cent. These rates vary nearly every year according to changes in the average level of income for different groups of the population, with a tendency to heavier taxation on incomes derived from free professions and from private handicraft work, and unearned incomes.

As the above figures show, in the U.S.S.R. it is possible to live on unearned income (to this group belong incomes from inheritance, and inheritance is affected by a highly progressive levy). But only modestly—not only

do people living from unearned incomes in the U.S.S.R. account only for 0·04 per cent. of the total population, but their economic strength is not worth mentioning and they have no social power.

Besides, Soviet citizens can spend their income only on durable or perishable *consumer* goods, or deposit it in Treasury savings banks or “invest” it in State loans. They cannot own the means of production, they cannot increase their income by employing hired labour and *cannot privately influence the investment and production policy of the country*—and in this lies not only the cardinal difference between the private economic rights of Soviet citizens and the rights of citizens of other countries, but the basic difference between the Soviet economic system and the capitalist system.

The general public, as well as old-fashioned socialists, usually stress as an essential feature of the capitalist system the inequality in incomes and pay much less attention to even more important features of the capitalist system, that is, to the right of the private person to direct the “savings” and investments of the national income and to determine the character of the country’s production. In the capitalist system, what is ordinarily called “savings”, both voluntary or realised and involuntary or unrealised “savings”, are invested either by individual entrepreneurs or by units of them, for example, joint-stock companies, and to a much less degree by the State (in public buildings, roads, etc., but only in exceptional cases in production).

I should explain the distinction between realised and unrealised “savings”. The first category is simple; it covers the cases where an individual abstains from spending his income and “saves” part of it, which he lends to others or to the State *via* the channels of the different credit institutions. The second must be more

fully explained in order for the reader to understand why "profit", taxes, State loans, etc., still exist in the Soviet system. For simplicity's sake I shall describe all these "complicated" problems not in academical terms of theoretical economy but in ordinary language.

Every society, in order to improve its material and cultural standard of living has to renew and increase its productive capital and provide a livelihood, not only for persons employed in actual production and distribution of production (transport and trade), but also for people providing different kinds of services not closely connected with production and distribution (administration, health, education, arts, etc.). For the renewing of capital it is necessary to put aside so-called amortisation funds; for the increasing of productive capital it is necessary to organise accumulation of new resources. In the capitalist system profit performs this rôle; and in this aspect "profit", i.e. accumulation of capital for the possibility of expansion of production, will exist in any progressive society. Amortisation funds and accumulation of means for the expansion of production are the unrealised "savings" of society. It means abstaining from distribution of the *full* results of production among all who participated in a given time in some particular production. This aspect of the necessity of "profit" for the progress of society is generally stressed by defenders of the capitalist system. But they usually conceal the fact that under the capitalist system the private owner of capital is completely free to use his capital as he likes. He can export capital from the country of its origin to another country where he hopes to invest it in a more profitable business, and thus deprive the labour of his country of the possibility of enlarging production and increasing employment. He can invest this capital in race-horses or in the building of a house "with a thousand



windows", in a luxurious yacht for his personal use, or "generously" donate to his old public school capital which may have been accumulated, for example, in production of coal and represents the "savings" of coal-miners.

But the need of the country may be to allocate labour not for the upkeep of horse and greyhound races—however profitable from the private point of view—not for the building of private country houses used perhaps for only a few weeks in the year, not for amusement yachts or the education of a privileged few, but for the production of fertilisers and agricultural machinery, modest workers' dwelling-houses or fishing boats, and for good primary education for the large mass of the population.

In this freedom of private owners to invest the capital accumulated *by society as a whole*, lies the danger not only that investment will be done unco-ordinately, disproportionately in different branches of national economy, which will ultimately bring about a crisis in production and distribution, but that production, capital and labour will be allocated wastefully from the point of view of the achievement of maximum results with available resources and labour for the improvement of the material and cultural life of the large mass of the population of a given country.

A striking instance of the wastefulness of the capitalist system of investment was pre-revolutionary Russia, which had all the natural resources for the development of industrial and agricultural production. But a considerable part of the national income was "invested", i.e. labour was allocated not for the exploitation of rich natural resources of the country but for the production and import of material comforts and the upkeep of a highly cultural life for the top hundred thousand of the population.

In the U.S.S.R., citizens, as I said, cannot privately influence the investment of the national income. If they have savings they can only lend them to the State through the State savings bank or by subscribing to State loans. In the U.S.S.R. the State planning institutions regulate all the large-scale investment of the country, and this investment is not influenced by profit motives but is designed in order to achieve certain aims preliminarily approved by the Government. The choice between building a textile or tractor factory and building a new railway depends not on the prospect of their respective profitability but on the general judgment as to which is more urgently required, and the possibility of allocating the necessary and available labour and resources to a particular construction. How, in principle, this is done I shall describe briefly in general terms later on.

Neither can Soviet citizens, in contrast to the citizens of other countries, *privately* influence the direction of production and distribution. In the capitalist system, because there are people who can "afford" to pay hundreds of pounds for a real pearl or diamond (which nowadays only a specialist can distinguish from a "cheap" artificial one) and because this business is profitable, workers dive into the sea or dig in the rocks and shop assistants in "West End" shops sit idly for hours in the expectation of a distinguished customer. Or, on the other hand, thousands of articles of very doubtful material and cultural value for the satisfaction of human needs are produced for the bazaar type of customer who cannot afford to pay for expensive, good-quality goods but who, by his "sixpenny" purchase, provides millions of profits for the ingenious seller who provides him with a "free choice" between coloured water or perfumed ground chalk or a mysterious chemical mixture meant to be lemon juice, miraculous tooth-paste or "vitamin food"

curing him from all diseases and restoring energy after forty.

These are extreme examples, but they clearly illustrate how wastefully production for profit deals with the allocation of labour for productive activities. In order to induce customers to "like the variety of goods presented", thousands of people are employed in advertising or in propaganda, on which a greater part of the national income is spent than is at the disposal even of Dr. Goebbels, whose duty it is to induce people to make a "free political choice". In a research symposium, published in the U.S.A. in 1935, it was stated that "about 59 cents out of the consumer's dollar goes to the services of distribution and only 41 cents to the services of production; thus it costs considerably more on the average to distribute goods than it does to make them".<sup>1</sup>

In the Soviet economic system the profit motive, in general, does not influence the plan of production of one or the other kind of goods at all. When the Soviet planning institutions prepare plans for the building of new factories or enlarging or reducing production in existing factories, they proceed from the basis of available productive and labour resources and from the general directives on policy adopted by the Soviet Government for a given period. When the first Five-Year Plan was adopted, it was agreed that available skilled and unskilled labour should, in the first place, be employed not for enlarging the productive capacity of consumer goods industries, in spite of the fact that such a productive policy would have been very profitable, but for building factories producing means of production, that is, equipment to make possible the future enlargement of industrial and agricultural machinery. Peasants, at this time, were much more willing to buy textiles or home

<sup>1</sup> *Does Distribution Cost too much?*, p. 334.

utensils than to wait for future possibilities of buying tractors and combines, and consequently the enlargement of textile production would have been very "profitable business".

But the Soviet Government decided that resources and labour must be allocated not so much for the building of new textile factories or enlarging production in the existing ones, as for the building of steel-producing plants which would, in their turn, make possible the production of industrial and agricultural machinery in the future and so ultimately raise the productive capacity of the country and increase the supply of consumer goods.

Owing to this planned direction of investment and production, inspired not by the profit motive but by fixed aims, and owing to the planned allocation of productive resources and labour, it was possible to more than double the urban population of the U.S.S.R. between 1926 and 1939 (in 1926 the urban population was 26·3 million, in 1939—55·9 million), to treble the number of employed workers and employees from 10·1 million in 1926 to 30·4 million in 1940, to build up completely new branches of industrial production, to equip the Soviet Army with modern weapons on a scale far greater than old, rich industrial countries succeeded in doing even after three years of war mobilisation of their resources, to produce in the immediately pre-war years, as we see in the tables at the end of this chapter, absolutely and relatively more consumer goods than were produced in pre-revolutionary Russia.

Let us now see how plans are made and how the Soviet economic system works.

#### PLANNING UNDER SOCIALISM

I shall, of course, only point out some of the more essential differences between the functioning of the

capitalist and Soviet system, and shall not touch its "machinery", i.e. organisation and administration, as to do so it would be necessary to write a book not less voluminous than that of the Webbs on Soviet Communism.

Planning is the chief characteristic of the Soviet economic system. But in the capitalist system also private entrepreneurs and groups of them (cartels) make "plans". The first essential difference between these "plans" and the plan of the Soviet system is that the former are "plans" of individuals or groups of entrepreneurs competing with each other, keeping their "commercial secrets", very often ignorant of what their opponent is doing or what kind of a "delayed action mine", intended to ruin one or the other's business, is in preparation; and, of course, the "plans" of one branch of production are not interconnected with those of the others (cartels sometimes cover sister productions but not "distant relatives"). Soviet plans not only cover *all* branches of a particular production, but the plan of one branch of economic activity is closely interconnected with the plans of other branches of the country's economic activity as a part of the total Plan for the whole national economy for a given period. For example, a plan for the production of tractors not only covers all the tractor factories in the country (of course, all improvements made in one factory in methods of production, experience in organisation, inventions, in one word all "commercial secrets", if they are useful and can be adapted to other factories, are included in the plan) but is interlocked with the plans for factories producing equipment and raw materials for the Tractor Industry and thus, with the whole general plan of the Engineering Industry.

Naturally, Soviet planning was not invented overnight and does not consist of a combination of wishful thinking plus columns of statistics. Planning developed through

experience, through a certain amount of "trial and error"; but there is less chance of making an error in estimating to what extent production of tractors can be expanded when you know and deal with all the available productive capacity of the tractor industry and know that your order concerning production will be carried out by each individual factory, than in the case of independent factories unco-ordinated in their activities.

When the first year's plan in the U.S.S.R. was made in 1925, it was made on the basis of factual data of the development of the different branches of production during the preceding years. This plan, known as "Control Figures", was drawn up from a "material balance" worked out for the entire national economy, which showed the available productive capacity of factories, the supply of fuel and raw material, skilled labour, etc.; and a general plan of development of national economy for 1925 was formulated which indicated how by alternative allocation of the available resources production could be expanded and new productive power of particular types created. These Control Figures, as the name indicates, were intended also to serve as indices for the observation and control of actual economic development.

After 1925 Control Figures were prepared annually; at first, they dealt only with the most important branches of national economy and with the economic side of social and cultural services; but as experience accumulated they were extended to cover the whole field of production, distribution, and finance. Their scope can be illustrated by quoting the chapter-headings of the publication, *Control Figures of the National Economy of the U.S.S.R. for 1928-9*, which are as follows:—

Results of the Development of the National Economy in  
1927-8

National Income and Its Distribution  
Progress of Socialisation  
Co-operatives  
Energetics Balance (i.e. production of fuel and electricity)  
Labour Conditions  
New Capital Construction  
Industry  
Agriculture  
Transport  
Prices  
Conditions of Equilibrium of the Market  
Trade Turnover  
Financial System  
Socio-cultural Construction and Services  
The U.S.S.R. and World Economy (i.e. foreign trade).

The 700 pages of this book analyse the trends of development of all the above branches of national economy between 1925-6 and 1927-8, and further expound the task to be achieved during the coming year, and explain the means and conditions necessary for its fulfilment.

These yearly plans are divided into quarterly plans and, lately, into monthly plans. Gradually quite an efficient machinery was built up for the controlling of the fulfilment of plans, in which a considerable rôle was played by the credit system and by a special *daily* press, newspapers devoted to the questions of Engineering, Light Industry, Agriculture, Internal trade, etc. Material was published in those papers which very sharply criticised all defects and inefficiency of the day-to-day business of particular plants and their branches in the fulfilment of plans, etc. This press was the richest source of "material" for anti-Soviet publications abroad, but it very much helped the Central planning and administrative institutions to be in close contact with the life of the periphery.

The rôle of the individual factory or other economic units in the construction of a plan of production is : to

give the planning institutions the necessary information concerning their productive possibilities, to consider the received project of the plan and return it with their possible objections and a "counter-plan", and afterwards to receive the approved plan for *execution*. Individual enterprises can make suggestions, propose amendments, but the final decision regarding their production plan does not lie with them. The superior planning institutions, of course, take into account all suggestions of individual enterprises, but their plan will be approved as part of the total plan which is intended to achieve the appropriate equilibrium between the different objects of the economic activities of the country.

The Soviet Government, being in possession of all this concrete information about the possibilities of expanding production, then makes the final choice between the alternative possibilities and approves the complete plan for the development of national economy during a particular year.

Since 1929, when the first Five-Year Plan was approved by the Government, these yearly plans have themselves been only the concrete and immediate portion of "perspective" plans which are drawn up for a longer period. Two such "perspective" period plans have already been executed in the U.S.S.R., one between 1928-9 and 1932 and one between 1932 and 1937; the execution of a third was interrupted by the outbreak of war.

These "perspective" plans represent a co-ordinated scheme for the development of the economic and cultural life of the community (in so far as cultural development depends on the economic conditions under which the people live) over a series of years; whereas the task of the yearly plan is to bring into detailed operation the general directives of the "perspective" plan, and if during the execution of the plan unforeseen circumstances



and obstacles appear, to make the necessary adjustments. Immediately before 1941 the yearly plans emphasised the need for accumulating reserves to fill any gaps which might occur in the fulfilment of plans.

In the earlier yearly plans the stress was laid on the drive for the maximum possible increase in production ; but gradually they became highly co-ordinated plans in which adjustments could be made during the process of their fulfilment ; and the actual fulfilment of the second Five-Year Plan and of its yearly sections in general was much closer to the original project than the fulfilment of the first Five-Year plan.

#### PLANNED FINANCE

The next essential feature of Soviet planning is that, unlike the " plans " of private entrepreneurs, it is not the financial considerations which come first when plans of production are made but the " material balance " (productive capacity, raw materials, labour) and the financial needs are readjusted accordingly after the first decision has been taken. Of course, every enterprise has its own financial plan, but it is not the financial plan which determines the productive plan but vice versa. After the production plan is framed the financial plan is interlocked with it. Here I shall describe only the elements of this " financial plan ".

Every factory, alongside its productive plan, has an approved " planned price " for its products. This is fixed so that if a certain amount of raw materials, labour and overhead expenses were spent on the production of a certain kind of goods it would result in a cost equal to the " planned price ". Thus the " planned prices " serve as a measurement of cost and as a means of control of the efficiency of production. The enterprise has also its approved " sale price ", i.e. invoice prices at which

industrial goods are interchanged among State enterprises. The gap between this "sale price" and the "planned price" constitutes "planned profit".

Part of this "profit" is destined for amortisation funds and reserve capital for the enterprise itself, part of it is withdrawn into the State budget as "deduction from profit of State enterprises", and part is allocated for the "directors' fund". This last can allocate expenditure for the "improvement of the welfare of the workers and employees" of the enterprise and for bonuses for the managerial board and premiums for individual workers. Thus, if the actual cost of production is reduced below the "planned price", actual profit will be higher than the "planned profit" and consequently more will go to the "directors' fund". If the opposite should occur it may be that not only will nothing remain for the "directors' fund" but that the obligation to the State budget will not be fulfilled and the whole financial plan will end in disorder. This will not be a good look-out for the director of that enterprise when the controlling bodies find out that the non-attainment of the "planned price" was due to the inefficiency, negligence, etc., of the director.

For Soviet justice considers that a person who through "anti-social" motives or through laziness, negligence, or irresponsibility in carrying out the responsible work entrusted to him, causes damage to society, is liable to more severe punishment than is one who causes damage to private property or to private persons.

#### PLANNED CREDIT

The credit needs of an enterprise are met by the "credit plan" which is part of the "financial plan" and, at the same time, a means of control over it. Together with the productive plan a "credit plan" is simultaneously

approved which is closely interconnected with the former. A certain amount of "planned credit" is allocated to every enterprise on its account in the State Bank. I cannot enter into technical details here; I would only stress that if production is not carried out in accordance with the production and financial plan (if more raw materials are spent or more stocks accumulated than necessary, more fuel used, more spent on labour or on overhead expenses), this will inevitably be reflected in a breach of the approved "credit plan" and this will serve as a signal for the need for intervention by the controlling bodies. All credit transactions of Soviet enterprises must be made through the State Bank which provides short-term credit, and through special long-term State banks for long-term credit, since in the U.S.S.R. there do not exist bills of exchange (abolished in 1930) or private banks.

When a new enterprise starts business or expands its production, the need for new working capital or enlargement of the existing capital is met by a grant from the State budget which is obtained through the channels of the above-mentioned State banks for long-term credit.

"Money" for new "investments", i.e. all expenses on building new factories, dwelling-houses, improvement work in agriculture, etc., is also provided by grants from the State budget.

But people ordinarily wonder "whence do these Soviets get all this money for investment if there are no large private savings or profit in the U.S.S.R.?"

#### "*SAVING AND INVESTMENT*"

This raises a more complicated question, viz. the nature of "saving" and "investment" in this Soviet economic system. I have put these two words in italics because, like the word "profit", they bear a meaning in the

U.S.S.R. very different to their meaning in capitalist society. I will endeavour to explain it in non-academic language.

Let us first of all recall in the most elementary form the meaning of saving and investment in the capitalist system. Saving, as I said above, is ordinarily defined as a refraining by individuals or by an association of individuals from spending the whole of his or their current income on consumption. Investment is the putting of savings into some economic activity which yields interest or profit; or sometimes by investment is meant the actual process of investment, the building of factories, roads, etc. But these definitions of saving and investment are definitions from the point of view of the individual. From the point of view of society as a whole "saving" and "investment", ultimately, are only two aspects of one united process. When we save money and do not keep it in "stockings" but "lend" it to other people by depositing it in banks, by buying shares or State loans, etc., this money "lent" by us is later spent by the bodies to which we lent it on some economic activity, that is, ultimately paid out as wages and salaries. For example, now, when we buy war savings certificates, we transfer our money into the hands of the Treasury which, *ultimately*, pays with the money lent by us the wages of workers producing munitions, industrial workers producing equipment and food for the army. Thus part of our potential purchasing capacity is transferred into the hands of these workers and they can buy goods from the buying of which we refrained by our saving and investment in war savings certificates. Consequently from the point of view of society as a whole the process of saving and investment results in re-distribution of available consumer goods between different categories of the population. There is a limiting of the consumption of

one group of the population with a view to enlarging consumption possibilities for other groups of the population.

At any given time all available consumption funds in society are consumed by one or other of four main groups of the population : (1) by those groups of the population which are engaged in the production of agricultural products and industrial consumer goods ; (2) by the groups building factories, producing capital goods which will yield results only in the succeeding period ; (3) by the groups engaged in providing services in transport, communications, administrative apparatus of the country, cultural institutions, etc. ; the latter group do not produce any kind of tangible goods for exchange ; (4) by the groups which neither produce goods nor provide services for society, i.e. pure consumers existing upon unearned incomes, pensions, etc.

. In the capitalist system redistribution of consumer goods among different categories of the population is effected by price mechanism. Prices of agricultural products determine the amount of potential purchasing capacity and saving of the producer of these products. Prices of labour, that is, wages and salaries, determine the amount of purchasing and saving capacity of all labour. Price of capital, rate of profit, rate of interest, determine the amount of purchasing and saving capacity of capital owners. Through price mechanism there consequently occurs transition of income from one hand to another, and therefore a redistribution of the national income among different categories of the population. By a certain price policy it is possible to organise the spending of all private income on consumption of necessities. This means that there will be no private saving in the ordinary sense, while at the same time society as a whole can carry out a considerable amount of national

“saving” and “investment”, that is, building new factories, railways, roads, etc. If by a certain price, wage and taxation policy we can withdraw part of the purchasing capacity of the first, third and fourth groups mentioned above and transfer it into the hands of the second group, we shall be able to carry out a certain amount of “investment work”. For “investment” from the point of view of society as a whole is not the putting of savings in some economic activity with a view to profit, but the allocating from the total consumer funds a certain amount of consumer goods for providing maintenance for those categories of the population which are engaged in new construction, in production of capital goods and in creation of intellectual capital in concrete terms, for workers and employees engaged in the building industry, heavy industry, in transport, etc., and for the personnel working in educational and cultural institutions.

After this rather long introduction we can proceed to the description of the organisation of “saving” and “investment” in the U.S.S.R.

In the U.S.S.R. “saving” and “investment”, i.e. from the point of view of society as a whole, redistribution of the spending power of the population among different groups of it, is done by planned regulation of price, wages and salaries and by using the State budget as an instrument for the redistribution of the greater part of the national income. The methods of regulating prices, wages and salaries and the construction of State finance changed many times during the different stages in the development of Soviet economy ; here I shall give only an outline of the principles of the system which was in force during the immediate pre-war years (1935-41).

#### PRICE POLICY

The Soviet planning and regulating institutions fix the

prices for all main products and goods. When the Soviet planning and regulating authorities for internal trade fix the price for products and goods which pass through the different channels of State and co-operative trade, they simultaneously fix also all the components of price. The Soviet wholesale price is composed of the following elements: (1) "sale cost" for industrial goods, or delivery price for agricultural products; (2) expenses of the wholesale trading organisations; (3) "planned profit"<sup>1</sup> of wholesale trade organisations, and (4) turnover tax. To the retail price are added the expenses of the retail trading organisations, and their "planned profit".

The principles according to which the "sale cost" is calculated I have described above. The expenses of the turnover of a wholesale trading organisation are fixed as a certain percentage of delivery price which must cover all the expenses of the trading organisation and by the amount of these expenses is measured the efficiency of the trading organisation. Planned profit is also fixed as a certain percentage of price. This planned profit is partly transferred to the State budget by means of deduction from profit and partly left at the disposal of the management of the enterprise.

Turnover tax represents the difference between the net cost of wholesale trading organisations and the wholesale selling price at which goods are sold to retail trade, that is, turnover tax covers the gap between the prices at which wholesale trading organisations sell goods and products to retail trade and the amount composed of the three above-mentioned components of the wholesale price. Turnover tax technically is calculated as a certain percentage of the wholesale price and must be automatically transferred to the State budget by the *wholesale*

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 99.

organisations when commodities are sold to the retail trade organisations. By means of turnover tax the difference between the wholesale price and net price is accumulated in the State budget. I can illustrate the rôle of these components of the Soviet wholesale price by the following *hypothetical* example : Supposing the sale price of a certain commodity to be fixed at a hundred shillings. These hundred shillings consist of the following components : fifty shillings represent the "sale cost" at which the commodities were delivered by the factory to the wholesale organisation ; twenty shillings represent overhead trade expense ; ten shillings represent planned profit ; these three components together, i.e. eighty shillings, make the net price ; twenty shillings are turnover tax. When the commodities are sold this twenty shillings must be automatically transferred to the State budget.

Turnover tax serves not only as a means of withdrawing into the State budget the difference between sale price and net price of wholesale organisations, but also as a means for readjusting prices according to the general price policy. If, for example, the supply of certain goods is below demand and consequently there develops a scarcity of these goods, in order to readjust demand to supply the regulating organisations decide to raise the price for these goods. This can be done by raising the rate of turnover tax while leaving the other components of the price untouched. In our example, if it is decided to raise the price from one hundred shillings to one hundred and ten shillings, this can be done by raising turnover tax from twenty to thirty shillings. If, on the contrary, it is decided to reduce the price of certain commodities this can be done by reducing the rate of turnover tax.

As I said above, neither price nor the possibility of



profit determines production. Goods are produced in the U.S.S.R. not because they can be sold with profit but according to the general policy of the economic development of the country and consideration for the welfare of the population. But goods are sold to the population, and consequently prices must be fixed so as to balance the supply of goods with the demand for them. In the U.S.S.R., however, the prices of some goods can be fixed even below the actual cost of production in order to stimulate purchase. For example, prices for books were very often fixed below the actual cost in order to increase their sale. The prices of certain products of heavy industry were also fixed below their actual cost of production either because the factory was only in the initial stage of organisation of its production and its expenses were higher than those of other factories or because it was thought necessary to keep the prices of these goods at a low level compared with the prices of other goods. Prices for certain other goods, for example, luxury articles, tobacco, drinks, etc., were fixed at a much higher level than the cost of production and the difference was withdrawn into the State budget by means of turnover tax.

#### THE STATE BUDGET

Thus, in the process of the buying of goods a certain amount of the purchasing capacity of the population is withdrawn into the State budget by means of turnover tax and deduction from the profit of trading organisations. This turnover tax and deduction from the profit of State enterprises are the main sources from which the State budget derives its revenue.

The second important source of revenue of the State budget is provided by subscription to State loans. The State loans in the Soviet Union differ from the ordinary

loans in other countries. They are not issued for special occasions only, but every year a certain amount of the State revenue is obtained by means of State loans which are subscribed to by the large mass of the population, mostly on an instalment basis. The aggregate of saving deposits of the population in State loans, in actual fact, in the Soviet Union is much greater than the aggregate of saving deposits of the population in savings banks. By means of the State loans the greater part of the population's private monetary savings is accumulated every year in the State budget.

The receipt from the other sources of revenue of the State budget, that is, from income tax, levies, etc., plays a much less important part in the total revenue of the State budget than it does in the other countries. That is quite natural as large private capital and incomes do not exist in the Soviet Union.

The significance of the sources of revenue of the State budget described above can be illustrated by the following figures of the revenue of the State budget in 1940. The total revenue was 178·1 milliard roubles, from which turnover tax provided 105·8 milliard, profit of enterprises 21·4, State loans 11·4, State insurance 9·1, profits of machine-tractor stations 2·0, taxes and levies 9·4, and other revenues 19·0. Why such a large revenue from turnover tax? Because turnover tax is a technical device for readjusting the difference between the producing cost of the aggregate of consumer goods and the aggregate of the spending power of the population. Above I described the four groups of population in their consumer aspects.<sup>1</sup> If the income, that is the spending power, of groups 2 and 3 rises more quickly than does the total production of consumer goods, the gap between the cost price of the aggregate of consumer goods and

<sup>1</sup> See p. 102.

the aggregate spending power of the population will inevitably widen. When the Soviet Government started to carry out a programme of large-scale industrialisation and cultural development in the country the amount of labour employed in groups 2 and 3 steadily increased and consequently the aggregate of purchasing capacity of these groups also rose steadily, in actual fact, more rapidly than it was possible to raise production of consumer goods. Turnover tax performs the rôle of covering this gap as well as redistributing the purchasing capacity between different groups of the population. This will be clearly seen from a description of the expenditure of the State budget.

The main expenditure of the State budget is allocated to the financing of the national economy. This is the characteristic feature which distinguishes the Soviet State budget from that of other countries. All new investment in different branches of the national economy in the Soviet Union is mainly financed by the State budget. The State budget, as I said above, also provides new enterprises with working capital as well as replenishing the working capital of existing enterprises when they enlarge their production according to the planned directives.

I can illustrate this by the following example : In 1938 the total financing of capital investments for the whole of the light industries amounted to 850·1 million roubles. This total investment was covered by grants from the State budget amounting to the sum of 476·6 million roubles, by profit accumulated in the light industries amounting to 241·4 million roubles, by amortisation funds—81·7 million roubles, and by other internal accumulation of capital in the light industries amounting to 49·4 million roubles. Thus more than 50 per cent. of the expense on capital investment were provided by

grants from the State budget. In 1938 it was planned that the total working capital of all industrial enterprises should be raised by 8.9 milliard roubles, from which 5.4 milliard roubles, that is nearly 70 per cent., had to be provided by the State budget.

If we now compare the amount of the revenue acquired by the State budget from turnover tax and from State loans with the amount spent on the financing of the national economy and on defence, we shall see that revenue and expenditure nearly balance. For example, the expenditure of the State budget in 1940 was divided as follows : financing of national economy—57.1 milliard roubles, defence—56.1 milliard roubles (in 1940 expenditure on defence was very high ; in the previous years expenditure on the financing of the national economy was much higher than expenditure on defence) ; expenditure on socio-cultural services 41.7 ; administration and justice 6.8 ; State loan service 2.8 ; and other expenditure 8.9 milliard roubles.

Thus, with one hand the State budget by means of turnover tax and State loans accumulates revenue in the State budget, with the other hand it returns this revenue on the financing of the national economy, that is, on building new factories, dwelling-houses, investment in cultural institutions, etc. For example, Soviet peasants delivered to the State purchasing organisations agricultural products at fixed prices much lower than the prices which the Soviet trading organisations charged the urban population for the same products. But the difference between the prices of agricultural products paid to the peasantry by the State purchasing organisations and the prices paid by the consumer to the State trading organisations is accumulated in the State budget by means of turnover tax and from the State budget is returned to the producer of agricultural products through

the building of machine-tractor stations equipped with the most modern agricultural machinery, the enlarging of the production of fertilisers, the building up of agromonomical services, etc.

In the Soviet Union individual saving and investment plays a very negligible rôle ; but society as a whole carries out every year very considerable "saving" and "investment" in the sense used above. What I have given is, of course, only a very general survey of the principles of organisation of the Soviet financial system which so differ from the capitalist system that a more comprehensive description would require many pages of technical detail tiresome to the general reader.

For the same reason I shall only say a few words about the difference in the functioning of the credit system in the U.S.S.R. and in other countries.

#### BANKS AND CREDIT

The rôle of the banks in the U.S.S.R. is to serve as an apparatus for redistribution of the temporarily free money of different enterprises and institutions, that is, to provide short-term credit and to organise money transactions between different enterprises and organisations ; and also to organise provision of long-term credit for "investment". Soviet banks do not compete for "clients", do not pursue the aim of getting profit and do not influence on their own the economic activity of the country. They charge interest for credit operations in accordance with the directives of the State planning and trade regulating organisations. This interest is charged in order to cover the banks' administrative expenses and to provide possibilities of enlarging their reserve and working capital.

All enterprises and institutions in the socialised sector must deposit their free money in the only bank for all

short-term credit in the U.S.S.R., that is, the State Bank, and only from it can they obtain short-term credit.

The State Bank, at the present time, (1) conducts all short-term credit business of which it has a monopoly position for all socialised sectors ; (2) serves as a bank of issue ; (3) serves as a tax-collector for the Treasury ; (4) serves as a cashier for the special long-term credit banks and, in fact, for the entire credit system of the country. For long-term credit there exist four all-Union banks : (1) a bank for financing the capital construction of industry and electrification, called the *Prombank* ; this bank finances the capital construction of State industry, transport, communications, building of roads as well as such building of dwelling-houses as is carried out by industrial enterprises ; (2) the second long-term credit bank is the Agricultural, or *Selkhozbank* which finances capital construction on State farms and machine-tractor stations, and provides long-term credit for *Kolkhozes* ; (3) the third bank is the all-Union bank for financing capital construction of State and co-operative trade, the *Torgbank* ; (4) the fourth, *Tsekombank*, is the bank for financing municipal and housing construction, which together with the local communal banks provides long-term credit for all municipal construction, for the building of dwelling-houses, cultural buildings (schools, hospitals, clubs, etc.), as well as financing the industrial construction which is carried out by non-industrial Commissariats, for example, industrial construction for the Commissariat of Health. With the exception of *Tsekombank* all long-term banks have their own network of branches. *Tsekombank* carries on its work through a system of local commercial banks. All these banks finance the enterprises and organisations within the fields assigned to them by means of grants or repayable long-term loans. The amount granted or loaned depends,

of course, upon the approved credit plans of the clientèle. Although the long-term credit institutions are required to draw up plans of their own and follow them closely once they are approved, their plans are in the main a reproduction of the financial plans of the particular branches of economy which they serve. So that the national financial plan for capital investment in the various industries, transport, communication, building of roads, etc., becomes also the plan of the *Prombank*. In a similar manner the financial plan for capital investment by trading enterprises is also the *Torgbank's* plan, and so forth. The long-term credit system is also authorised to grant short-term credit to the building companies which they finance, so as to enable them to meet seasonal requirements for materials and supplies.

The duties of the long-term credit banks, however, are not confined to a mere distribution of credit funds. The long-term credit banks are charged with the exercise of financial control over the application and spending of funds by their clientèle. In general we can say that despite their name of banks, in fact it is difficult to think of them as such in the terms of the capitalist banking system ; for their chief function is to exercise control over the expenditure of funds by their clientèle. They are, in reality, more controlling departments of the Commissariat of Finance than banks in the ordinary sense of the word.

Soviet banks are used by the State as a means for carrying out the general economic policy of the country. Monetary yield from investment does not influence the credit activities of Soviet banks at all. Loans are granted only for special purposes approved as part of the productive and financial plans of enterprises.

Financial panics, rush for deposits, are quite impossible because all borrowers and depositors are enterprises or

institutions of the socialised sector, and obey the instructions of the same State planning and regulating organisations. If owing to a discrepancy in the fulfilment of the cash plan some obligation cannot be met immediately, the doors of the bank will not be closed, but "clients" will either be instructed to call at a later date or to have recourse to some other branch of the State credit system.

Of course properly managed capitalist banks also make plans for their activities. The difference between these plans and the Soviet credit plan is that all credit plans of Soviet banks and the credit plans of various enterprises and institutions are co-ordinated and integrated into a unified credit plan for the whole country.

#### SOVIET FOREIGN TRADE

How has the Soviet economic system solved the problem of foreign trade, which would seem to be a very difficult task for a planned economy?

Foreign trade connects national economy with world economy. Planned measures for national economy can be only extended indirectly beyond the borders of a country. They can completely regulate the export and the import of a given country, but can only very indirectly intervene on the world market. And this is regarded as a great obstacle for the planning of foreign trade, because the success of the export and import plans of a given country depends not only upon the fulfilment of the planned estimates inside the country, but upon the adjustment of the country's plans for foreign trade to conditions existing on the world market. Conditions on the world market can substantially interfere with the foreign trade plans of a given country. Price fluctuations on the world market, changes in the rate of exchange,



can upset the planned trade balance of an individual country even if the plan was exactly fulfilled as regards the quantity of export and import.

Foreign trade can be a source of prosperity, can help to develop the national economy and the standard of living of the population, on the one hand, but on the other it can very much hamper this development. These features of foreign trade produce a difference in the attitude to "free foreign trade" of industrial and of agricultural countries. For the highly developed industrial country "free foreign trade" generally is a favourable condition for the development of the national economy. For the agricultural country it may mean a real danger of becoming an economic vassal of the industrial country.

The Soviet Government fully recognised, on one side, the dangers that foreign trade may have for any plan for reconstruction of the country's national economy and for the introduction of a planned economy and, on the other, the advantages that could be gained from foreign trade for the development of the national economy, if carried out according to the general economic policy of the country.

Therefore as early as April 1918 the foreign trade of the country was nationalised. State monopoly of foreign trade was established; trade transactions for the purchase and sale of all kinds of articles with foreign states or individual trading enterprises abroad had to be conducted on behalf of the Soviet republic by institutions specially set up for this purpose. During the whole of the period from 1918 until to-day the entire foreign trade of the Soviet Union has been controlled by the State and actually conducted by centrally organised export and import organisations under the strict supervision internally of the Commissariat of Foreign Trade and

externally of trade delegations for foreign trade, or Torgpretstva, in the different countries.

Owing to the fact that no import is possible without the permission of the appropriate departments of the Commissariat for Foreign Trade, the internal market is completely protected from world competition. Only those materials and goods are imported which are considered necessary for the development of production or the satisfaction of the consumer needs of the population according to the import plan, which is part of the general plan for any given period. Import licences are issued in accordance with this general import plan.

Export is carried on not because it is more profitable to sell abroad but in order to pay for imports. The aggregate volume of exports and imports is regulated directly and not indirectly by altering the rate of exchange as in the capitalist system. Furthermore, as export and import are carried out by enterprises of the socialised sector, export and import ultimately are considered not as separate commercial operations but as one united operation.

Under the capitalist system importers and exporters ordinarily work at their own risk, and the losses or profits of imports fall on the importers and the losses or profits of exports on the exporters.

In the U.S.S.R. the organisations dealing with export and import are State organisations, and all settlements as regards foreign trade are made on behalf of the State. Consequently, in spite of the fact that export and import are conducted as separate commercial operations, ultimately both are carried out by the same "firm"; thus losses in export can be covered by gains from import, and vice versa. As the State deals with all export resources and all import orders it could, in principle, secure for itself more favourable conditions on the foreign market.

Owing to the monopoly of foreign trade the Soviet Government was able firmly to regulate the *volume* of raw materials and finished goods which it considered possible and necessary to allocate for export and to carry out import strictly according to plan, importing only such materials and goods as were necessary for the development of the national economy and to supply the population.

Foreign trade became part of the general plan of development of the national economy. Of course, conditions on the world market sometimes forced the Soviet Government to alter their export and import plans ; but such readjustment was facilitated by the fact that export and import are considered as only two aspects of one united foreign trade operation.

During the first years of the first Five-Year Plan export and import were carried out on the largest possible scale, despite the fact that the world market, at this time, was in a condition of crisis. When the need for importing equipment for industry and agriculture was no longer so urgent, the total volume of imports was reduced and exports, too, were cut down in order to provide more for the satisfaction of internal needs.

Here I cannot describe, of course, the methods of organisation of foreign trade under State monopoly. But the fact that during the past twenty-five years the Soviet Government always fulfilled its foreign trade obligations and foreign trade did not hamper but promoted the development of the national economy, proves that State monopoly of foreign trade fulfils its rôle quite satisfactorily.

#### INCENTIVES AND WAGES

The chapter in this book dealing with the organisation of Trade Unions in the U.S.S.R. describes the principles

on which the planning of the total wage-bill is carried out, how social insurance and social services are organised, how wage problems are settled and how, in general, the participation of the workers in the organisation of production is assured.

From this description the reader will realise that the right of workers to participate in the shaping of the labour conditions in which they work is incomparably wider in scope and deeper in significance than in the capitalist system. The Soviet worker is much less a "small wheel" in the Soviet economic system than is his counterpart in the capitalist system.

In addition to what is explained in the chapter on Trade Unions I would only like to stress two characteristic features of the Soviet labour system ; the part played by monetary and non-monetary incentives in the productive efforts of Soviet workers, and the basic principles of Socialist "emulation" or competition.

Two main ideas have influenced the Soviet Government in all its decisions concerning regulation of wages and organisation of labour. First, that until the "conditions of scarcity" in which mankind continues to live have been replaced by "conditions of plenty", it is impossible to organise remuneration of labour on the communist principle of equality of reward. Only in "conditions of plenty" would it be possible to organise labour on the principles defined by Lenin :

Communist labour, in the narrower and stricter sense of the word, means work for the common good, work not to discharge only a fixed duty, nor to earn a claim to certain goods, nor according to standards previously fixed, but voluntary work without calculation of remuneration ; work performed through the habit of working for the common good and the consciousness that toil is necessary for the common good.

Until this could be achieved it was inevitable to make

concessions to human nature which, in "conditions of scarcity", expects to get greater reward for greater effort. And the Soviet Constitution stresses that Soviet citizens "have the right to work, i.e. the right to guaranteed employment and payment for their work in accordance with the quantity and quality of their work".

But, while accepting the necessity of fixing different wage-levels for different types of work, the Communist Party, the Soviet Government, the Trade Unions, Press, etc., stress continually the need to develop *social*, non-monetary motives both for improving one's own productivity and qualifications and for assisting one's fellows to advance along the same road. The social motives so encouraged take shape as socialist competition between individual workers or groups of workers, between factories and even between whole sections of economic activity.

When the first Five-Year Plan began to be put into effect, the Soviet Government simultaneously started a campaign for training up not only skilled workers but also a new generation of Soviet specialists. Besides spreading up the education of specialists in the Universities and Higher Technical Schools, the Government supported "vidvizhenstvo", that is, promotion of workers to leading administrative positions. Many thousands of workers were promoted direct from manual work to higher administrative posts in industry, transport, and in other economic enterprises and administrative institutions. At the same time there was started a campaign for social competition on a large scale within the factories.

In order to increase the productivity of labour, to raise production, to fulfil the Plan, etc., agreements for social competition were reached between enterprises, departments, and even between departments and work-shops in different enterprises.

The more energetic and socially conscious workers undertook the task of putting more skill and energy into their work than their fellows, and thus to set an example for the other workers as well as to produce a higher output. These workers, under the name of "udarniki", also received greater reward for their efforts; but this "udarnik" movement was supported not only because the "udarniki" stimulated the productivity of the other workers by their example but because the "udarnik" was the representative of the new type of Socialist labour, that is, labour performed not only with the aim of getting personal reward but with the sense of duty toward community as a whole.

#### STAKHANOVISM

The idea of social competition is that the more capable, the more qualified workers, must set an example to the others; they must not dominate the weaker or less competent but must, on the contrary, help them; they must communicate their experience to them and help the whole productive collectivity to utilise the results of the personal achievement of the most talented, the most skilled and most enterprising workers.

This social incentive inspired all kinds of social competitions which took place during recent years and which are now generally known as Stakhanovist movements. Many anti-Soviet writers or ignorant persons described the Stakhanovist movement as a "sweating" system. I think it will be useful here to recall what Stakhanov actually did.

The coal-miner Stakhanov observed that he and his fellow coal-hewers used their pneumatic drills for only a part of a shift, because when they had cut out a quantity of coal they had to clear it away from the working-place and do other subsidiary and essential but not actually

main productive tasks. He came to the conclusion that if he worked his drill the whole time while other men were exclusively employed in clearing away the coal, timbering and so on, such a team would achieve better results than if each individual performed all the different jobs in turn. When he was allowed to put his theory into practice he had gratifying successes, hewing over one hundred tons of coal per shift, about forty times the normal output.

From this description of Stakhanov's achievement it can be seen that it was not due to any exceptional physical effort but to a new method of working. Stakhanov's own performance was comparatively elementary, but the same principle when applied to factories became more complex, taking into account the repetition of muscular movements and cutting out every superfluous motion, and providing the supply of material and equipment at the most convenient place, at the right moment, in the right position, etc. Stakhanov, in his particular job, put into actual practice scientific principles of rationalisation and the economical application of labour, all what is meant by "scientific management" in the true sense.

Immediately after Stakhanov's historic shift a great campaign of popularisation of his achievement started. Newspapers published full reports, meetings were arranged, and this inspired many hundreds and later thousands of workers in different occupations to apply the principles of rationalisation to their particular work, and many of them really achieved extraordinary results in stepping up production.

The idea of social competition is not only that of competition of enterprise with enterprise in order to achieve better organisation of production, greater output per head, improved quality of production, reduction of cost-

price, etc., but to communicate experience to rival enterprises and to help the latter to achieve the same results.

When a difficulty arises in the fulfilment of the plan or bottle-necks appear in production, social competition helps to eliminate them.

For example, in 1940, when it was realised that production was lagging behind planned requirements, there began in July and continued up to the end of the year a widespread campaign under the name of "All-Union socialist competition" in the coal, iron and steel, oil and non-ferrous metal industries. The enterprises in these industries competed one with another in order to raise production to the planned level.

The reward of their efforts was both *moral* and *material*. Morally, the reward was the right to be called a "model enterprise" and to get the "transitional banner"<sup>1</sup> which was tangible evidence of the social achievement of an enterprise. Materially, a special monetary fund was allocated for the reward of the most successful enterprises in these social competitions, that is, for the reward of the managing and technical personnel as well as the workers and employees with the highest achievements, and a fund for the improvement of the socio-cultural living conditions of all workers in the successful enterprises.

From 1938 the Soviet Government introduced three special orders for the reward of workers and employees: the order of "Hero of Socialist Labour", the highest, and two medals "For Labour Valour" and "For Distinction in Labour". These orders brought the holders not only moral and social distinction but some material benefits as well—release from payment of income tax out of their basic wages and salaries as well as other

<sup>1</sup> Reminiscent of the "house cup" of football teams in schools. The factory winning the banner holds it until its record is beaten by another.



privileges. They are awarded for services rendered to society in industry, agriculture, transport, trade, in research work, in technical invention, science, art, etc. Their purpose is to serve as non-monetary incentives for the development of personal initiative and individual effort in the service of society.

All this explains the meaning of Article 12 of the Soviet Constitution that "in the U.S.S.R. work is the obligation and a matter of honour of every able-bodied Soviet citizen", and that the duty of working and the reward for work is based on the principle of socialism: "From each according to his ability, to each according to the work performed."

#### ACHIEVEMENTS

What results have been achieved by the Soviet economic system?

In judging results it is first of all necessary to keep in mind the foremost feature of planning. Planned economy and planning, as I stressed above, does not mean the possibility of doing whatever one likes according to one's own free choice, nor the using of completely flexible means, but the mobilisation of *existing* productive and labour resources for use in *alternative* purposes. Only airy planners of post-war "reconstruction" think that it is enough to draw up "plans" for building beautiful cities with all comforts for the urban population, while forgetting that it will be necessary to allocate labour for this, i.e. to feed, clothe, etc., all workers engaged in the building trades. To achieve this it would be necessary simultaneously either to expand the production of agricultural and industrial consumer goods or, if this should be impossible, to restrict the consumption of other groups of the population in order to provide a livelihood for those engaged in the building trades. "Plans"

which are not part of a general Plan of national development and do not consider first of all the question of alternative use of available resources and labour, will remain either wishful thinking or "patchwork" of one group of interests at the expense of another. (Even "freedom of speech", when it is not accompanied by a real possibility of embodying conviction in action, degenerates into "freedom of jabber".)

When the Soviet Government introduced the first Five-Year Plan, it was decided that the available resources and labour must be used first of all for building a new industry, and enlarging production in the war industries, in order to strengthen the country's defence, and for reconstructing agriculture on a new technical basis, and only secondarily for improving the standard of living. It was clearly realised that it is impossible to build new factories, to increase transport facilities, to import equipment for the newly built factories and at the same time greatly to increase the building of dwelling-houses and the production of industrial consumer goods, especially when it appeared that owing to the transition of agricultural production from its old basis to a new one, agricultural production failed to rise and even temporarily declined. Thus, during the first Five-Year Plan, the maximum concentration of available material and labour resources was directed to the laying the foundation of future production in industry and agriculture and not to an immediate improvement in the standard of living.

When the second Five-Year Plan was approved in 1933, it was based upon a production already greatly increased; consequently, together with a further enlargement of heavy industry, it was proposed to achieve a great improvement in the standard of living also. The international situation after 1933 (when Hitler came to power in Germany and the Governments of other coun-

tries were not unwilling to support Hitler's "Crusade" against Bolshevism) once more forced the Soviet Government to allocate more material and labour resources to heavy industry, especially war industry, and to slow down the original plan to improve the standard of living. This planned allocation of the greater part of the country's material and labour resources to heavy industry, i.e. the production of capital goods, explains why production of the latter rose much more rapidly than the production of consumer goods. This can be seen from the figures given in Appendix I of the industrial production of the U.S.S.R. Production of capital goods rose from 1929 to 1940 by more than eight times, whereas production of consumer goods rose less than fourfold.

The adoption of planning for the national economy enabled the Soviet Government, in a very short space of time and without having recourse to foreign loans, (a) to build up entirely new branches of production such as engineering, chemicals, and armaments, (b) to reconstruct entirely their former production, with the result that in 1937 new factories or completely reconstructed factories produced 80 per cent. of the total output, (c) to show a steady annual increase both in total production and in the amount of labour employed. As to war industry the fact that the Soviet army was able single-handedly to resist the whole weight of the highly mechanised German army with the same and even better kind of weapons, speaks for itself.<sup>1</sup>

The figures of production of consumer goods show, however, that despite the allocation of the greater part of material and labour resources to the production of capital goods and armaments, production of consumer goods also steadily rose at a relatively rapid pace. Especially from 1935 onward there was a rapid and definite

<sup>1</sup> See further, *The Soviet Home Front*, by N. Barou (Fabian Society).

improvement in the standard of living. This could be illustrated by many figures of production of all classes of consumer goods which there is no space to quote here.

Much progress was also achieved in railway transport as shown in Appendix II.

As to agricultural production, after the difficult period which accompanied the transition from individual to collective economy, agricultural production also began to rise steadily. Agriculture was equipped with completely new machinery which was not even known to the pre-revolution peasantry. The figures in Appendix III clearly show the main development in agricultural production.

Planned economy permitted the spending of enormous sums on improvement of the social and cultural services provided for the Soviet citizens by the State. In the chapters dealing with education, culture and Trade Unions in the U.S.S.R., enough material is given to demonstrate the enormous improvement achieved in these fields. I add only a few figures (in Appendix IV) in further illustration.

The steady growth of production in the country, the steady improvement in material and cultural conditions, was interrupted by the war. But the experiences of the war have clearly shown that Soviet citizens believe it worth while to make great sacrifices and to display astonishing heroism in the firm faith that when the interruption is over, they will resume the course of economic and cultural development which the new system of organisation of the economic and cultural life of their country has assured to them.

## APPENDIX I

GROSS INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT OF THE U.S.S.R.  
(in milliard roubles of 1926/27 value).

	1913	1929	1933	1938	1939	1940	1941 (plan)
Total . . . . .	46.2	25.7	45.7	106.8	123.9	137.5	162.0
Capital goods . . . . .	5.4	10.9	24.5	62.6	73.7	83.9	103.6
Consumer goods . . . . .	10.8	14.8	21.2	44.2	50.2	53.6	58.4
Coal (mil. metric tons)	29.1	40.1	76.3	132.9	145.9	164.6	191.0
Oil " "	9.2	13.8	22.5	32.2	—	34.2	38.0
Steel " "	4.2	4.9	6.9	18.0	—	18.4	22.4
Aluminium (thous. met. tons)	—	—	7.0	56.8	—	59.9	99.4
Cotton textiles (mil. metres)	2,224	2,996	2,732	3,491	—	—	—
Woollen textiles (mil. metres)	103	101	86	114	—	—	—
Leather shoes (mil. pairs)	8.3	48.8	99.4	213.0	—	—	—
Sugar (thous. tons)	1,347	1,283	995	2,519	—	—	—

## APPENDIX II

## RAILWAY TRANSPORT

	1913	1929	1933	1938
Railway lines operated (thous. kms.)	58.5	76.9	82.6	85.0
Transport service				
Goods (mlrd. tons/kms.) . . . . .	65.7	113.0	169.5	370.5
Passengers (mlrd. passengers/kms.) . . . . .	26.1	32.0	75.2	90.9

## APPENDIX III

## AGRICULTURE

	1913	1929	1933	1938
Total production (mil. 1926/27 roubles)	12,607	14,745	14,017	20,123
Total sown area (mil. hectares)	105.0	113.0	129.7	136.9
Grain harvest (mil. metric quintals)	801	717.4	898.0	949.9
Cattle (mil. heads)	60.6	67.1	38.4	63.2
Number of tractors (in thous.)	—	66.3	210.9	483.5
Combines (in thous.)	—	—	25.4	153.5

APPENDIX IV

	1914	1929	1933	1938	1939
Libraries (thous.) . . .	12·6	28·9	32·9	70·0	77·6
Clubs (thous.) . . . .	0·2	34·5	53·2	95·6	103·7
Museums . . . . .	180	812	732	761	794
Theatres . . . . .	153	—	551	702	787
Cinemas (thous.) . . .	1·4	9·7	27·6	28·6	30·9
Editions of books and journals (million copies)	86·7	568·1	659·5	949·9	—
Number of beds in hos- pitals (thous.) . . . .	175·5	246·8	410·8	672·0	—
Doctors . . . . .	19,785	63,162	76,027	110,000	—

## CHAPTER IV

### SOVIET TRADE UNIONS

by N. BAROU

SCARCELY any aspect of Soviet life and organisation is of greater interest to the student of working-class politics than the development of the Trade Unions and their relations with the Soviet State and the Communist Party ; for it bears on the question of strategy, of the means of obtaining political power, a subject which socialist thought has tended to neglect.

#### I. HISTORY OF THE UNIONS

Tsarist Russia was not favourable ground for the growth of Trade Unions. For a long time the Russian Unions were only semi-legalised, and semi-tolerated by the Government in the present century only. They were regarded as a breeding-ground of revolutionaries and a natural centre for revolutionary activities. Their members, in common with other revolutionaries, often spent large portions of their lives in prison or exile. Under these circumstances organised Trade Unionists were few in numbers, but very active and politically highly-educated.

Old Russia was a paradise for its high-handed capitalists ; the Government and the police were to all intents and purposes weapons in their hands for use against their workers' demands. The result was that demands and strikes which had economic aims acquired deep political colouring.

There was not much opportunity in Tsarist Russia for improvement in working-class conditions, and few strikes were successful. Those which were became major

political events ; but a heavy price in the way of imprisonment and blacklisting of leaders was paid for successful and unsuccessful strikes alike. In spite, however, of these difficulties, the Trade Union movement made considerable headway and was influential among the workers notwithstanding its small numbers. During the short political spring of the 1905 revolution, Trade Union membership went up to 200,000 ; but contracted again rapidly during the reprisals period of 1906-7. Many Unions were dissolved, or continued their work partly illegally. But "underground" Trade Unionism was steadily gaining in strength, and during the first world war open membership was again mounting. By June 1917, three months after the March Revolution, it had swelled to a million and a half.

The origin of Russian Trade Unions differed radically from that of the Western movement in that as mass organisations they were established later than the socialist parties, and had therefore developed under the direct influence of socialist political groups. Their relations with the socialist parties, particularly the Bolsheviki, cannot be understood unless that is borne in mind.

The history of Soviet Trade Unions falls into three distinct periods. The first was from the outbreak of the October Revolution to the introduction of the New Economic Policy ; it was a period of sharp civil war during which the Unions had to concentrate on the maintenance of some kind of war production and had little time for ordinary activities. The second period ends with the opening of the first Five-Years Plan, and the third is the period of organised planning.

During the first two periods a great struggle was going on between Lenin's views and those of many opposition groups within the Communist Party. Of the two most important groups one wished the Unions to become part



of the State machine ; the other had a somewhat syndicalist attitude and advocated transferring the control of industrial production into the hands of "the producers". The function of Trade Unions in a planned socialist society has only gradually been worked out and formulated since planning itself began. Lenin throughout his political life saw clearly the essential rôle of Trade Unions in capitalist economy—to organise and educate the workers and to agitate for improvement in their wages and conditions of life. He also correctly concluded that "capitalism is interested on limiting the functions of Trade Unions to a small sphere within the existing capitalist society, to separate them from any connection with socialism, and the neutrality theory is the ideal expression of these capitalist aims". For his own part, he advocated a close union between the Party and the Trade Unions, and as early as 1906 we find him urging these suggestions to the Stockholm Conference of the Party ; "The Party must aim to educate in all possible ways the members of Trade Unions on the spirit of full understanding of the importance of class struggle and the socialist aims of the working classes, and to gain through Party activities a *de facto* leading part in Trade Unions."

All his life Lenin remained faithful to this theory, and fought hard against any attempt to change the Party line on Trade Unionism. He believed that during the transition period to socialism the main function of the Trade Unions should be to act as a "transmission belt" between the masses and the Party. "Just as the very best factory," he wrote, "having a splendid power-house and first-class machinery, will stop functioning if the transmission mechanism between the power-house and the machinery gets out of order, so will the collapse of our socialist construction be inevitable if the Trade

Unions, which are the transmission mechanism between the Communist Party and the masses, are badly organised or work badly. It is not enough to explain, reiterate and confirm this truth, it must be embodied by organisation in the whole structure of Trade Unions and in their everyday work."

During the first ten years of the Revolution, however, this "transmission belt" had to unite the vanguard of the working class not merely with the Soviet wage-workers, but with 100 million peasants. At the start of the Soviet régime, the urban wage-workers had not yet severed their relations with the countryside. They kept steady contact with their families in the villages, and they had to serve as a collective vanguard of Soviet development in country and town alike.

There are the dark backward masses of the people [said Lenin at the Miners' Congress]; there are the Trade Unions, which are so strong that they are leading the country behind them and are marching forward under the guidance of the Party, which was trained for twenty years to the struggle against Tsarism. This is the whole mechanism which keeps us in power.

After the introduction of planned economy and collective agriculture the "transmission belt" was operating mainly inside the working class, and its function was changed in some degree. Stalin formulated it thus: "Trade Unions form the link between the advanced and the backward elements in the ranks of the working class; they unite the masses of the workers with their vanguard." So defined, and so functioning, Soviet Trade Unions have grown at an enormous pace. Their total membership is the highest of any Trade Union movement in the world, and in proportion to the workers three times as high as the British; this great growth reflecting, naturally, the rapid industrialisation of the U.S.S.R. and the mechanisation and collectivisation of its agriculture.

*Membership*

Total membership amounts to 84 per cent. of all wage and salary earners in the Union ; the following figures show the rate of increase since the beginning of the first Five-Year Plan.

Year.	Total Numbers of Wage or Salary Earners.	Total Numbers of Trade Union Members.	Total Annual Members' Contribution (in roubles).
1928 . .	11,600,000	7,600,000	—
1933 . .	22,300,000	15,900,000	—
1935 . .	24,000,000	20,272,000	360,000,000
1938 . .	27,500,000	23,358,000	671,000,000
1940 . .	30,400,000	25,500,000	800,000,000
1941 * . .	31,000,000	27,000,000	900,000,000

\* Planned.

It is a common belief of the outside world that in the U.S.S.R. membership of a Trade Union is compulsory ; it is not. This is the logical deduction from Lenin's premises, and the Party has held to his line in rejecting many "oppositional" attacks on it and refusing either to turn the Trade Unions into a State institution with compulsory membership or to allow them to run State industries as representing the producers. Before the war there were about 5 million Soviet wage-earners (16 per cent.) who did not belong to Trade Unions. These were mainly workers who had been recently recruited to industry from rural areas and so lacked cultural and political education. Their regional and occupation distribution is interesting : there was 23 per cent. non-unionism among coal-miners of the Donetz basin, 15 per cent. among factory workers in medium-class machine construction, and 13 per cent. in heavy machine con-

struction, and 28 per cent. among iron-ore miners in the south.

Against these pools of non-Unionism the Soviet Trade Union leaders are fighting hard. Their daily, *Trud*, regularly publishes leading articles which explain that Trade Unions must devote considerable effort and energy to recruitment. They remind Trade Unions that in the U.S.S.R. Union membership is not automatic and not taken for granted; and warn local and central Union organisations that their success or failure will be judged by the results of their recruiting campaigns. The leaders are often very outspoken about shortcomings in this field. For example, K. Nikolaeva, the woman representative on the Soviet Trade Union delegation to Great Britain, reported in 1941 to the Plenum of the All-Union Central Committee that the reason for large groups of workers remaining outside the Trade Unions was bureaucracy in Union organisation. "No real work is done among people who are not members of the Unions; it is not explained to the working masses what advantages members of Trade Unions have. We must put an end to this state of affairs."

These and other criticisms can only be understood if we continually have in mind the basic difficulty of Soviet life—the low standard of culture. Resolutions dealing with this point are so highly critical that by merely quoting them a very black picture of Soviet industry and labour could be painted—as indeed anti-Soviet writers have delighted to do. But it has to be remembered that these resolutions and reports on dirt, disorganisation, bureaucracy, "showing-off," parades, and other instances of "lack of culture" are cases of *self-criticism*. It is no accident that to-day the adjective "uncultured" is one of the greatest insults in the Soviet vocabulary.

## II. POINTS OF DIFFERENCE FROM THE WEST

Soviet Trade Unions differ from Trade Unions in capitalist countries in several important respects, some the result of historical development, some of the political structure and the economic and cultural conditions of the U.S.S.R. Many of their functions arising from the nationalisation of industry, trade, land, and transport, and the existence of planned economy, are outside the purview of any Trade Union in a capitalist country ; and it may be said, in general, that their functions are far wider.<sup>1</sup> They help to increase production and to run factories efficiently. Besides attending to the interests of their members, they organise socialist competition<sup>2</sup> ; they administer social insurance schemes and provide for their members facilities for sports, holidays, education, cultural and social activities. Trade Unions in capitalist countries have also developed and changed in the course of generations ; but in their case the basis of development has been different. Under capitalism their main object is defence—of the wage-earners against their employers. This they have sought

<sup>1</sup> They include :

(1) To negotiate, through their Central Committees, the distribution of the wage pool of each industry, and through their factory committees, its distribution in each factory.

(2) To draw up and register collective agreements for wages, wage-rates, and conditions of labour.

(3) To take part in regular production conferences on plans for the month or quarter.

(4) To carry out inspection of factories—sanitary inspection being left to the Commissariat of Health.

(5) To establish standards of industrial safety and hygiene.

(6) To make suggestions for the promotion of workers to managerial status, etc.

(7) To give legal assistance to their members where necessary.

(8) To foster socialist competition and Stakhanovite methods.

(9) To take part in the planning of housing construction and the distribution of housing space.

Compare these with the work of a British Trade Union.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 118.

to achieve, (a) by controlling the supply of labour, so that the employers could not use an unorganised reserve of unemployed to break down wage standards, (b) by individual and collective bargaining to raise wages, (c) by reducing hours of work and pressing for a guaranteed day or week, (d) by improving working conditions, forcing compensation for injury, paid holidays, etc. As an accompaniment to this main task, they have also, necessarily, interested themselves in promoting the political and general education of their members and of the working class at large.

The first basic aim, that of keeping up standards by controlling the supply of labour, has been sought by different means at different times; by the "closed shop" principle, by upholding long apprenticeships, by financing the emigration of unemployed members, by Trade Union out-of-work funds, by opposing the employment, and sometimes refusing membership to the low-paid labour of women and young people<sup>1</sup>; it tended at times to build up an aristocracy of labour organised in craft unions barricaded off from the general labour market, which, as Engels remarked, meant that in effect "each union was breeding its own blacklegs". This aim does not, however, exist for Soviet Trade Unions, since unemployment has been non-existent there since 1930, when the last unemployed were absorbed in the great expansion of trade and industry, and since the Constitution expressly guarantees the right to work of every Soviet citizen. Soviet Trade Unions have no reason to fear competition from the unemployed and no reason, therefore, to restrict entry to their ranks; they aim at enrolling everybody, wage and salary-earners alike, and

<sup>1</sup> This last was particularly noticeable in Great Britain, where for historical reasons the standard of payment for women in industry was comparatively very low.

are scolded by the Press and the Party for the 16 per cent. who are still unorganised.

### *Responsibility for Production*

The second main difference is of very great importance. It concerns *responsibility for production*. In capitalist countries positive responsibility for production and for the success or failure of any particular concern, lies with the employers alone; the Trade Unions, with their interest in securing the largest possible share for the wage-workers and protecting them against exploitation, have only a negative and limiting interest in production. Only in war-time, when the national necessity can be seen to override particular interests, do the Unions become positively interested in increased production—as they are doing to-day. This brings them nearer to appreciating the Soviet angle.

For the Soviet Trade Unions are directly and positively interested in the organisation and increase of production and in economic life in general. Right from the start, the aim of the Soviet economic system—of which the Soviet Trade Unions are a part—was to raise productivity, in order both to prepare for the war, thought to be inevitable, and to raise the standard of life. This raising of the standard of life, as every worker in the Soviet Union realises, can only be done by increasing the output of nationalised production. It is not a question of groups trying to secure a larger share of a total output over whose general amount and direction they have no control, but of all groups and individuals participating in raising the available total. Thus, Trade Unions in a State of nationalised and planned economy have to concern themselves with questions of productivity of labour, of planned output, and of the organisation

of production, which Trade Unions in a "pure" capitalist economy would find irrelevant, strictly speaking.

### *Industrial Unionism*

Trade Unions in the U.S.S.R. are thus important and responsible partners in the running of nationalised trade and industry ; and this brings us to the third difference—the method of organisation. The Unions of the U.S.S.R. are *industrial* unions, for partnership in industry involves union by industry. It would be impossible for Trade Unionism in the U.S.S.R. to fulfil its functions if it was organised in a haphazard medley of craft unions, multi-craft unions, industrial unions, professional societies, and general unions extending over a whole group of industries. In the U.S.S.R. there are 182 Trade Unions, each of them organised on an industrial basis, that is to say, enrolling every man, woman, and youth employed in a factory or plant belonging to a given branch of industry, or in a social institution. Within the Unions are special clerical and technical sections which unite the clerical workers or technicians employed in the industry ; but the Union unites the workers as a whole and speaks for them as a whole *vis-à-vis* the management.

This industrial organisation of the Unions achieved several useful purposes. It has laid the foundations for the development of functional industrial democracy inside each economic unit and of popular machinery for industrial planning ; it has helped to solve the problem of the relations between technicians and wage-earners ; it has created the background for an effective Party-cell organisation in the factories, and it has enabled the social security organisation and the educational and cultural organisation of the Trade Unions to be satisfactorily built up.



*Wages and Salaries*

The fourth main difference is to be found in the whole Soviet method of dealing with questions of wages and salaries. As would be expected, the methods of wage-fixation are very different when it is a case of responsible partners allocating shares in a national product which they have helped to plan. Methods of struggle between groups, strikes, and bargaining—the whole of the apparatus which the Webbs described as “the Higgling of the Market” can have no place where labour has ceased to be a commodity offered for sale in an unorganised “free” market.

The Soviet wage is part of the economic planning of the country. It is fixed as a whole by means of elaborate planning machinery (in which the Trade Unions play a considerable part); and the distribution of the total wage-bill among different industries is one of the main methods of contracting or expending production in those industries in accordance with the main plan. When the wage plan for each industry has been settled for the year, the Trade Unions then open negotiations with the management boards of the industries for collective agreements. These collective agreements, which must be made, are lengthy and complicated documents dealing with a great many subjects. They lay down the standard of output expected, the time and piece rates to be paid to different classes of workers and their co-ordination, overtime rates, the kind of instruction to be given by the management, the transfer of workers from one grade to another, welfare conditions, and rewards for improvements and inventions. In the Soviet Union, where no question of profits from patents or secret processes arises, workers are eagerly encouraged to think about the processes of their work and see wherein they could be improved, and careful provision is made for the exam-

ination and testing of any suggestions. Skilled members of the factory staff are available—and their names are known—to assist any man or woman who may have had an idea, but who lacks the knowledge necessary to put it in a form suitable for presentation to the management.

### III. ORGANISATION, BUDGET, ETC.

There is no entrance qualification for membership of a Soviet Trade Union whether of wage or salary earners. Membership is open to all in possession of civic rights. The smallest unit of organisation is the group, which should have from five to thirty-five members—though it often has more—and which elects an organiser in open meeting. The number of groups is about half a million. These groups are combined, as in other countries, into local branches, regional branches, central republican branches, and finally the All-Union Central Committees. Local nominations for committees and officers, are made in open meeting, where anyone may be proposed ; one may even propose himself, giving adequate reasons. There is then a full discussion, which would be found embarrassing in Britain, of the candidates' personal records and qualifications, and the final vote is taken by secret ballot. To be elected it is necessary to poll 50 per cent. of the votes ; and those elected go forward to district, regional, etc., committees, where the same procedure is followed. "Directing bodies", however, such as factory committees, are chosen by secret ballot in the first instance ; they are kept small and have no Presidium or Executive Committee. All elected members and officials are subject to recall by those who elected them. Congresses of Trade Unions must be held at least once in two years, and conferences every year.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Congresses" are the governing, rule-making assemblies ; "conferences", of less power and importance, meet between congresses to do whatever is necessary. [Ed.]

One-third of the membership which elected any committee may demand a fresh election, or one may be held through the intervention of a higher authority in the Trade Union.

The Central Committees of the Unions negotiate the collective agreements with the management boards of industry and trade. Within the framework of the national agreements special agreements are made between the Union Factory Committees and the management of each industrial unit; the factory committee, as the agent of the workers therein, taking responsibility for factory safety and welfare, for efficient working, good timekeeping, and the prevention of absenteeism, theft, and waste.

Questions of individual wages are settled by a wage commission, and for interpretation of the collective agreements and settlement of disputes the Trade Unions appoint representatives to a Rates and Conflicts Commission, composed of equal representation of the management and the workers, which must settle the dispute within three days or refer it to a court. Every annual collective agreement as a rule plans for a decrease in costs and an increase in production per head, which the workers pledge themselves to achieve.

At intervals, "mass-control brigades" of the Trade Unions investigate the cost side of production in the factories and examine all accounts and payments. Full-time inspectors of labour are appointed by the Central Committees of the Union; but in addition works committees, confirmed by district committees, nominate voluntary part-time inspectors—in 1938 there were 238,000 of these. In January, 1939, a *Labour Book* was introduced which provided a written record of each worker's punctuality, absence, efficiency, etc. This reflects the proclaimed duty of every Union member to

observe labour discipline according to the collective agreements and the labour code ; he is also supposed to try to improve his general education and professional skill, to attend Union meetings and to abide by their decision. Workers are expected to stay "in the same job", except for special reasons, for example, promotion or training ; but "the same job" is interpreted as meaning any type of employment in their own industry anywhere in the U.S.S.R.

The chief source of income of the Trade Unions is a levy of 1 per cent. upon all the earnings of their members, and the income arising from their collective cultural and similar activities. The general Trade Union budget for 1941 will show how they spend it, in millions of roubles.

Income :	Expenditure :
Balance in hand . . . . . 206	Cultural and educational services . . . . . 627
1 per cent. of all earnings 900	Wages paid to own employees . . . . . 398
Enterprises . . . . . 458	General expenses . . . . . 171
Sundries . . . . . 175	Sport and physical services . . . . . 135
Amortisation . . . . . 29	Assistance to members . 123
	Improvement of technical qualifications of wage-earners . . . . . 88
	Clubs and similar institutions . . . . . 25
	Building, repairs and inventories . . . . . 100
	Central Trade Union Council expenses . 23
	Sundries . . . . . 27
	To Reserve . . . . . 51
Total . . . . . <u>1,768</u>	Total . . . . . <u>1,768</u>

This particular budget was severely criticised when it

came before the meeting of the All-Union Central Committee, which drew the attention of the Unions to their heavy spending, and urged all the district, factory, etc., committees to institute regular budget discussions ; in especial, it referred to the large numbers of persons employed by them and urged that more use should be made of voluntary and unpaid work.

Party control, within the Trade Unions, is exercised in the same way as Party control in political and other organisations<sup>1</sup> ; that is to say, within the general line of Party policy Trade Unions have a considerable amount of say in the activities of their own economic unit and the choice of individuals to administer it. Losovsky summed up the position in these words, " their task lies in the spheres of organisation, economics, and education. These tasks are carried out not at random but in an organised way under the leadership of Communists active in the Trade Union movement "

### *Trade Union Education*

The industrial and management side of Trade Union educational activities is one which has no counterpart in the Trade Unions of capitalist countries, which not being part of the direction of industry, do not train their members to be directors. But Lēnin frequently referred to the Soviet Trade Unions as " schools of Communism ", and it is clear from the context that by " Communism " he did not mean the Party but the Soviet order as a whole.

Trade Unionism [he said] is not a State organisation, it is not a compulsory organisation. It is an educational organisation, an organisation for leadership, for teaching ; it is a school, a school of administration, a school of economic management, a school of communism.

As practical schools in this sense, the industrial Unions

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I, p. 36.

of the U.S.S.R. have had a big part to play. They have trained their members, both in actual work and by their participation in all the innumerable discussions up and down the country of the annual and Five-Year Plans ; and they have been able, moreover, to mobilise hundreds of thousands of workers (many of them volunteers) and put them at the disposal of the management boards of industries and trades, in order to strengthen—even, in some cases, entirely to supply—managerial personnel. In fact, the Trade Unions are now a great reservoir of trained labour on which the Communist Party and the Soviet State can rely for assistance in new economic ventures and the development of old ones.

The above paragraphs deal with the most important educational rôle of the Soviet Trade Unions ; they have also a great deal of interest in education proper and in sport. Their educational budget amounted in 1941 to 627 million roubles, and according to a report made in that year their “workers’ clubs” were running nearly 11,000 “circles”, including dramatic, choral, orchestral, and dancing circles. It is curious that there were no “circles” on technical subjects ; however, steps were being taken to alter that. The budget for workers’ sports—a very wide selection—came to 134·5 million roubles in 1941 ; and there are a large number of institutions such as clubs, sports grounds, “palaces of culture”, tourist centres, etc., which are run by Trade Unions and are free to their members.

### *Social Security*

The major material advantage, however, which is enjoyed by the members of a Soviet Trade Union lies in the field of social security. Soviet Unions play a large part in the administration of Soviet social insurance, which is itself a much larger affair than social insurance

in any other country. It is one of the chief means by which the "rights" guaranteed in the Constitution<sup>1</sup> are secured, and it will be convenient to describe it here. Trade Union members receive preferential treatment throughout the social security system.

"Social Security" in the U.S.S.R. does not include unemployment benefit, that large part of Social Security schemes in the West; for there is no unemployment, and it is not envisaged that there ever will be. It includes

(a) Maternity benefit for all workers, whether or not they are members of Trade Unions.

(b) Sickness and accident benefit, where non-members receive half the rates paid to members.

(c) (Available to Trade Union members only), loan services, rest-homes, sanatoria, holiday homes, and tourist centres.

All these are financed out of the social insurance budget, which is provided by a levy of 3 per cent. or more upon the wage bill of each branch of industry. Besides this, the State, out of other funds, provides other services such as free health and medical services, and crèches for the care of children.

Maternity benefit is 100 per cent. of normal wages, and in addition there is an allowance for the child's clothes, and for additional food for mother and child, and the State provides a great deal of advice and help to mothers. Sick pay is 100 per cent. in the majority of cases, less for those who have been employed less than two years in an industry—this is partly in order to discourage "fitting"—and half as much for non-unionists.

Rest-homes and sanatoria, though owned by the Commissariat of Health, are largely managed by the Unions, which now send to them about 2½ million workers every

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I, p. 17.

year. The size and growth of social insurance in the Union can best be seen from a few figures.

Year.	Expenditure on social insurance (million roubles).				
1928	.	.	.	.	1,050
1933	.	.	.	.	4,799
1938	.	.	.	.	6,323
1940	.	.	.	.	8,828
1941 (planned)	.	.	.	.	9,998

It should be observed that 1928 was the year in which the first Five-Year Plan began.

In the 1941 budget the largest item, 3,042 million roubles, was allocated to pensions; 2,309 millions to benefits for workers temporarily disabled—this is a 10 per cent. increase on the previous years, and reflects greater industrialisation as well as an increase in available funds. 667 million roubles were earmarked for assistance to children of wage and salary earners in the form of pioneer camps, sanatoria, etc.

#### IV. TRADE UNIONS AND WAR

The coming of war has not made so much alteration in the nature and function of the Soviet Trade Unions as in those of other countries. Military activities, in any case, did not come as a novelty to them; for by helping to form the first battalions of the Red Army they laid the first foundations of the military power of the Revolution, and ever since they have been deeply concerned both with the Army and with war industries. It cannot be too often emphasised that the leaders of the Soviet Union have never had the possibility of war on a large scale out of their minds; and the Trade Unions, as an integral part of the Soviet economy, have naturally had their rôle.

The task of the Unions, already mentioned, in speeding



up and increasing production, has simply been intensified by the war, although certain new problems have arisen for them to face, viz. the switch-over from peace-time to war-time production (common to all countries), mass evacuations as a result of the German invasion,<sup>1</sup> with training new leaders to take the place of the fighting men, and up-grading the older ones. Production committees, elected by all the workers employed in each unit, are mobilising the experience and initiative of everybody, and the procedure for dealing with new inventions described above is working full-time. The attitude taken up may be judged from this statement of the Armament Workers' Union :

“ We must make full use of working time, eliminate stoppages which still recur, teach new workers to fulfil their output quotas to time, economise in the use of metal and tools, power and fuel, and use machinery to full capacity.”

This about sums up the war-time attitude of Trade Unions to production. In addition, their educational activities have taken on a new start. They are training workers in their spare time as air-pilots, parachutists and gliders, in order to form part of the “ reserve in depth ” which has been such a remarkable feature of the Red Air Force ; similarly, they are training women for service in the Red Cross and the Red Crescent. Instead of ordinary sporting activities, Trade Union sports associations now organise fitness efforts and pre-military exercises ; their educational clubs establish study groups for mass defence, instructing their members in various aspects of military science, and their libraries are advised to popularise books about the heroic past of the Russian peoples and the heroic present of the Red Army.

Outside of industry, the most important work of the

<sup>1</sup> See, for more detail, N. Barou, *The Soviet Home Front* (Fabian Society).

Trade Unions is in "Osoaviachim", the huge civil defence force, with a membership of many millions, which has to a large extent been financed out of Trade Union funds. But they are also playing a large part in trying to increase food production, encouraging factory groups and individuals to take up allotments, sometimes actually assisting them to obtain land, seeds and tools, and in improving the efficiency of food distribution. Many of the jobs which in war-time Britain are done by outside organisations, local authorities, etc., are in the U.S.S.R. the concern of the Trade Union movement. *Pravda* put the essence of the difference in a few sentences :

Who are primarily responsible for the needs of the working population? The leaders of the economic organisation, the Trade Unions and the local soviets. The place of the Trade Union is not only where the wage-earner works, in the shop or in the brigade, but also where he lives, where he feeds, where he rests.

#### CONCLUSION

We must not underestimate the task, which faced the Soviet Trade-unions after the October Revolution, and especially during the last fifteen years of the planning period.

Lenin was aware of the magnitude of the transformation which the Soviet working class and the Soviet State had to undergo. "We know," he said, "that the lack of culture belittles the Soviet power and re-establishes bureaucracy. . . . The workers, who are building a new society, have not changed into new men, who are clean from the filth of the capitalist world ; they are up to their knees in this filth and one can only dream about cleaning it off. It would be the greatest utopia to think that it is possible to do so immediately. Such a utopia would only postpone the reign of socialism to the skies" (1919).

The Soviet Trade Unions had to help the Soviet workers to find a new road out of the morasses of the heritage of the Tsarist Empire. They had to convert the millions of former farmers into an industrial army and their main difficulty was to overcome the "lack of culture".

The total number of workers and employees in Soviet industry, trade and agriculture, has grown during this time nearly three times from 11½ to 31 millions—women representing 45 per cent. of all industrial workers in November 1941.

The 20 million recruits came mainly from rural districts, and they have largely contributed to the increase in the town population from 26,300,000 in 1926 to 55,910,000 in 1939.

Soviet Trade Unions have done a great job under most trying conditions: the defence of the Soviet Union manifest clearly that the population is ready to fight and die for the country, as it is, and that the country is strong enough morally and materially not only for a sacrifice, but also for victory.

The great human, cultural and technical transformation, about which Lenin dreamt twenty-five years ago has gone a long way towards its fulfilment, and one can only hope that after the victory, the Soviet Trade Unions will be one of the leading forces in a re-united International Trade Union organisation for the establishment of which the British Soviet Trade Union Committee is the first step.

PART III

*EDUCATION AND CULTURE*

CHAPTER V

EDUCATION. THE SHAPING OF THE SOVIET  
CITIZEN

*by* A. STEINBERG

I. THE INHERITANCE OF THE PAST

REFERENCE books on the achievements of the Russian Revolution seldom fail to present in their diagrams, side by side with the tremendous increase in coal or machine-tool production, the exceedingly high standard of Soviet education as compared with that of pre-revolutionary Russia. The rise in the number of schools of all categories, of professors, teachers and pupils, and, above all, in the percentage of literate men and women is related in a manner which tends to suggest that education is concerned with measurable quantities rather than with qualities of mind and character. In the case of Soviet Russia, this may be partly due to the influence of Russian terminology. "It is time to realise," said Stalin in his speech of May 4th, 1935, "that of all the valuable capital the world possesses the most precious is man." There is certainly good reason for comparing human beings with some form of condensed capital. Still, a child's soul is something very different even from a precious stone, and the "output" of a school is only vaguely comparable with the yield of an oil-well. The difference is fundamental. Because man, even in the remotest part of the Soviet Union, is determined by his

historical background. Thus he cannot be treated, especially in respect of his education, let alone of his re-education, as a raw material. Soviet education could not and did not start from scratch, and there is no way to assess its real achievements other than by an analysis of the "capital" inherited from the past, and by a description of the very peculiar "tools" at its disposal.

The most striking feature of the educational position in Imperial Russia, in the years preceding its downfall, was not so much the abnormal proportion of illiterate adults, when set against the standards attained in Western Europe, as the rapidly growing discrepancy between demand and supply of educational facilities. The Government and its supporters hated the general clamour for more and still more schools. "In Germany," said one of the leaders of the big landowners in 1906, "they praise the schoolmaster as the victor of Sedan. I warn you, the day is not far off, when our Reds will applaud him as the grave-digger of Old Russia." However, in this, as in all other aspects of its policy, the Government was substantially on the defensive. After a prolonged struggle, compulsory schooling was accepted "in principle", and means were provided for the gradual extension of the elementary school network.

Bowing to political necessity, the Tsarist Government found its compensation in upholding the old school system with all its ties and bonds. Typical of the system was the subdivision of the very complicated structure, vertically as well as horizontally, into watertight compartments. Those who went through the primary schools had no chance of admission to the secondary schools. Thereafter the highway to the universities became so narrow as only to admit the holders of a "classical" matriculation certificate. The chance of transfer from one type to another of secondary

schools (of which there were no less than seven quite different types) was practically nil. "Divide and conquer" was the guiding principle, and this was applied as between the sexes by the formation of women's universities. (For a short time during the years of trouble 1905-7, the ordinary high school was thrown open to girls; but immediately afterwards the reactionaries in the most offensive terms ordered their expulsion.)

The main task prescribed for the educational institutions of all grades was the preservation of the traditional ways of life and the instilment of unswerving loyalty towards Throne, Altar and Empire. Aloofness from the troubles of the day and, generally, from all contemporary problems was law for pupil and teacher alike. The textbooks ignored the fact that Russia had lost a war against Japan, and the maps continued to mark Port Arthur as a Russian naval base. Russian literature was similarly treated. At a time when Tolstoy had long been recognised, both inside and outside Russia, as one of the classics of world-literature, pupils in Russian secondary schools were punished for reading *War and Peace*. That the abhorrence of the Present was bound to entail an ugly misrepresentation of the Past, is obvious.

A system of education lagging so far behind the times was doomed long before its actual destruction. Its breakdown was reflected in another phenomenon peculiar to pre-revolution Russia, the gradual growth of a second educational system, beside the official and in a way substituting for it. Free of the rigidity inherent in its rival, the new system automatically developed an elasticity which enabled it to respond to every aspect of the public demand.

Desire for knowledge was common in Russia to literate and illiterate alike. For the latter the only means of acquiring the longed-for knowledge was the spoken word,

and, accordingly, the first task of the unofficial system of education was to spread oral tuition. It was supplied in abundance and supplemented by innumerable evening classes as well as by reading and study circles. The autobiographies of Gorki or Chaliapine testify how efficient this kind of education was even in the days of their boyhood. Thereafter it progressed by leaps and bounds. The educated Russian normally accepted it as his or her natural mission to share their spiritual bread with the hungry. Even Russian books were invisibly stamped with the mark "Common Property". As the influence of the unofficial education grew, all the distinctions of the old educational system became unimportant. What now really mattered, was whether one had acquired the essence of the "true" education.

The high reputation of the "second" system was derived from the fact that it had a curriculum of its own which, in direct opposition to the official one, bore a close relation to the actual problems of Russia's political and social life. The old system ignored the present out of fear of the future; the new revised even the past in the light of things to come. Pride of place in the new education was given to such subjects as Political Economy and Sociology, to the history of the French and other revolutions and, of course, to modern literature, Russian and foreign.

Of the two systems, the subversive had the particular advantage of being in tune with the craving for self-determination which swayed all the non-Russian peoples of the Tsar's Empire. Whilst the schools maintained by the State had scarcely any consideration for the most sacred traditions of the non-Russians, or, more exactly, of all non-Great Russians, the teachers and the teachings of the underground type were proclaiming emphatically that every ethnic group inside Russia was entitled to

a life of its own. To these enthusiastic teachers, no matter whether they were "Great", "Little" or "White" Russians, Jews or Georgians, the Polish uprising of 1862, for instance, was an event no less glorious than the English or French Revolutions. In the past of Russia, in Russian literature and philosophy, they searched for and easily discovered those elements which agreed with their own ideal of universal brotherhood and justice. Thus they succeeded in winning the affection of conquered and oppressed peoples for a Russian commonwealth not yet born and only hoped for.

The main bearer of the new educational movement was Russia's Intelligentsia, a social group of a singular character; inseparably connected with the history of Russian culture. Every member of this group, held together only by common ideals, was supposed to be at least potentially a teacher in the people's service. For and with the people, was the Intelligentsia's motto. Teachers and educationists by the summons of the inner voice, they were continually conscious of a feeling of indebtedness towards the burdened and toiling. Was it not these, the producers of their daily bread, who had also created the Word, the Russian and all other languages, the main instrument of Thought and Knowledge? This was the semi-religious form in which the theories of Western socialism were assimilated by the Russian mind.

The fluctuating movement of All-Russia's Intelligentsia found its crystallisation points in an array of revolutionary parties, every one of which was constituted as an educational institution and represented, most literally, a school of thought. All of them considered themselves to be "parts" not of the existing "Russia", but of an ideal society which had yet to be called into being. Training of instructors and mass education with that



purpose in view was, therefore, their main object. No one was qualified to lead who had not behind him years and years of such work. All the great Russian revolutionary leaders went through this militant school, starting as pupils in a reading circle and rising step by step to the position of revered "teachers". About 1905, the Russian political emigrés set up in Paris a full-fledged High School of Economics, and a few years later Maxim Gorki founded a special college for Bolsheviki at his place of refuge, Capri.

At the time of the Revolution, the illegal schools inside the Tsarist educational system were ripe to emerge into the open and completely to replace their rivals.

## II. THE EDUCATIONAL IDEAL OF MARXIST RUSSIA

The establishment of the Soviet régime produced in Russia, alongside the political and social revolution, the overthrow of the inherited philosophy represented by the Orthodox Christian Church. Its place has been taken by Marxism, the official philosophy of the ruling Communist Party. Within the sphere of education this implies the adjustment of all educational aims to the social ideal of a classless society, which is the ultimate proclaimed goal of the Soviet Union.

The whole population of the Union is to be educated, taught and trained in such a way as to be able, everyone in his or her individual place, to perform the task allotted by the State. Thus the shaping of Soviet citizens worthy of the name is the general aim of Soviet education. A precise definition of the good Soviet citizen is now on Russia's Statute Book, the *Fundamental Law of the U.S.S.R.* In Chapter X of this Constitution is included a list of "Duties of Citizens", among them "to observe the laws, to maintain labour discipline, honestly to perform public duties and to respect the rules of socialist human inter-

course" (Art. 130). For the understanding of the special characteristics of modern Russian education, the last few words are the most important. They presuppose a standard of human behaviour which can only be understood in the light of Marxist ethics.

What does the Soviet law mean by "socialist intercourse", and what are its "rules"?

The answer to these questions is to be found in the ideas the Marxists of Russia had always held about the moral and mental qualities of the working class. To the Russian disciples of Marx man in the factory represented even inside the capitalist world that higher type of human character which should be intentionally bred, so as to become universal in the coming classless society. In 1905, long before the Bolshevik Revolution, at the time of the mutiny aboard the battleship *Potemkin*,<sup>1</sup> Russian Marxists, in their attempt to explain why the Imperial Navy was more in step with the vanguard of the people than the army, pointed to the sociological likeness between a big naval vessel and a modern factory. Like the member of a battleship crew, the factory worker was bound to become, sooner or later, aware of the fact that he is in the same boat with a great number of fellow-workers, that his individual fate is but a detail in the fortunes of a greater whole. His social position, the place held by him in the process of production, they said, predisposed him automatically to react to his environment in the right "socialist" way. It remained only to make explicit the different forms of this reaction, the "rules" governing it, in order to obtain the guiding principles of socialist education.

In the ideal image of the factory worker the feature most valued by the Soviet educationists is his presumed "Consciousness", i.e. his capacity to put the revolu-

<sup>1</sup> Subject of the most famous of the early Russian films.

tionary mission of his class above his individual interests. To this level should be elevated all Soviet citizens, who should respect each other as befits members of a community engaged in a great work of liberation. Furthermore, in their intercourse they should pursue, to the total exclusion of every kind of national or racial discrimination, that class solidarity which is supposed to be ingrained in the workers all over the world. The tendency to discriminate against people of alien origin as well as against the "weaker sex" is continually exposed in the process of Soviet education as a "bourgeois prejudice". Particular stress is also laid on the sense of superiority which seems to be characteristic of the worker's attitude towards the machine. The industrial revolution, as it came in the West, involved the subservience of man to machinery; in the U.S.S.R. he is being taught to use it for his own social purposes. A similar sense of independence is being instilled into the child of the peasant towards *his* means of production, the soil. The underlying principle is that Man has to look upon himself as upon the lord rather than the slave of Nature. There can be no doubt that by conferring upon the industrial worker the highest moral dignity Soviet education stimulates the shifting of country people to the cities and accelerates Russia's industrialisation.

With its economy based on rational planning, the Soviet Union needs the greatest possible number of citizens who respond easily to reason and are unlikely to be led astray by incalculable outbursts of emotion. In accordance with this need, Soviet education is set upon training the young generation in the virtues of self-control, of self-imposed discipline and of dutifulness towards both superiors and subordinates. Everyone should learn to lead and to be led. All these qualities are unmistakably martial virtues adapted to a rapidly

progressing economy planned on the lines of a military campaign.

Together with will-power the Soviet education is trying to develop in all under its care the creative faculties of the intellect. Here again, the rapid expansion of the Union's economy demands a practically limitless number of inventors and explorers, of men and women capable of performing research work, in order to adjust difficulties and to improve the methods of work. The creative force of the human mind, it is thought, can most effectively be put into action by studying Marxist philosophy and science. The first, because it extols Man above all the Heroes of past mythology (and to Marxism religion is nothing but mythology), thus imbuing the human mind with boundless self-confidence ; the second, because it reflects and reveals the immense power of the methodically working intellect.

All in all, Soviet education may be described as the mobilisation to the full of Russia's moral and intellectual resources for the benefit of the great social experiment undertaken by the Soviet State.

### III. WAYS AND MEANS

In drawing the picture of education under the Soviet régime we need to take several aspects into consideration.

First, the formal shape of the system of school and university, and the extent to which it is universally available.

Second, the content of the education provided, its purposefulness and the means by which it sets out to achieve its purpose.

Third, the network of extra-school organisations by which the efforts of the schools, etc.—again under control of the State purpose—are supplemented ; and

Fourth, the rôle played in the education of the Soviet

system by such bodies as Trade Unions, the Red Army, and above all the Communist Party.

Education, in the U.S.S.R., is not a separate part of life or an *adjunct* to the political system ; it is a vital element in the system and continues from infancy to death. Unless this is clearly understood, we cannot grasp either what the Soviet educational system is trying to do or why education is a subject of such passionate interest to the rulers of the U.S.S.R.

### *Machinery*

The machinery built up and used by the Soviet State for its educational purpose consists of two different sets of instruments, a regular school system and an extra network of training centres, supplementing each other and supplemented in their turn by a good many primarily non-educational institutions. A complete description of Soviet education has to take into account not merely the formal system, but *all* the main components and try to assess the part each of them is playing in the shaping of the Soviet citizen which is their common task.

In its outlines the Soviet school system resembles very much that of pre-revolutionary Russia. When the control of State education had been taken over by the exponents of Russia's unofficial educational system, they did not try to break it up, though they reformed it thoroughly in the democratic spirit of Russia's Intelligentsia. The inherited three-storey building, with its division into primary, secondary and high schools, has outlived the revolution. But inside the building there has been installed a lifting apparatus devised to carry the pupil, almost automatically, from the basement to the top. The instruction at every stage is preparatory to the requirements of the subsequent one, so as to make the intermediate examinations as easy as possible. Their

passing depends entirely upon the abilities and the assiduity of the pupil. These facilities are implied in the "Right to education" guaranteed to the citizens of the U.S.S.R. by Article 121 of the Constitution.

Education in a State school, however, is in Soviet Russia as much a duty as a right. Whilst schooling is a State monopoly, elementary school training for boys and girls from 8 to 15 has, since 1930, been both universal and compulsory. The secondary school leads through an additional three years' course up to the highest stage, to institutions of university rank. In 1941 the Union's "school population" had already risen above the 37 million mark. The efforts to extend universal school education up to the age of 18, and thus to abolish the distinction between primary and secondary schools, were frustrated by the outbreak of war. At both stages the education was, however, till the autumn of 1940, free of charge. Wherever possible, it is being carried through in the appropriate vernacular. In such cases Russian is taught as a second language. Everywhere and at all stages, there is co-education.

### *Curriculum*

Within the curriculum of the seven years' primary school the largest place, after Russian and Russian literature, is occupied by Natural Science, Mathematics, Geography and Social Science. The latter subject, the study of which begins at 13, plays in Soviet education the part assigned in the older form to moral instruction through religion; it bears some relation to the suggestions for "civics" as a compulsory subject in modern Britain. It comprises an introduction to Marxist philosophy, an exposition of the forces shaping modern society, an analysis of the internal structure and of the international position of the Soviet Union, of its ideals and, what is

most important, of the duties incumbent on the individual citizen in respect of the whole Soviet community. Literature and history are taught in the same Marxist spirit, though in the last few years, with the growing of the war menace, much stress has been laid on the glorification of the Russian past. This blending of Marxist internationalism with old-fashioned traditional Russian patriotism in the Soviet text-books has been sponsored by Stalin himself. In geography also, special attention is given to the "greatness" and "uniqueness" of Soviet Russia. Even the teaching of foreign languages (usually English or German), which begins with the fourth school year, is being used to underline modern Russia's advancement in comparison with the outer world. Science is being taught in such a way as to open the mind of the pupil to the possibilities of its technical application, in industry as well as in agriculture. With that purpose in view, the whole primary school education in the early 'thirties was turned to "polytechnikisation", which means learning by producing in practice the various processes described and explained in the teacher's lessons. Thus boys and girls all over the country are being prepared for the vocational choice they are supposed to make with the completion of their elementary school education.

Hand in hand with the training of the intellect goes the developing of artistic inclinations (singing, dancing, acting, etc.), the steeling of the character and the hardening of the body through athletic exercises and games. After a period of extravagant experiments in self-government of and by the class members, following the tradition of Russia's unofficial education in the bygone pre-revolutionary days, discipline has been restored to a measure never achieved in Russia before. School administration is concentrated in the hands of a headmaster, who is, however, assisted by the whole body of

teachers, instructors, a medical supervisor, representatives of the Parents' Soviet as well as by the most suitable among the pupils. For the children administrative activities within the school community provide the first opening to prove their capacity for leadership, to demonstrate strength of character and to put to test their common sense. Many similar opportunities are given to them during school excursions to places of work, in summer camps or on the occasion of a theatrical performance often produced entirely by the youngsters themselves.

### *Higher Education*

On the conclusion of their primary training the pupils have to make up their mind whether they choose to go on studying or prefer to start productive work at once. In the first case, if they are in a ten years' school, they will stay where they are ; otherwise they have the chance of being transferred to the higher type of school, and their choice of a definite vocation is then postponed for another three years. But even if they have decided to join up immediately in the army of the workers or the peasants, their education is by no means at an end. A dense network of technical training centres is spread all over the country, in which the young workers of both sexes receive, together with special vocational instruction, a considerable amount of additional general knowledge, for the purpose of making them " politically conscious ". The enormous increase in the number of such institutions (as demonstrated by the figures given below) was dictated by the needs of industrialisation in conjunction with the mechanisation of agriculture. In order to direct the youth in ever-growing numbers to this type of " specialisation ", the Government is deliberately discouraging their zeal for " scholarship ". To that end and as an emer-



gency measure, fees for the attendance at secondary and higher schools were re-introduced on October 2nd, 1940, in disregard of Article 121 of the Constitution.

The teaching personnel for both primary and secondary schools is being trained partly in special Training Institutions, of which there are several scores in the Soviet Union, partly in ordinary high schools, partly in the old universities, in which case the graduates have to acquire a supplementary pedagogical qualification. The total number of men and women who graduated in the last ten years as teachers, according to Prof. I. Trainin, is more than a quarter of a million. The teaching profession is held in high esteem throughout the Soviet Union.

Boys and girls of 18 who hold a secondary school certificate are entitled to compete for admission to one of the Union's 700 odd high schools which are training the most highly-qualified specialists for every branch of Soviet life, for industry and agriculture, for State and municipal administration, for educational and research work. A conspicuous feature of higher education in post-revolutionary Russia is its extreme specialisation. There are, for example, special high schools for statisticians and for teachers of geography. Needless to say, the great majority of the high schools are concerned to produce technicians. During the years 1928-32 the engineering colleges produced altogether 67,000 "industrial officers"; in the following five-year period the number of such graduates had risen to 211,000. (The corresponding figures for the lower technical schools were 98 and 318,000 respectively.) To counteract the educational disadvantages of specialisation, all students are obliged to study subjects of a "general interest", such as World History and, as a matter of course, the "dialectical materialism" of Marx, Lenin and Stalin.

*Social Origins*

However, the most striking feature of Soviet higher schools, particularly when compared with those of Imperial Russia, or with any other western country, is the social origin of the students. In 1914, figures drawn from eight universities, showed 57·1 per cent. of the students belonging to the upper and higher-middle class ; the rest either derived from the lower-middle class or came of peasant stock. In 1931-5 about a half of all students came from the ranks of the urban workers. Taking into account that even in 1939 there were less than 30 per cent. of wage and salary earners among the Union's adult population, we are entitled to say that in respect of higher education the working class in Russia has a privileged position. Whence are the sons and daughters of Russian workers getting the means for their five years' studies at a high school? The statistics tell us that in 1939 no less than 90 per cent. of all students were maintained by State bursaries. And if bursaries are not available or insufficient, Soviet students manage to combine study with paid work.

Every night from six until twelve [reports John Scott, an American observer who was himself working for many years in one of the newly created centres of Soviet industry] the street-cars and buses were crowded with adult students hurrying to and from schools with books and notebooks under their arms, discussing Leibnitz, Hegel, or Lenin, doing problems on their knees, and acting like high-school children during examination week in a New York subway. These students, however, were not adolescents, and it was not examination time. They were just the run of the population of the Soviet Union making up for several centuries of lost time.<sup>1</sup>

As in a flash, this vivid picture reveals the extent to which the Soviet population is making use of the equality

<sup>1</sup> Scott, *Beyond the Urals*.

of opportunity which is the corner-stone of the whole Soviet school system. But it reveals also that the application of this basic principle has still, even in Soviet Russia, its natural limits.

### *The State and Education*

State control of school education is exercised for the greater part not by the Union but by the individual Union Republics. This enables the outline to be adjusted to the different conditions of life of the Union's various nationalities. The "determination of the basic principles in the sphere of education" is, of course, under Union jurisdiction (Constitution Art. 14). All matters concerning higher education are also under Union supervision. They are dealt with by a special Union Committee whose chairman is a member of the central government (Constitution Art. 70). The main instrument for implementing the Union's control is the federal budget. It is noteworthy that as late as 1937 almost 20 per cent. of the whole expenditure was allocated to education (nearly as much as to defence); and even in the last pre-war budget the percentage was still over 12.

### *Semi-Official Education*

Their own triumph over the old official educational system effectively convinced the builders of Soviet Russia that no system of State education could be considered secure, as long as there was room for a rival from outside. Hence their incessant efforts to control and absorb the whole educational potential of the country. Education begins at home. Therefore, under the Soviet régime, a second semi-official, semi-voluntary educational system has been built up which is designed to take hold of the child in its infancy, so as to detach it as early as possible from the uncontrolled and uncontrollable home atmosphere.

Although respect for family life is now again in the ascendant in Russia, the educational influence of the family is being steadily eliminated. This is the chief aim of what is called "pre-school education".

Already the communal crèches in town and village achieve this purpose in part; and even more the network of kindergartens spread all over the country among all its peoples, including the most backward tribes of the farther North and the remotest East. The installation of a radio-station and the opening of a Kindergarten are usually the first civilising steps taken on some forlorn Arctic island. In the Murmansk region, to take one instance only, there were in 1937 forty-six Kindergartens with 2,430 children, and 8 special buildings at their disposal. Not less amazing are the corresponding figures for Kamchatka and the Chukotski peninsula. To the Kindergartens are often attached preparatory schools paving the way to the ordinary primary schools. All these institutions are in the care of specially trained personnel and are made as attractive as possible, so as to make them popular with the parents.

At the age of 7, when the youngsters are about to become liable to compulsory schooling, they become simultaneously eligible for full membership in the Communist organisation of the "Octyabryata", which means "the cubs of October", i.e. of the Revolution. There the little ones are educated under the guidance of older children, the "Young Pioneers", aged 12-16, who belong to the Communist organisation which prepares its members for joining the "Comsomol" (Communist League of Youth). The latter, with its membership of boys and girls between 16 and 23, is the last stage of the high road which leads the young Soviet citizen to the very centre of the political life of the Union, the All-Union Communist Party.

Article 126 of the Constitution describes the Communist Party as the union of "the most active and politically conscious citizens." This gives the clue to the general aim of Party educational policy as pursued through all the stages of childhood and youth organisation. The official school system has the task of moulding in a general way the Soviet citizen; the semi-official co-partner that of finding and training recruits for the moral and intellectual élite which the Party aspires to be. As recruitment to the Party itself is voluntary, so also is enrolment in the Pioneers and the other organisations. The various stages of pre-Party enrolment are, however, adjusted very nicely to the stages of the school system. Thus, elementary schoolchildren supply the candidates for entry to the organisations of Cubs and Pioneers, and students from secondary and higher schools join the Comsomol. The larger the membership of these preparatory groupings, the easier the selection of candidates for the Party itself, and the less likelihood that this will be dependent on accidental factors.

Herein lies the reason for the strenuous and successful efforts which have been made, ever since the early 'twenties, to extend the scope of these extra-school organisations. In 1926 Pioneers and Cubs between them mustered an army of some 2 million members; by 1935 this number had trebled. The membership of Comsomol grew even more rapidly, from a million and a half in 1926 to about 5½ millions in 1935. At the present time over one-half of all schoolchildren and students in the Union (nearly 19 out of 37 millions) are enrolled in one or other of the three organisations.

The Party devotes great care and attention to its juniors. Pioneers, for example, already possess their own super-club premises.<sup>1</sup> Richard Terrell in *Soviet Under-*

<sup>1</sup> "Palaces" is the Russian word. Cf. "Palace of Labour."

*standing* (1937), gives an eye-witness account of education in one or two of these institutions.

In the Rostov Palace of Pioneers [he writes], I watched little boys studying models of ships, cranes and railway sidings such as were used on the Don river, at the port. They gave me a demonstration of the unloading of a ship. At Stalingrad, where tractors and other agricultural machines are made, the Palace contains models of internal-combustion machines in section. A lecturer explains the models and diagrams to a group of little boys and girls, who spend much of their time copying the models in crayon and mastering their intricacies perfectly.

Here, too, as in the ordinary course of Soviet education, much attention is paid to securing artistic efficiency.

#### *The Work of Other Institutions*

The State and the Party are assisted in their educational work by the efforts of a number of other institutions whose main objects are not primarily educational. Of these the most important are the Trade Unions, the Co-operative societies and above all the armed forces. All of them lent a hand in the liquidation of illiteracy.

The greatest service in this field was rendered by the Red Army, which for many years caused masses of illiterate recruits to undergo a course of elementary education. Since literacy became general among the younger generation, the young men in the armed forces are being provided with educational facilities of the widest scope. Even in time of war this work is unflinchingly carried on. "It is quite usual", reports the Soviet writer Y. Rykachev, "to meet a young Red Army man studying philosophy, history, some foreign language or psychology while the battle rages only a few miles ahead." Most of these front-line scholars are "corresponding" students of Soviet universities receiving special encouragement from the military command. Like the

universities and the higher schools, the armed forces are one of the most fruitful recruiting grounds for the Comsomol.

No less attention is given by the Trade Unions to the improvement of the educational standard of grown-ups. In the first place, it is the workers' club which serves this purpose. The number of such clubs amounted to 6,000 in 1940; during the previous year they had to their credit the arrangement of over 1 million lectures and literary evenings, with audiences totalling more than 300 million. By 1940 the Trade Unions were responsible for nearly 15,000 special libraries. One of their duties is the selection of members suitable for higher technical education. A considerable part of the men and women who have passed their finals in the Soviet technical schools have been sent there by their respective Trade Unions. Not long before war broke out, the Unions were ordered to select half a million younger members for supplementary education in special factory schools. Now, in connection with evacuation measures, it is often the Trade Unions which have to take over the supervision of the whole school system.

However, in one way or another, every kind of Soviet activity has its particular educational aspect. Even service in the various branches of State and local administration is regarded as an opportunity for special education. The driving force behind all these feverish activities, the Communist Party, looks upon itself, true to its pre-revolutionary traditions, as an educational institution of the highest rank. The Party, also, moulds the entire cultural life of the Soviet Union (research work, artistic production, press, cinema, radio, etc.) to its own educational purpose, the formation of the Soviet citizen as the nearest present approach to the Communist ideal of man.

In fact, it would not be far from the truth to say that Soviet Russia is one great totalitarian school of socialist thought and action ; and it is significant that its leader is addressed on the most solemn occasions as “ our Teacher ”, and is proud to be described as the most faithful of the disciples of Lenin.

#### IV. THE RESULTS

The results brought about by the gigantic Soviet effort on the education front must be considered in regard both to quantity and quality.

In quantity the educational achievements are of such a size that they beat easily every record registered so far in human history. Only twenty-five years ago, to begin with the most vital point, 67 per cent. or two-thirds of the population were illiterate ; according to the census of 1939, the percentage of illiterates has sunk to 22.6, just a third of the pre-revolutionary level. Taken at their face value, these figures may, however, be misleading. An analysis of the details will show that even in pre-Soviet Russia in some parts of the country, particularly the big cities, the average of literacy was much nearer the present level. Still more revealing are the figures in relation to the sexes. At the beginning of 1939, 88.2 per cent. of the males and 66.6 per cent. of the females were literate; the corresponding figures for 1917 were 50 per cent and 15 per cent. This means that, in point of literacy, the male half of the population had much less to gain than the female one, and that, on the other hand, the Soviet women have still far to go to catch up with the men, though the difference between the sexes has been considerably reduced. Soviet educationists are, none the less, fully entitled to claim that “ illiteracy in the U.S.S.R. has been almost completely eliminated ”. Within the limits of the age group between 10 to 25, the proportion



of illiterates is by now swiftly approaching zero. The residue of illiterates in this group belong almost exclusively to those backward nationalities which have only come into the range of civilisation under Soviet rule. But in the advanced parts of the Union, not to speak of cities like Moscow or Leningrad, it is now a very rare occasion to find among the conscripted youth anyone who is not quite familiar with the art of reading and writing. On the whole, the Soviet Union is about to attain the standard of universal literacy.

The following table may convey a general idea how things are developing.

LITERATES AMONG PERSONS AGED OVER 9			
		Urban Districts.	Rural Districts.
1926 . . .	.	76·3%	45·2%
1939 . . .	.	89·5%	76·8%

Like the males and females, the town and the country dweller are thus rapidly converging, which means that the peasantry is catching up on the townfolk. As in many other respects, the Revolution has here, too, been particularly beneficial to the peasants and to the women; most of all to the womenfolk of the countryside.

A few more figures may illustrate the rapid extension of the school network since the Revolution. In 1917 there were in Russia about 94,000 elementary schools with 8 million pupils; the numbers are now over four times as great. Owing to the lack of suitable buildings, many schools, even in Moscow, work two and three shifts. Within the five immediately pre-war years alone, more than 20,000 new schools were built, most of them in the villages. At the time of the last Imperial census (1897), Russia had 1·3 million men and women with secondary or higher education, i.e. about 1 per cent. of the whole population; by 1939 this number has increased to 14·2 million or to 8·41 per cent. of the population. In the

Ukraine the proportion was even higher (10·16 per cent.), and the peak was reached in Stalin's native land, Georgia (12·46 per cent.). These figures are among the highest ever reached by any community in the modern world. No less impressive are the figures relating to the high schools alone.

	High Schools.	Students.
1917 . . . .	91	124,000
1940 . . . .	700	600,000

This extraordinarily high standard is being upheld even in time of war. The number of places open to students during the term 1941-2 has increased by over 10 per cent. against that of the previous year.

All these figures are concurrently indicative of the fact that the U.S.S.R. has at its disposal the largest number of men and women equipped with modern knowledge, and particularly, in accordance with the general trend of Soviet education, with technical knowledge. But are they equipped to make the appropriate use of their equipment? How deep is the scientific and literary knowledge they have acquired rooted in their mind? Has the intensive training, in conformity with the Communist pattern, not affected the independence of their judgment, their ability to live up to the requirements of genuine human dignity? Are these newly-shaped Soviet citizens normally developed personalities or a kind of mass-produced automatons in human disguise?

Statistics can give no answer to these questions which are, however, of vital importance for assessment of the quality of Soviet education. In order to discover its results in terms of quality, we have to turn our eyes to Soviet life as a whole; we must, mentally, plant ourselves in its very heart, and try to understand the cultural activities which are in progress there; we must get an adequate idea of Soviet literature, art, music; of the

social climate which permeates, in the Soviet Union, the private life of every citizen.

This is a formidable task indeed. But there are other telling signs indicating, if only vaguely, the general direction in which Soviet humanity is travelling. The criticisms of Soviet education which are voiced time and again within the Union itself reveal not only its shortcomings from the official Communist point of view, but also the indestructibility of the Russian character which breaks through all the dams of educational planning. It is the Old Adam in the Russian, and in all the other human types of the Soviet Union, who revolts against the standardised type of a "cultured" Soviet citizen, into which he might have been pressed by sheer weight of political power. Owing to his powers of resistance, Marxist education in Soviet Russia is acquiring, with the progress of time, a specifically Russian tinge, and the result is a new blend of human character which is as much Russian as Marxist.

The present war, the acid test for Soviet education, proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that within the borders of the former Russian Empire, there has been brought up a new generation, in whom scientific knowledge, technical skill and efficiency, the results of the Communist educational effort, are organically combined with the perennial Russian characteristic, endurance, fortitude in reverse, and boundless love of the country. It is more than a symbol that the victors of Stalingrad are being decorated with orders named after the great warriors of the Imperial past, Suvorov and Kutuzov, and even after the military genius of the Orthodox church, Alexander Nevsky.

## CHAPTER VI

### CULTURE

*by* A. STEINBERG

**B**EFORE the Revolution “Kultura”, the Russian equivalent of the English “Culture”, meant to the mind of educated Russians first and foremost the quintessence of civilisation, its refinements and highest achievements in all spheres of creative spiritual life. As such, the word was quite foreign to common speech. At the present time, however, it is not only fully adopted by the Russian people in its entirety; not only did it find its way into all the non-Russian vernaculars of the Soviet Union, but it is appreciated in itself as a valuable acquisition of the masses. With its immense popularity, the word has also immensely gained in the scope of its meaning. “Kultura” still means all it had meant before, philosophical thought and scientific research, fine arts and a refined taste, chivalry and elegance; but it means also much more—conformity with the moral and intellectual standard of the average Soviet citizen, the required minimum of orderly behaviour and, of course, clean teeth and neat clothes. Significantly enough, all that is being done in the U.S.S.R. for the furthering of physical fitness goes under the heading “Phys-Kultura”. And the famous “Park of Culture and Rest” along the Moscow river is a living monument to this linguistic innovation. The realisation of the big change the word has undergone provides us with a fitting measure for the appreciation of the cultural revolution through which Russia’s population has passed in the last two and a half decades.

## I. THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Revolution has brought culture to the people and has raised the people in a very short period to an extraordinarily high cultural level. What is true of Soviet education is equally true of the Union's cultural life. It is entirely determined by the principle of equality of opportunity. Though the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. does not, as in the case of education or leisure, guarantee to the Soviet citizen a specific "right to culture", it emphasises that "the raising of the cultural level of the workers" is one of the main purposes which direct the whole planned economy of the country. (Art. 11). Whenever "culture" or "cultural life" are mentioned in the Constitution, they regularly occupy a place second only to that of "economy" and rank even higher than "defence" (Art. 68 [f]; Art. 131). This implies that every citizen of the Union is entitled to claim his part in the cultural life of the country in the same way as he is entitled to benefit from its prosperity and security. From this point of view the Soviet "right to education" is in itself, in the last resort, only a means to a cultural end, in so far as without education no one could possibly make a new contribution to the inherited culture nor even enjoy its fruits to the full.

In the articles of the Constitution just referred to, the Soviet State proclaims as its task to provide for the "development of economy, culture and defence". In regard to economic life it means first of all planned economy; the war has shown us what it meant in regard to defence. But what does it mean in regard to culture? Does the idea of planned culture make sense? Are the creative forces necessary for the development of culture able to be mobilised or regimented? Can the "cultural level" of a whole country be raised in a similar way as,

say, the water-mark of Soviet lakes and rivers? That is exactly what the builders of Soviet Russia actually maintain. And we shall see that in the cultural sphere they have been, within certain limits, no less successful than in that of economy or defence.

Cultural development was conceived in Soviet Russia, since its inception, in accordance with a scheme drawn up on strictly Marxist lines. This scheme dictated, firstly, a rigorous selection of cultural values worthy of further cultivation; secondly, the segregation of those inherited values which had to be either sterilised or even rooted out. Selection resulted in the full vindication of Scientific Truth in all its refractions and of artistic beauty with all its radiations, but, at the same time, in a wholesale rejection of religious faith. It was this negative side of Soviet cultural planning which brought the whole enterprise into disrepute with the Western world. For many years it overshadowed entirely the other, the bright side of the picture. German anti-Russian propaganda would not have had the audacity to present Germany's Fuehrer to the world as the champion of European culture, were it not for the uncompromising attitude of the Soviet Government towards religion. Only a few among the believers all over the world realised that the fight of the "godless" Russian Communists against religion was not due to the uprising of some old barbarity, but, on the contrary, an attempt made by the partisans of modern European enlightenment to draw the practical conclusions from their scientific philosophy. This is borne out by the fact that in dealing with the other aspects of cultural life, apart from the religious, the rulers of Soviet Russia have shown themselves as broadminded as was humanly possible.

Culture was to them the sum-total of all that Man has achieved in his struggle against Nature. It had, there-

fore, to be free of all limitations in space and time. It was conceived as a whole to which every people on earth and every epoch in history can make or has made its contribution. This cultural universalism is a quite logical extension of Marxist internationalism to human activities. Taking the broad view of the past and present alike, the Soviet Government created in the cultural sphere the theoretical basis for close collaboration of all the nationalities of the Union. There was no room left for cultural power-politics, say, of the Russians, on the one side ; nor, on the other side, for cultural grievances on the part of the weaker nationalities. Soviet culture is intended to be neither Russian nor Georgian, nor tinged by any other national shade, but an interplay of many consonant colours, a rainbow, as it were, forestalling the coming cultural integration of mankind. Nothing seems to cause more delight to the eyes of the Soviet reader than lines like these : " The works of Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Goethe, Gorki, Swift, Chekhov, Balsac, Dostoyevsky, Byron, Pushkin, Heine, Turgeniev, Maupassant and Sholokhov are now familiar friends of the remotest peoples of the U.S.S.R." (from an article by Y. Rykachev). All tongues and epochs are here deliberately intermingled, gathered together round one rallying-point, the Soviet Union itself.

It may or may not be a fact that Shakespeare, Swift and Byron are by now more at home in East-Siberian Yakutia than in their native land, and yet there is no doubt that this is, in general, what the Soviet cultural plan is aiming at. Within its framework a mass mobilisation of creative forces has been carried through ; the educational system has been put into its service, and all available technical means are being used for its implementation. On November 7th, 1942, the last anniversary of the Revolution, *Pravda* wrote :

The Soviet citizens emerged on the broad highway of cultural development. Before the young people opened up the wide vistas of art, science and literature. A new Soviet intelligentsia developed primarily from among the children of workers and peasants. They are the doctors, teachers, writers and artists. A new type of man has entered the history of mankind.

The balance-sheet of cultural planning during a period of twenty-five years is, in these few sentences, spread before us. It includes as its last asset even the highest prize of that planning, the "new type of man" or, in the phrase of S. and B. Webb, "Man Remade". Again we may be sceptical as to whether this ultimate goal of the planned cultural revolution has already been attained, or is, at best, only a justifiable anticipation. At any rate, it is worth while to survey the various items of this balance-sheet, not recoiling even before the difficult task of assessing the true value of the last one.

## II. PLANNED DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURE

According to Marxist philosophy, human progress is basically progress in the development of the productive forces which serve humanity. The steady improvement of the technical means of production inspired and driven forward by science is, therefore, from the Marxist point of view, the most vital part in the "cultural superstructure" of human life. This means that science is the natural focal point where economic and cultural planning must meet, as soon as both are taken in hand. And that is what actually happened, in the early 'twenties, in Soviet Russia.

Simultaneously with the drafting of the first schemes for a unified economy, consideration was given to the organisation and systematic development of scientific research throughout the country. The most urgent task was the preservation of the scientists themselves and the



winning of their sympathy for the socialist experiment. This was virtually achieved even in the years of the civil war. Then came the need for a rapid increase in the numbers of research workers, for providing them with the necessary equipment and for devising methods for their collaboration on an All-Union scale. These far more complicated problems were also one after another either solved or approaching solution when the German invasion came. However, the war has not merely wrought disruption on the scientific life of the country ; in many ways it is stimulating research and inviting the Soviet scientists to new inventions and discoveries, particularly to those which are useful to the Union's defence.

A few details, supplemented by figures, may help to make the Soviet idea of planned science clearer.

The co-ordination of all the research work which is going on in the U.S.S.R. is entrusted to the Academy of Sciences, the opposite number of the British Royal Society. Founded in 1725, the Russian Academy was thoroughly reformed after the Revolution. In 1917 only one research institute was attached to it ; in 1938 the figure was 58. In the same period the number of its Fellows rose from 45 to 130, and that of its Research Assistants from 109 to 3,420. In the early 'thirties, one Department of the old St. Petersburg Academy had been moved even as far as to Vladivostok on the shores of the Pacific. The grand total of the Union's research institutes exceeded 900 in 1939, and the number of men and women carrying on scientific work within their walls was in the neighbourhood of 30,000. The highly specialised research institutes are linked up with various People's Commissariats, for example, those of Heavy Industry, Public Health or Agriculture, and are being instructed by them, under the supervision of the All-Union's State

Planning Committee, to deal, singly, or collectively, with the problems which Soviet life is continuously presenting. In one particular case—the preservation of agricultural produce—14 institutes have been brought together for a combined study of the problem. It was no accident that the man who was responsible for the first great Soviet plan of economic development, G. Krizhanovsky, became, in 1929, Vice-President of the Academy of Sciences.

The record of Soviet Technology, Physics, Biology, Agricultural and Medical Science bears witness that the hope expressed by Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, that the U.S.S.R. might easily become “a nursery of genius”, is, to say the least of it, well founded. The equality of opportunity for higher education has resulted in a mass mobilisation of men and women blessed by nature with scientific abilities, so that the selection of the ablest from among the students of the Union’s high schools for special training in scientific research is very unlikely to miscarry. It was the obvious success of the Soviet mass experiment as well as their own war-time experience that, in the opinion of Professor J. D. Bernal, brought home to the scientists of Great Britain that “planning of science is not only necessary but is also quite compatible with individual initiative and enterprise”.

A special field of Soviet research is the well-organised exploration of the remote parts of the Union. Many valuable geographical discoveries have been made in the course of this exploration, many a territorial acquisition put for the first time on the map of the U.S.S.R. and, implicitly, on that of both hemispheres of our planet. Referring to the exciting successes of the Soviet flying explorers in the Arctic, a conservative London daily ventured, in 1937, the prophecy that for the future historian this “Conquest of an Empire” would perhaps

be the only memorable event of our time. The title of H. P. Smolka's book *40,000 against the Arctic* (1937) intimates in a compressed formula how much planning and efficient organisation lies behind the triumphs of Soviet geography. Closely connected with the geographical exploration is the work of surveying and prospecting which is steadily going on in the peacefully conquered areas. In one of them only, the Murmansk region, 425 expeditions were working in the years 1920-34 (as many as 333 of these expeditions had been sent after the initiation of the first Five-Year Plan). If the number of all the scientifically qualified men and women who take part in this kind of work and the total of the personnel of all the factory and Kolkhoz laboratories is added to that of the professional scientists, the sum will by far exceed 100,000.

Geographical exploration involves ethnographical research, and the survey of the natural resources of the Union leads almost automatically to archæological discoveries. In both these directions, in ethnographical width and in archæological depth, the Soviet scientists have attained a high record. Many backward Soviet nationalities would never have come to historical life as active co-partners of Soviet culture, were it not for the success of Soviet ethnography, in particular of its linguistic branch. As to archæology, which according to the new Russian terminology is the basic part of the "History of Material Culture", it may suffice to note one fact only. Since the Revolution the Russian list of palæolithic finds, so vital for the knowledge of prehistory, is ten times as long as before. The number of ethnographical museums and archæological collections has increased immensely. There is scarcely an autonomous region in the U.S.S.R., not to speak of the Autonomous Republics, without at least one corresponding "national "

museum. In a letter addressed last August to their British colleagues, Soviet archæologists pointed out that even the war could not prevent them from continuing their collectively undertaken "investigations on the ancient history of the peoples of the U.S.S.R."

Particular attention is given to historical research, in accordance with the traditions of the Russian intelligentsia, to the history of literature, not only of Russian literature or of other Soviet nationalities, but also to world literature as a whole. Alongside with new carefully prepared editions of Soviet Russia's classics (as for instance the edition of Tolstoy's works in 100 volumes) foreign classics (Shakespeare, Shelley and many, many others) have been and are being translated, even now, into Russian and a dozen other Soviet languages. The gigantic task which is being fulfilled by hundreds and hundreds of experts is, owing to the wider meaning associated in Russian with the word "Nauka" (Science), considered also as an integral part of scientific work. Actually it plays, within the framework of Soviet cultural planning, the part of a connecting link between Science and Art.

Difficult as the description of planned Soviet science may be, it is nothing in comparison with an attempt to present in a concise form the Soviet plans and what they have brought about in the fields of Literature, Theatrical art, Ballet, Music, Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. Each of these seven arts has to tell its own story of achievement and failure in Soviet Russia during the past twenty-five years. There is, however, one thing which unites them in a common progress. All of them have become tremendously popular with the broad masses of the Union's population; all have taken root in the most desolate expanses of the country; all are, though not with the same intensity, undergoing a process of rapid

growth. The scale of this growth at any rate does not fall short of that which is characteristic of Soviet industry, of the armed forces and, of course, of Soviet education. The innate artistic abilities of the Russians and of many other Soviet peoples was an inherited "capital" which lent itself much more easily to full mobilisation than, say, the coal or iron resources of the Union.

Still, it was a job which had to be done. Simultaneously with the "liquidation of illiteracy", a flood of literary products, old and new, in prose and in verse, was let loose upon all peoples of the U.S.S.R. Here are some illustrative figures.

Year.				Number of Books printed.
1913	.	.	.	86,000,000
1938	.	.	.	693,000,000
1939	.	.	.	701,000,000

Even the war, in its first year of heavy retreat, brought that last figure down only by one-half, to 350 million volumes. Since the Revolution, altogether 9,000 million copies of books and pamphlets have been issued. The annual output was, during this period, multiplied by eight. Soviet books are being printed in more than 100 languages. Tolstoy's and Chekhov's works have been published in sixty languages, Gorki's even in sixty-eight (with a total of nearly 40 million copies). In view of the tremendous increase in the number of libraries and in that of volumes in the old libraries, the effective circulation of books was in 1940 actually not eight- or ten-fold, but at least fifty times as much as in 1914. The 111,000 urban and rural clubs of the Union (before the Revolution their number was negligible), are doing their utmost in the services of literary education and of book distribution. The Government seizes every opportunity to put, for the sake of their popularity, the portraits of the Russian classics (Pushkin, Lermontov, Chekhov) on

the postage stamps. Even cities and towns are being renamed after them. Tsarskoye Selo, the Windsor of Imperial Russia, bears now the name of the king of the Russian poets, Pushkin, and a whole province, as well as its capital, has been re-named after Gorki.

Coming back from the glorious dead to the living Soviet authors, we have to ask what the Soviet system has given them apart from an almost unlimited number of readers. "It is rather difficult to answer that question," says Vsevolod Ivanov, the well-known novelist, "because for us the Soviet system is like life itself. We are immersed in it like a disciple in the ideas of his teachers." It is probably this immersion which both helps and hampers the creative work of the protagonists of all the fine arts in Soviet Russia. Their number is legion, though it has risen in a proportion much smaller than the number of those whom they address. If they are sufficiently gifted and more or less in line with "the ideas of their teachers", they "receive invariably", in the words of the famous Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich, "tremendous support and assistance from the State and its leaders". But submerged as they are and as they by necessity must be in the irresistible flood of the dynamic Soviet life, they lack that serenity, that rest of mind, and self-control which seem to be the prerequisite of genuinely great art destined to tower high above its own age of creation. The texture and structure of Soviet poetry and prose, to stick to that form of creative art which had opened the world to Russian culture, is on the whole of a very high quality. So far, however, there has not yet appeared among the Soviet "Engineers of the soul", as the Soviet men and women of letters are being described since their first All-Union Congress in 1934, anyone who has the classical touch in his or her work, no one whose position in the cultural life of the country could be com-

pared with the position of Pushkin under Tsar Nicholas I or even with that of Gorky when he was still a contemporary of Chekhov and Tolstoy.

No doubt that Shostakovich has, in his own words, "the largest audience of which any composer could dream". But has he ever been able to procure for himself, amidst the thunderstorms of his epoch, that undisturbed solitude which was so beneficial to his predecessors in the history of Russian music? And what is not so good for Soviet music, is perhaps worse still for the plastic arts in the Union. Dynamism and repose in one is a contradiction in terms. Trying to render the breath-taking speed of their surrounding life, Soviet artists are bound to sin against and derange their own æsthetic canons. Repeated attempts to find a new architectural style have not so far got beyond the stage of rough sketching.

The better were, from the start, the chances of artistic activities serving the day and bound to thrive in the air of publicity. The Soviet theatre, ballet and cinema are in full blossom. The latter, in particular, has broken new ground and acquired world fame, whilst the former still continue to profit from the traditions established before the Revolution. All of them have at their disposal, thanks to the gigantic scale on which the propagation of artistic activities has been deliberately undertaken, a practically limitless reserve of talent. So has music as far as performance is concerned. In many small Soviet cities concerts and recitals with programmes designated to satisfy the most refined taste are an everyday occurrence. In 1914 there were in Russia altogether 153 theatres and scarcely any cinemas; the respective figures at the end of 1938 were 790 and 30,000, not taking into account the 131 children's theatres and the amateur theatrical companies whose number goes into tens of thousands.

Owing to the evacuation of theatre companies and orchestras, since the German invasion, the artistic life behind the front, in the eastern part of the Union, has received a new mighty impulse. On the other hand, the war was bound to bring to a standstill the promising development of that specific Soviet art, mass pageantry. The Unions of Soviet Writers, of Artists, of Composers and Musicians and of Actors, all used to collaborate with the All-Union Committee of Arts in evolving new schemes for popular mass entertainment with the active participation of the entertained themselves.

Those who are inclined to put chess into the category of fine arts, will be interested to learn at this juncture that chess tournaments are in Soviet Russia an occasion for mass enjoyment and that there are in the Soviet Union not less than 1½ million registered chess players.

### III. THE SURVIVAL OF PRE-REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIAN CULTURE

Reference to the effect which the cultural traditions of pre-revolutionary Russia has had on the newly developed Soviet culture have already been made on previous pages. This older Russian culture, however, not only survives inside the Soviet Union as a recognisable thread interwoven into the tissue of the new cultural life, it still has a life of its own, embodied, first of all, in such an institution as the Russian Orthodox Church. A survey of Soviet culture, brief as it may be, is bound not to leave out of account these surviving elements of the past, if only for the purpose of finding out how the Soviet education and culture have succeeded in creating a really "new type of man".

One of the most influential factors in Soviet cultural life is the victory of the inherited Russian literary speech over its aggressive rivals of the first revolutionary years.



For obvious reasons this linguistic struggle and the defeat of the aggressors passed, notwithstanding their vital importance for the development of Soviet culture, almost unnoticed by the outside world. As some other arts, the champions of the new Soviet culture were, in the late 'teens and early 'twenties, trying hard to "revolutionise" the literature, and not only the literary form, but also the Russian usage and even the Russian word itself. The signal fate of the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, the driving force behind the Russian "Futurism", who had to capitulate before the necessities of Soviet cultural planning, stands out as a symbol of the Government's deliberate retreat on the "cultural front". The good old literary Russian has been rehabilitated and restored to its full rights in prose and in poetry, in the press and on the radio, in school and in the public meeting. Thus a strong bond has been established with the entire literary tradition of the past, a ring in a chain leading, link by link, to the very Slavonic origins of the Russian tongue. The distinctions between Eastern Slavonic languages, as, for example, between "Great" and "White" Russian, when confronted with their common roots, could not but lose their somewhat over-emphasised importance; and the close unity of all the Slavonic peoples of the Union, i.e. of three-quarters of its population, was thus reaffirmed anew. Not very different was the Soviet linguistic policy towards other Soviet peoples, and much the same was its effect on their cultural development.

The general line of Soviet cultural policy, to revise and to readjust the heritage taken over from the past rather than to suppress and to destroy it, was decisive even for the Government's utterly hostile attitude towards religion. The established Orthodox Church was separated from the State, even as the school, which in pre-

Revolution days, particularly in the rural districts, was a domain of priestly control, was separated from the Church. With all that, the guiding principle of Russia's intelligentsia, that of "freedom of conscience", far from having been disowned, was time and again reaffirmed in the most solemn form. It is now embodied in Article 124 of the Constitution. Yet not without qualification. The second half of this article reads: "Freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda is recognised for all citizens." The obvious implication is that the "believers" in the Soviet Union, be they Christians, Muslims or Jews, are denied the right, ensured to the atheists, agnostics, freethinkers and rationalists of all descriptions, to disseminate their faith and philosophy among their countrymen. The privileged position of the "godless" finds a noteworthy expression in yet another passage of the Constitution (Art. 129), in which the "right of asylum" of foreigners is extended to those "persecuted for their scientific activities". All Soviet commentators agree that the law provides hereby a refuge for all whose scientific convictions might bring them into collision with the anti-scientific, i.e. religious, philosophy predominant in their respective homelands. For, from the Marxist point of view, Science and Religion are incompatible. In so far as planned Soviet culture intended to be scientific in its very core, its promoters must regard every religious denomination as a school of thoughtlessness and prejudice. So do they regard every kind of philosophy, deviating from the Marxist dialectical materialism. Apart from the orthodox Marxism there is therefore no room left in Soviet Russia for Metaphysics, unless treated purely historically. Research into the history of human culture, however, comprises in the Soviet view the history of religious belief, and with all its opposition to philosophical idealism Soviet Russia has

to its credit a new, most carefully revised, Russian edition of Plato's works.

The position of religious communities is, under the circumstances, exceptionally difficult. The more remarkable their survival. According to Soviet statistics, there were in the Union, on the eve of the war, 4,225 Orthodox churches and 37 monasteries, 1,312 mosques and nearly 1,000 synagogues. The number of religious communities with a membership of twenty or more amounted to 30,000. Compared with the pre-Revolution epoch, when Moscow alone was a city of "forty times forty churches", the effect of the "freedom of anti-religious propaganda" seems devastating. But to the religious mind the undaunted few make all the difference, and this small religious minority of the Soviet population, hardened by the trials of the last two and a half decades, is at any rate far from despair. That is why in the years preceding the war and in the critical time the U.S.S.R. is now going through we hear so frequently of new friendly contacts between the State and the Church. The support of the believers is by no means irrelevant to the Government; on the contrary, the Government realises that in relation to a considerable part of the population, in particular in the villages, this minority occupies the position of an influential élite. The more sincere is, therefore, the official appreciation of any expression of loyalty on the part of the churches, such as is contained, for instance, in the messages of congratulations sent by the Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, or by the head of the Orthodox Reformist Churches, Alexander Vedensky, to Stalin as the C.-in-C. of the Red Army on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. And not less sincere, too, for the same reason, are the declarations of tolerance repeatedly made, since 1936, by the Government. There

is ample evidence that the day may not be far away when the religious outlook will be granted in the U.S.S.R. fairer conditions of competition with the official Marxist philosophy than at any time since the Revolution.

The scions of Soviet culture are often, in their moral and intellectual development, as good as the highest standards of older civilisations. The main point of difference is that they are atheists. If this negative criterion should be regarded as their distinctive mark, we may agree with the contention insistently proclaimed in Soviet Russia that a "new man" is set on foot. In his broadmindedness, in his longing for a quicker pace on the road of human progress, in his love of humanity not impeding in the least his enthusiastic self-abnegation in the service of his own country, he emerges as a most attractive cross-product of both the old Russian and the new Soviet culture. At the same time no specimen of the new type, contrary to the assumption sometimes made, has lost his own face, his unique individuality. If nothing else, the great number of heroic figures emerging on Russia's battlefields gives the lie to this malevolent assumption. Ilya Ehrenburg has every reason to emphasise :

Only a blind man could declare that the Russians are a mass, that individuals do not exist in Russia. If they march to death without fear, it is because they desire a life worth defending. One can love life with such fervour and passion as to sacrifice one's own life for its triumph.

The Soviet novelist and war correspondent repeats here almost word by word the description of the Russian character given by that ardent Christian, Dostoevsky.

But what makes the Russian Christian ideal of a human being almost identical with the "new type of man" longed for in Soviet Russia is, first and foremost, the universalism common to both. It is unmistakably this

universalist spirit which speaks out of the telegram sent from Kursk after the town's liberation to the Union of Soviet Writers in Moscow : " The Germans burnt down our libraries, and nearly all our Russian and world classics have been destroyed. Badly in need of works by Tolstoy, Pushkin, Lermontov, Shakespeare, and modern Soviet, English, American and French writers." " Moscow libraries ", another news item tell us, " are collecting English, French, German, Italian and Spanish books, to form the basis of a foreign library in Stalingrad."

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