

ТРУДЫ ИСТОРИКОВ СССР, ПОДГОТОВЛЕННЫЕ  
К X МЕЖДУНАРОДНОМУ КОНГРЕССУ ИСТОРИЧЕСКИХ  
НАУК В РИМЕ

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PAPERS OF SOVIET HISTORIANS FOR THE  
X INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF HISTORICAL SCIENCE  
IN ROME

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**ВЕЛИКАЯ ОКТЯБРЬСКАЯ  
СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКАЯ РЕВОЛЮЦИЯ  
И ЕЕ ЗНАЧЕНИЕ  
В ИСТОРИЧЕСКИХ СУДЬБАХ  
НАРОДОВ РОССИИ**

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**THE GREAT OCTOBER  
SOCIALIST REVOLUTION AND  
ITS SIGNIFICANCE  
FOR THE HISTORICAL DESTINY  
OF THE PEOPLES OF RUSSIA**

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ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО АКАДЕМИИ НАУК СССР

Москва — 1955

## THE GREAT OCTOBER SOCIALIST REVOLUTION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE HISTORICAL DESTINY OF THE PEOPLES OF RUSSIA

### I

Surveying the annals of nations the historian cannot pass by such events as social revolutions. An unprejudiced scholar cannot do so, for social revolutions are not sporadic phenomena in the life of society but law-governed acts of the natural historical process, true of all nations in various epochs. Social revolutions are not an exception but the rule in the development of world history, and perform the part of all-powerful "locomotives of history," ensuring the onward march of human society, its transition from lower to higher stages, as, for example, from feudalism to capitalism.

Turning to the history of contemporary bourgeois society with its vast, compared with the preceding epochs, development of the productive forces and tremendous achievements in spiritual culture we find at its cradle such social upheavals as the English revolution in the 17th century; the birth of the United States of America in the course of the Revolutionary War of Independence; the French Revolution at the close of the 18th century; the revolutionary storms in the middle of the 19th century in Germany, Italy, and other countries.

The English "glorious revolution" of the 17th century paved the way for Britain to become the "workshop of the world." By their great bourgeois revolution the French people opened the road to social progress not only to their country but awakened the whole European continent to a new life. This revolution had an immeasurable influence also on the progress of world civilisation. The people of the United States of America, having cast off the yoke of British rule and having vanquished in 1865 their slaveowners, set their country on the road of rapid capitalist development. The 1848 Revolution in Germany, though not victorious, had deeply ploughed up the social soil and predetermined the national unification of the numerous German feudal states into a centralised state. In Italy the revolution ushered in the national-liberation war and the reunification of the people into a single state.

But the chief result, broadly speaking, of the social revolutions of the 17-19th centuries is that their triumph brought about the downfall of the old obsolete feudal-serf system with its customs and social institutions, the system which became a great hindrance to social progress.

We historians are well aware of the severe struggle in which the new, capitalist system was then born. The great revolution of the past aroused bitter hatred of the historically doomed reactionary forces of the old medieval society. There was no lack of false prophets from among the gentry and the ruling church who foretold the inevitable destruction of the new, "godless," bourgeois system. There were no bounds to the slander and malignity upon the revolutions and the revolutionaries who struck at the foundations of the social, economic and



political system that had been in existence for ages. Let us recall, for example, Edmund Burke's lampoon (published in 1790) which in its time gained particularly wide renown. Sparing no words to distort the French revolution, and trying to sow among the people fear in and horror of the revolutionary transformations of society, the rabid champion of the old medieval order, Edmund Burke, wrote: "This was unnatural... They have found their punishment in their success. Laws overturned; tribunals subverted; industry without vigour; commerce expiring; the revenue unpaid, yet the people became impoverished; a church pillaged and a state not relieved; civil and military anarchy made the constitution of the kingdom; everything human and divine sacrificed to the idol of public credit, and national bankruptcy the consequence."<sup>1</sup>

As may be seen from the above quotation its author does not disdain to belie and depict as a national catastrophe the revolution which brought France great national regeneration.

Such examples could be cited ad infinitum. But, we believe, there is no need to. We have given this citation not in order to polemise with the shadows of the past. History has long ago and irrevocably decided this dispute. We only wanted to stress that at all times when, blinded by class hatred, people do not wish to reckon with the laws of social development and enter into an unequal controversy with history, they are doomed and inevitably suffer defeat.

<sup>1</sup> E. Burke, "Reflexions on the French Revolution," p. 187.

After the bourgeois revolutions and their results withstood the test of history, it is no longer possible to deny either their objective inevitability or their historical expediency. The development of society has conclusively proved that they were brought about not by the will of leaders or parties, though these unquestionably played an important part. Underlying the revolutions were deep economic and political causes stemming from the development of social production. Millions of people rise in revolution because the material conditions of society have matured, demanding the removal of the fetters that retarded social progress and condemned the broad masses of the people to great suffering.

Capitalism had rid mankind of the burdens and horrors of feudalism. But it brought no deliverance from oppression and exploitation of man by man. It replaced one form of exploitation by another and generated new antagonistic contradictions, containing both the conditions for a new social system and the causes for its inevitable downfall. Capitalism is as much an historically transient social formation as the slave system and feudalism were. In the course of its development it prepares the requisites for transition to a more progressive and higher stage of human society, socialism. And, when these requisites have matured, a new type of social revolution comes on the order of the day—a socialist revolution called upon to bring mankind complete deliverance from social and national oppression.

And just as at the cradle of the bourgeois society stood social revolutions of the past centuries, which ushered in the epoch of the establishment and domination of capitalism, so at the inception of the new, socialist,



society, established in the USSR and the People's Democracies, stood new social revolutions, and foremost among them the world's first triumphant socialist revolution, the Great October Socialist Revolution, which ushered in a new historical epoch in the development of human society.

In this brief report it is not possible to examine the anatomy of capitalist society, its laws, and the mechanism of their operation in order to demonstrate concretely the logic of social development which inexorably leads to new social revolutions and replacement of capitalism by socialism. Our task in illuminating this fundamental problem of human progress is made easier by the fact that such great thinker-revolutionaries as Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin and their followers have in their scientific works exhaustively answered all its basic questions.<sup>1</sup>

It is natural that Marxism from its very inception has had many opponents. The dispute between the historians and sociologists of various trends regarding the correctness of the conclusions of Marxism has continued for over a century. And the disputants have still not reached a common conclusion. The dispute can be prolonged endlessly if we abstract ourselves from the facts, from history, from life. But, as we know, facts are stubborn things, history is the best judge, and life the best teacher. And the facts fully confirm the scientific correctness of Marxism. And now, when one-third of mankind, 900,000,000 people, have through social revolutions liberated themselves from capitalism and scored

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, "Capital," Vols. 1-3.

V. I. Lenin, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism." Works, Vol. 22.

decisive successes in building their new life, one cannot controvert the correctness of Marxism and still keep to the real facts.

Relying on Marxian sociology we regard our task to be that of examining the concrete conditions of the rise and victorious development of the Great October Socialist Revolution and to the best of our ability answer the question why precisely Russia became the home of history's first Socialist revolution, and the significance of this revolution for the destiny of the peoples of Russia.

## II

Russia is a great world power. It ranks first among the countries of the world for the size of its territory, and third for its population. The Russian people have made invaluable contributions to the treasure-store of world civilisation. More than once they saved Europe from the invasion of diverse conquerors and claimants to world domination. Universally recognised is the outstanding role in the development of world culture of Russia's great sons: Lomonosov and Pushkin, Tolstoy and Gorky, Mendeleyev and Pavlov, Glinka and Chaikovsky, Sukhov and Repin, Chernyshevsky and Plekhanov. Russia has brought to the fore such a titanic mind as Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and the continuer of his cause Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin.

However, owing to a number of causes, Russia embarked on the road of capitalist development later than some other countries of Europe and America. This resulted in that in modern times she found herself among the technically, economically and culturally backward countries. As time went on she lagged more and more



behind the leading capitalist states, and by the beginning of the 20th century this lag assumed the character of a direct threat to her national sovereignty.

The fundamental cause of this increasing lag is that Russia effected her transition from serfdom to capitalism not by a bourgeois revolution but by the Reform of 1861. The thorough break-up of feudal relations that took place in France and in a number of other countries did not take place in Russia. As a result, capitalism in Russia developed under conditions of surviving vestiges of serfdom in the country's economic and political system. This found expression in the economic sphere, in the preservation of vast landlord latifundia, semi-feudal estates, on the one hand, and peasant allotments, likewise semi-feudal in origin and character, on the other; and in the political sphere, in the retention of power by the absolutist tsarist monarchy.

Owing to this, the determining contradiction in Russia became for many years the agrarian, and, more precisely, the peasant question, the essence of which consisted in the fact that 30,000 landlords owned 70,000,000 desiatins of land while more than 10,000,000 peasant households owned 75,000,000 desiatins. Whereas each landlord possessed an average of about 2,500 desiatins, the average peasant holding was 7 desiatins per family, and many had only 1 to 2 desiatins.

Land-starved and crushed by want the peasants were compelled to rent land from the landlords on semi-feudal shackling terms, known as the *otrabotochni* system which amounted to this: the peasant cultivated the landlord's land with his own implements, partly for pay

in money and partly in kind (use of land, use of pastures, loans granted in the winter, etc). Thus the latifundia were the chief hindrance to the advancement of agriculture, because by their vast size they, paradoxically as it may seem at first, conserved small strip farming not only on the peasant land but on the landed estates, as the latter were worked by poverty-stricken peasants with their primitive implements and poor draft animals. In its turn the allotment character of the peasant land, too, retarded the development of the rural productive forces, held back the process of differentiation of the peasant population into a class of capitalist farmers and a class of hired farm labourers, hampering the process of capitalist mobilisation of the land. At the same time commodity-money relations grew in the countryside which increasingly brought the peasant under the sway of the market and made him the object also of capitalist exploitation.

All this taken together conditioned a sweeping and extremely painful process of ruination and impoverishment of vast masses of the peasantry. This is evidence by such a decisive fact as the colossal growth of the number of households possessing one or no horses. Thus, whereas in 1905 such households comprised 58.8 per cent, in 1917 their number rose to 76.3 per cent.<sup>1</sup> From the close of the 19th century Russia entered a period of chronic agrarian crisis, which assumed greater proportions every year. A striking expression of this were systematic crop failures and famine.

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<sup>1</sup> "Economic Differentiation of the Peasantry in 1917-1919." Collection of data by the Central Statistical Administration, Moscow, 1922, table on p. 20.



This state of agriculture most disastrously affected the development of industry, condemning it to slow development and technical backwardness. As we know, the chief requisite for industrial progress is a wide and ever-expanding home market. But in Russia, with its extremely low level of the productive forces in agriculture and the enormous poverty of the bulk of the peasantry, which comprised four-fifths of the country's population, greatly narrowed this market and caused its very slow and uneven growth. A peasant household bought on the average one pood of iron a year. It is clear that under such conditions there could be no question of any more or less really extensive development of the metallurgical, metal working, fuel and other branches of the heavy industry, which constitutes the foundation of a country's economic might. Those few branches of heavy industry that had been created in the pre-Reform period were orientated not so much on the peasantry, which constituted the bulk of the country's population, as on government purchases, the railways, the small urban population, and, partially, exports (petroleum and petroleum products). A number of important light industries, such as the textile manufacturing and sugar refining, likewise could not expand on the home market and largely depended on exports to the Eastern and European markets. Hence, the country's lack of domestic capital, indifference of the bourgeoisie to launching new branches of industry, unwillingness and inability of the ruling circles to lead the country on the road of industrialisation on a scale that could ensure her rapid economic progress.

Even such a favourable, it would seem, factor for the development of industry as exceptionally cheap la-

bour (created by the tremendous overpopulation of the countryside due to the peasants' lack of land and great want) in Russia only contributed to stagnation of technology. Employers preferred to expand production by hand labour and not by introducing modern technical facilities.

Such were the conditions under which Russia plodded on the road of capitalist development.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, following the chief capitalist countries, Russia too entered the imperialist stage. Monopoly capitalism, or imperialism, is the highest and last stage of capitalism, the economic essence of which is the substitution of free competition by capitalist monopolies. Characteristic of imperialism is the extreme aggravation of all socio-economic and political contradictions.

Though she was not a classical country of imperialism, industry in Russia was highly concentrated in the big monopolies like the Prodamet (iron and steel trust), Produgol (coal trust), to name some of the predominating. But monopoly capitalism in Russia was interwoven with strong survivals of serfdom in the country's economic and political system, which made the struggle of the social forces here particularly intense.

As it is already widely recognised now, monopolies are in their early stages conducive to the development of the productive forces, yet at the same time they lead to stagnation in industry and technology, decay and parasitism, devastating economic crises, chronic underproduction and unemployment, world wars. In Russia, monopolies played a still more negative role than in other countries. A specific feature of the Russian monopolies was the extreme narrowness of the home mar-



ket. That is why the capitalists, seeking super-profits, directed all their efforts to securing high monopoly prices for their goods. And this, far from facilitating the expansion of production, let alone its modernisation, often made for its curtailment, and even in such vitally important lines as coal and petroleum. If we add to this the fact that decisive branches of industry in Russia belonged to foreign capital, which pursued a policy of downright plundering the country's natural resources and labour power, and sent abroad the super-profits it thus obtained, the deleterious part played by the monopolies in the development of Russia's economy becomes still more patently manifest.

Russia's economic development in the period of imperialism is characterised by the following figures: from 1900 to 1913 industrial output increased by 62.2 per cent, farm production—33.8 per cent. In 1913 the share of farm production in the country's total output was 51.4 per cent, and industrial output only 28 per cent; the remaining 20.6 per cent covered the building industry, transport services, trade, communications. The per capita income in 1913 was 102.2 rubles, or some 66 per cent less than in Germany, 72 per cent less than in France, 78 per cent less than in Great Britain, and 86 per cent less than in the USA.<sup>1</sup>

Flagrantly anti-popular and anti-national, tsarism's economic policy was disastrous to the country. It proceeded entirely from the interests of the feudal landlords, the upper strata of the bourgeoisie and foreign capital. The state budget was based on overtaxing the working

<sup>1</sup> This is treated in greater detail in "History of the National Economy of the USSR," by P. I. Lyashchenko. Moscow, 1939.

population. Its greater part was spent on the army, the navy, the police, the officialdom, the church, on premiums and subsidies to the landlords and capitalists. Endeavouring by grain exports to secure an active trade balance in order to maintain stability of the currency, tsarism pursued such a tax policy toward the peasants which compelled them to sell their grain to merchants and speculators at ruinous prices. The bulk of the budgetary revenue came from indirect taxation of prime necessities—the worst kind of taxation of the poor. From about a fourth to a third of the revenue was derived from the liquor monopoly.

Notwithstanding the agrarian character of the country the budget of tsarist Russia to all intents and purposes provided nothing for agriculture. Appropriations for public education comprised somewhat over 30 kopeks per capita. As a result of such "concern" of the tsarist government for the people's education three-quarters of the population were illiterate, and in the non-Russian districts the illiteracy rate reached 98-99 per cent.

An inevitable result of tsarism's reactionary policy was the continual impoverishment and ruin of the country and the people, a systematic deficit of the state budget, stagnation of industry, and chronic crisis in agriculture. In the last analysis the whole financial wisdom of the tsarist government in the several decades preceding the October Revolution boiled down to intensification of the tax burden inside the country and maximum attraction of foreign capital. This inevitably led to still greater economic and, consequently, also political, dependence of Russia upon the chief imperialist powers.

Indicative of the growth of Russia's national, including foreign, debt are the following few figures: before



1861 the tsarist government owed 1,264,300,000 rubles; on the eve of the Russo-Japanese war this figure had risen to 6,679,000,000 rubles; in 1906 the tsar received a billion-ruble loan to "crush" the Revolution; by January 1914, the national debt went up to 8,825,000,000 rubles, with the foreign debt comprising 48 per cent. Interest on foreign state loans alone reached 250,000,000 rubles a year. With the loans contracted by the Nobles' Land Bank, the Peasant Bank and by the cities, guaranteed by the government, the prewar debt amounted to 13,241,500,000 rubles, the annual payments abroad exceeded 300,000,000 rubles in interest and with debt repayments reached nearly 400,000,000 rubles.<sup>1</sup>

Another powerful medium of foreign economic fettering of the country was the seizure of the basic branches of the heavy industry by foreign capital. Striving to safeguard the interests of the home bourgeoisie, tsarism by high protective tariffs barred foreign goods from the Russian market. But it created the most favourable conditions for the mass influx of foreign investments (not to mention that foreign capital enjoyed exceptionally favourable laws governing stock companies, concessions, etc.). Surmounting in this manner the tariff barriers, foreign capital monopolised the Russian market and had the benefit of cheap labour. In a short time (from the end of the 19th century) foreign capital gained control over vast natural resources and key positions in industry, drawing enormous profits from them.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. Sidorov, "The Significance of the Great October Socialist Revolution for the Economic Destiny of Our Country," in "Istoricheskiye Zapiski" (Historical Record), 1948, Vol. 25, pp. 9-10.

On the eve of the first world war foreign capital comprised about a third of the capital of industrial joint-stock companies (1,343,500,000 rubles out of 4,000,000,000). Its share in the electrical industry was by that time 75 per cent; in the chemical industry more than 40 per cent; in iron and steel 72 per cent; in banking more than 40 per cent. A decisive role was played by British and French capital. Following them American monopoly capital was fast penetrating Russia's economy.

Far from being instrumental in overcoming Russia's technical backwardness and promoting her economic independence, foreign loans and investments only intensified her ruin and dependence upon the Western imperialist states. In the twenty-five years from 1888 to 1913, foreign industrial firms made, according to most conservative estimates, 2,326,100,000 rubles net profit, which not only covered their investments in full, but topped them by 543,100,000 rubles.<sup>1</sup> Russia's payments abroad, for approximately the same period (1881-1913), in interest on loans and dividends, totalled 7,900,000,000 rubles, or almost double the fixed funds of the large-scale industry belonging to joint-stock companies, and exceeded all investments in Russian railroads.

As a result of her technical and economic backwardness Russia had to import nearly all the equipment for her factories and mills. Tsarism's foreign credit commitments brought in their wake the conversion of tsarism into an unequal partner of British, French and American imperialism. The Russian army became a reserve

<sup>1</sup> L. Y. Eventov, "Foreign Capital in Russian Industry," M.-L., 1931, p. 38.



for the Entente armies. In addition to all that, by the beginning of the war it found itself short of rifles, guns and shells.

Tsarism and the Russian bourgeoisie led the country to inevitable national catastrophe. In the cause of her national deliverance, history, by the inexorable logic of objective development, impelled Russia to such a revolution which was to abolish first tsarism and then capitalism. At the beginning of the 20th century the prerequisites for a great people's revolution had matured in Russia. In the course of social development evolved the real forces capable of accomplishing it: the revolutionary working class and its natural ally, the labouring peasantry. In Russia developed the world's most revolutionary working class which created a new-type party, the Communist Party, the vanguard in the struggle for the liberation of the working people from social and national oppression. The first people's revolution in Russia (1905-1907) was not victorious, but it played a tremendous part in the country's progress, and was a prologue to the Revolution of 1917.<sup>1</sup>

The first world war, which was an inevitable result of the development of the economic and political forces in the epoch of the rule of monopoly capital, gave a powerful impetus to those socio-economic and political processes which, with the relentless logic of the objective development of society, placed social revolution on the order of the day, as the only means of saving mankind from sanguinary destructive wars, from social and national oppression.

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<sup>1</sup> This is treated in greater detail in "The People's Revolution of 1905-1907 in Russia," by A. M. Pankratova.

The war was a severe test for tsarism, it had revealed its ulcers and vices, and conclusively demonstrated that the further existence of tsarism as well as the bourgeois order was disastrous to the country.

Russia entered the war as an unequal partner of the Entente, chiefly as a supplier of cannon fodder to them. She sent her troops to France and Greece for the salvation of the allies' armies from destruction. The allies, however, did not even in the least carry out their obligations to Russia. Their arms supplies were inadequate and came late. Russia's national debt during the war swelled to monstrous dimensions, reaching 60,000,000,000 rubles toward the end of 1917. In interest alone on this debt she paid 3,200,000,000 rubles a year, or more than her total prewar annual budget. Her foreign debt during the war increased by 8,400,000,000 rubles. She owed Great Britain 7,500,000,000 rubles, and France 5,500,000,000 rubles. Russia's payments on foreign loans reached 1,200,000,000 rubles a year, or three times that of prewar, and comprised 40 per cent of her entire prewar budget.<sup>1</sup> The war brought vast destruction to Russia's productive forces. Industry, the transport services, agriculture began to disintegrate and a formidable famine started.

The world war caused a grave social crisis. Russia's working class was the first in the world to successfully utilize the enfeeblement of the imperialist system due to the war: in alliance with the peasantry it accomplished the February Revolution and overthrew the tsarist autocracy. But state power was captured by the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie took the line of continuing the impe-

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<sup>1</sup> A. L. Sidorov, "The Significance of the Great October Socialist Revolution for the Economic Destiny of Our Country," in "Istoricheskiye Zapiski," 1948, Vol. 25, pp. 12-13.



rialist war and did not solve a single of the fundamental problems placed on the order of the day by the whole course of Russia's economic and political development. The bourgeoisie did not give the people peace, bread or freedom. It continued the policy of tsarism which the people had overthrown.

As the war went on the hardships became more and more unbearable to the people. About 50 per cent of the entire adult and able-bodied male population were mobilised. In 1917 Russia still had an army of more than 10,000,000 men. The country's productive forces were continually deteriorating. Industry was on the decline, mass unemployment increased, the countryside became more and more impoverished and hunger grew. By the end of the war Russia had lost 60 per cent of the national wealth she had possessed in 1913, while Britain lost only 15 per cent and France 31 per cent.<sup>1</sup> As for the United States, being far removed from the theatre of war, it grew tremendously rich from huge war profits.

The Provisional Government did not, nor could it, bring the long-awaited regeneration to Russia. It led the country on the road of war, chaos and starvation, to an inevitable national catastrophe.

### III

The deep socio-economic contradictions, the war and the looming catastrophe in Russia caused a national crisis.

The whole course of economic and political development brought the peoples of Russia to the socialist revolution as the only way out of the situation that had developed. Characterising the situation at that time

<sup>1</sup> "The History of the Civil War in the USSR," Vol. 1, 2nd Russ. Ed., p. 26.

V. I. Lenin wrote: "The war has created such an immense crisis, has so strained the material and moral forces of the people, has dealt such blows at the modern social organisation, that humanity finds itself faced by an alternative: either it perishes, or it entrusts its fate to the most revolutionary class for the swiftest and most radical transition to a superior method of production."<sup>1</sup>

Seeing that the ruling classes and their cat's paw, the government coalition parties—the Constitutional Democrats, the Mensheviks, and the Socialist Revolutionaries—were pursuing an anti-popular and anti-national policy, the working class, which had gone through the great school of class struggle and had already carried out two revolutions, rose in 1917 under the leadership of the Communist Party in the struggle for the victory of the socialist revolution. Besides the workers and peasants, many millions of other toilers languished under the yoke of the landlords and bourgeoisie. Under the heavy heel of the money bags suffered also the small city folk. The subjugated peoples were plundered and oppressed both by the Russian and their native landlords and bourgeoisie.

The proletariat naturally represented all the working people of Russia. Precisely in Russia, for the first time in history, matured the social force, in the shape of the alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry, which

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, Selected Works, Two-Volume Eng. Ed. Vol. 2, p. 117, Moscow, 1947.

A detailed characterisation of the rise and development of the socialist revolution in Russia is given in V. I. Lenin's works, Vols. 24-27, in the works of J. V. Stalin, Vols. 3-4 etc., and in the works of Soviet historians, particularly in the "History of the Civil War in the USSR", Vols. 1-2.



crushed the resistance of the exploiters and secured the triumph of the revolution.

And the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies became the organisational form of the alliance of the workers and peasants, the organ of this alliance.

The Soviets were not invented by any political party. Nor were they devised by the Party of the Communists. The Soviets came into being by the creative work of the masses: they sprang up in the thick of the Russian proletariat.

Having united the working people of Russia in their struggle for the triumph of genuine freedom and brotherhood of nations, the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies became the foundation for the new, Soviet, statehood which was established as a result of the victory of the October Socialist Revolution.

On October 25 (old style, November 7 new style), 1917, the workers, soldiers and sailors of the capital openly came out against the Provisional Government and deposed it. The manifesto "To the Citizens of Russia" issued on the morning of October 25, said: "The Provisional Government has been deposed. The power of the state has passed into the hands of the Revolutionary Military Committee, organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies, which stands at the head of the Petrograd proletariat and garrison.

"The cause for which the people have fought—the immediate proposal of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control of production, and the creation of a Soviet Government—is assured.

"Long live the revolution of the workers, soldiers and peasants."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin. Works, Vol. 26, 4th Russ. Ed., p. 207.

The workers and peasants in the rear, the soldiers and sailors at the front supported with great enthusiasm the initiative of the revolutionary workers and soldiers of the capital.

On October 25, 1917, the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets opened in the capital of Russia, Petrograd, and was attended by workers and peasants, soldiers and sailors from the Soviets of Petrograd and Moscow, the Urals and Donbas, the Volga area and Siberia, the Ukraine and Byelorussia, the Baltic countries and Central Asia, Bessarabia and the Transcaucasus, that is, people's representatives from the entire country. The congress proclaimed the passing of state power in Russia to the Soviets of the Workers' Soldiers and Peasants' Deputies, set up the workers' and peasants' Soviet government headed by V. I. Lenin, and adopted the historic decrees which embodied the most cherished aspirations of the people.<sup>1</sup>

The Great October Socialist Revolution overthrew the power of the bourgeoisie and landlords. For the first time in mankind's long history, the administration of the state passed into the hands of the working folk; a genuinely people's worker-and-peasant government was set up whose supreme law was and is its concern for the welfare of the people.

With the formation of the Soviet government a decisive step was made along the road to building the new type of state which was the principal instrument of the victorious people in their struggle for the construction of communism. The truly popular character of the Soviet social and state system that was born of the Great

<sup>1</sup> "The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies," published by the Central Archives, M.-L., Gosizdat, 1928.



October Socialist Revolution found expression in the very first legislative acts and measures of the Soviet government.

Expressing the fundamental interests and the desires of the people, the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets on October 26 adopted the historic Decree on Peace—a fact showing that from its very inception the Soviet government raised aloft the banner of struggle against war and for world peace. In the Decree on Peace the Soviet government proposed to all belligerent nations immediately to begin negotiations for the conclusion of a peace on democratic principles and just terms.<sup>1</sup> The peaceful policy of the Soviet government was then stubbornly resisted by its foreign and domestic enemies. Overcoming tremendous difficulties in its struggle for terminating the war, the Soviet government in March 1918 concluded the Brest Peace with Germany and her allies.<sup>2</sup> At all subsequent stages of the development of international relations the Soviet government proved its inflexible will to peace, its constant readiness peacefully to co-operate with all countries, big and small, on the basis of mutual trust, mutual advantage, and respect of the sovereign rights of nations. The peaceful policy of the Soviet government expresses not only the interests of the Soviet people but of the working people of all countries, to whom peace is a vital necessity.

We have already spoken above on the significance of the agrarian problem in Russia. The October Socialist

<sup>1</sup> "Decrees of the October Revolution," Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin Institute, Moscow, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> "The Foreign Policy of the USSR," Collection of Documents, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1944; and "History of Diplomacy," Vol. 2, State Publishers of Political Literature, Moscow, 1945.

Revolution, consistently guided by the interests of the multi-million labouring peasantry, successfully solved this supremely complex and vitally important social problem. The Decree on Land, adopted right after the Decree on Peace by the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, heralded the great agrarian transformations in the Soviet countryside.<sup>1</sup>

By this decree landed proprietorship, which comprised the basis of the feudal survivals in Russia, was abolished without any compensation, and the land passed free into the hands of the labouring peasantry. As a result of the October Revolution the peasants received more than 150,000,000 desiattins of landlord, tsarist, monasterial and other land, and 300,000,000 rubles' worth of implements; were relieved from paying 700,000,000 gold rubles per annum in rent, and huge sums in compensation for the land they received; their debt of 1,300 million rubles to the Peasant Bank was annulled. The peasants called the Decree on Land, the "Sacred" Decree. The transfer of the land to the peasantry consummated the people's age-old struggle for land. The October Revolution had thoroughly swept out all the feudal and serf survivals of the country, emancipated the multi-million peasantry from the yoke of the landlords and capitalists, and opened to the toiling people the road to a free and prosperous life.

Following the decrees on peace and land, the Soviet government by legislative acts instituted the 8-hour day, social insurance, workers' control over production

<sup>1</sup> "Decrees of the October Revolution," Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin Institute, Moscow, 1933; and "The Agrarian Policy of the Soviet Government—1917-1918," Collection of documents published by the USSR Academy of Sciences, 1954.



and distribution, and started the gradual transition to nationalisation of industry.<sup>1</sup> In nationalising industry the Soviet government proceeded from the fact that capitalism had greatly concentrated the means of production in industry and thereby created the necessary conditions for their passing from private ownership to that of society. Abolition of private ownership of the instruments and means of production was dictated by the requirements of the objective laws of social development and first of all by the necessity of conforming the relations of production to the level and character of the productive forces. For this it was necessary to abolish private ownership and establish public ownership of the instruments and means of production first of all in industry, where the necessary requisites had matured. This created wide scope for the development of the productive forces and paved the way to social progress.

Proceeding from society's urgent requirements and guided by concern for the welfare of the people, the Soviet government in the course of several months effected the nationalisation of the banks, large-scale industry and the railways, established monopoly of foreign trade, etc.<sup>2</sup>

To extricate the country from her shackling financial yoke, the foreign loans contracted by the tsar and the Provisional Government were annulled. The Soviet Government broke the chains of our country's economic and political dependence upon the Western imperialist powers and thereby saved her from national catastrophe,

<sup>1</sup> "Collection of Decrees and Decisions on the National Economy," Moscow, 1918; and "Nationalisation of Industry in the USSR," Collection of Documents, Moscow, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

emancipated her from the status of a semi-colony paying tribute to foreign capital, and set her on the wide road of socialist transformations.

Soviet power thoroughly rooted out the feudal survivals, the caste system and inequality in all spheres of social life. In substantiation of this, decrees were issued on the abolition of the estates and restrictions based on nationality or religion, on the separation of the church from the state and the school from the church, on the freedom of conscience, on the equality of women, on the equality of all nations, nationalities and national groups of Russia.<sup>1</sup>

The national question is one of the most complex in the history of states. And in Russia this problem was particularly complex and acute. It will be recalled that at the time of the October Socialist Revolution there were in Russia more than 60 nations, national groups and small peoples, the non-Russians comprising 65,000,000 out of a total population of 140,000,000. And the non-Russian nationalities were ruthlessly exploited both by "their own" and "alien" oppressors.

The Soviet Government successfully solved this problem as well. On November 25, it published the historic "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia" which gave legislative embodiment to the national policy of the Soviet Government. The Declaration proclaimed the equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia; the right of the peoples of Russia to free self-deter-

<sup>1</sup> Enactments and Orders of the Workers' and Peasants' Government, No. 1; No. 2, Article 18; No. 3, Article 34, 1917; and the First Soviet Constitution (The Constitution of the RSFSR, 1918), Moscow, 1938.



mination, including the right to secede and form independent states; abolition of all and sundry national and national-religious privileges and restrictions; the free development of the national minorities and ethnographical groups inhabiting the territory of Russia.<sup>1</sup> Following this declaration the Soviet Government, on December 4, issued a manifesto to the Ukrainian people in which it recognised the Ukraine's right to independence; and on December 18, recognised Finland's independence.<sup>2</sup>

The October Revolution commenced and triumphed under the banner of emancipating the peoples, under the banner of creating and consolidating a voluntary fraternal community of nations. It set up a new type of a multinational state, ensured real independence and the free development of all peoples who voluntarily united in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—the USSR.<sup>3</sup>

Of tremendous importance to the Soviet people was the cultural development, which assumed sweeping proportions from the very first days of Soviet rule. Parallel with the fundamental revolutionary political and economic transformations, the Soviet Government pursued thorough-going cultural transformations. The development of culture, national in form and socialist in content, constituted a major aspect of the socialist transformations in the USSR.

Soviet rule made accessible to the people the schools, universities, libraries, theatres, clubs and museums. It launched extensive work of abolishing illiteracy among

<sup>1</sup> Enactments and Orders of the Workers' and Peasants' Government, No. 2, Article 18, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., No. 6, Article 90, and No. 11, Article 113, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> "Formation of the USSR, 1917-1924, "Collection of Documents, Moscow, 1949.

the adult population. The press, radio, literature and art were placed at the service of educating the working people.

Reduced by tsarism, landlords and the bourgeoisie to poverty, deprived of the possibility to enjoy the most elementary benefits of culture, the peoples of Russia, under Soviet rule, acquired access to all the achievements of modern culture. The founder and head of the Soviet state, V. I. Lenin, soon after the Revolution, said: "All the miracles of technology, all the achievements of culture will now become the possession of the whole of the people, and henceforth the human intellect and genius will never again be turned into instruments of violence, into means of exploitation."<sup>1</sup>

The Soviet Government effected genuine democratisation of public education. This was tremendously facilitated by the "Statute of the Uniform Labour School," adopted on October 16, 1918. The working people of the Land of Soviets not only studied but took an active part in building the new Soviet school system and developing socialist culture.

In August 1918, the government issued a decree on admittance to higher educational institutions, ordering the Department of Public Education to take all measures to ensure to all who wished — first and foremost to workers and peasants — the chance to study. The Soviet Government not only proclaimed the right to education, it did everything to enable the people to exercise it. Preparatory schools, known as Workers' Faculties, were opened for workers and peasants not having a secondary education, to prepare for college.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin. Works, Vol. 26, 4th Russ. Ed., p. 436.

<sup>2</sup> Enactments and Orders of the Workers' and Peasants' Government. No. 45, p. 443, 1919.



The enemies of the revolution shouted that all historical and cultural monuments would perish in the fire of the revolution, that the people were capable only of destroying, not of creating culture. However, while the Soviet Government was striving to preserve the cultural heritage of the past and make it the possession of the whole of the people, members of the exploiting classes immediately after the Revolution tried to remove abroad as many cultural values as possible. They did everything to prevent the people from possessing the national treasures of culture.

The people, now in power, proved to be a wise and solicitous master. Even during the uprising the workers and peasants took measures to safeguard historical monuments and art objects. It is thanks to this vigilance and consciousness of the working people that such remarkable monuments as the Winter Palace, the Kremlin Cathedrals, the suburban Leningrad palaces, suburban Moscow estates, were preserved. Not only in the big centres, but everywhere, in the remotest parts of the country, the working people safeguarded the monuments of culture. Despite the Republic's extremely difficult material condition, the Soviet Government already in 1917 allocated the necessary funds for the maintenance of the palaces which had now become the possession of the whole of the people. A special Collegium for the Affairs of Museums and Safeguarding Historical Monuments and Art Objects was instituted under the Ministry of Education, and eminent scientists and cultural workers participated in its activities.

Indicative of the Soviet Government's great concern for cultural values are such decrees as: "On Safeguarding Antiquarian and Art Objects Belonging to the Polish

People," "On Safeguarding Scientific Values (museums, art collections, scientific laboratories, instruments, etc.)," "On Safeguarding Libraries and Book Repositories," "On the Registration and Preservation of Antiquarian and Art Monuments Belonging to Private Persons, Societies and Institutions."<sup>1</sup> To halt the removal abroad of articles of particular artistic and historical value, threatening the loss of cultural treasures now belonging to the people, the government issued a decision "On Prohibiting the Removal Abroad of Art and Antiquarian Objects."<sup>2</sup> The Soviet government consistently collected and preserved all cultural values of the country: remarkable collections of paintings, libraries, book repositories, etc., that had belonged to private individuals and were therefore hitherto inaccessible to the broad masses of the people. For substantiation of this, it issued decrees on the nationalisation of the Tretyakov Art Gallery; the Shchukin Art Gallery, comprising an exceptional collection of paintings by great European masters; the A. I. Morozov, I. S. Ostroukhov, and V. A. Morozov art collections<sup>3</sup>; the Moscow and Petrograd Conservatoires of Music, music shops and storehouses and music publishing houses.<sup>4</sup> Also the works of the great Russian composers—Glinka, Chaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Moussorgsky, Balakirev, Rubinstein and others—became the possession of the whole of the people.

<sup>1</sup> Enactments and Orders of the Workers' and Peasants' Government, No. 17, Article 244; No. 90, Article 916; No. 52, Article 592; No. 73, Article 794, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., No. 69, Article 751, 1918.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., No. 39, Article 511; No. 81, Article 851; No. 99, Article 1011, 1918.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., No. 99, Article 1020, 1918.



Prior to the Great October Socialist Revolution the broad masses were practically deprived of the works of the great Russian writers. In the very first days of the Revolution, a decree was issued on setting up state publishing. The aim of the Workers' and Peasants' Government was to launch an extensive publishing programme, giving priority to mass publication of the Russian and world literary classics, as well as textbooks and other literature for the people. The largest printing enterprises, which were to facilitate the fulfilment of the state's most important publishing tasks, were now in the hands of the people.

All these measures were designed to create the necessary conditions for all-sided cultural advancement, for broad enlistment of the masses in the development of socialist culture.

The new social and state system created by the Revolution, the first fundamental transformations in the life of society, the birth of the socialist, genuinely people's democracy, received legislative embodiment in the first Fundamental Law of the Soviet State, the first Soviet Constitution.<sup>1</sup>

Such in broad outline are the early social transformations in Russia ushered in by the Great October Socialist Revolution.

As the bourgeois revolutions ushered in the era of capitalism, so the Socialist revolution ushered in a new era in the history of mankind.

The victory of the October Revolution marked a radical turn in mankind's destiny, a turn from the old-capitalist, world based on private property and the ex-

<sup>1</sup> See "The First Soviet Constitution" (The Constitution of the RSFSR, 1918), Moscow, 1938.

ploitation of man by man, to a new, socialist, world, founded on socialist ownership of the instruments and means of production, with relations between people based on comradely collaboration, friendship and socialist mutual assistance. The ideas of October epitomised the new historical epoch.

The Soviet system awakened the creative activity of the masses. And Russia, which in the first world war had suffered defeat after defeat, now, transformed by the great Revolution, withstood single-handed against a coalition of counter-revolutionary forces consisting of the chief imperialist powers of the world and all the Russian whiteguard hordes. And this at the time when the young Soviet Republic was just beginning to build its Red Army, organise the creative labour of the Soviet people and launch socialist construction.

To many it then seemed that the Soviet Republic would be unable to hold out against the onslaught of the powerfully armed German and then the British, French, Japanese and American interventionists. Many foretold the inevitable downfall of Soviet power. Even the most "optimistic" prophets at first gave it not more than three months to exist. The "New York Times," for example, in the three years of 1918-1920, ninety-one times reported the end of the Soviets, six times, the surrender of Petrograd to White Russian generals, three times that the capital of the young Soviet Republic was on the verge of capture; twice that it burned down, another two times that it was in a state of panic; and six times the same "reliable" source reported that it revolted against the Bolsheviks.

But the Soviet Republic lived and vanquished its numerous enemies. It succeeded in organising and rous-



ing the people to the defence of their homeland, routing and driving the foreign invaders out of the Soviet land.

Having defended in heroic struggle and with titanic labour the gains of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the Soviet people demonstrated to the whole world that it is impossible to vanquish people who by their own experience have become convinced that they are upholding their own Soviet power, the power of the working folk, that they are upholding the cause whose triumph will ensure them and the coming generations enjoyment of all the benefits, of culture, all the creations of human labour.

Anyone able to read the book of life without stuffing his head with preconceived formulas could already by the very fact of the Soviet Republic's victory in the Civil War undoubtedly recognise what a force the masses become when they know that they are fighting for their own interests, when they are headed by a tried and tested militant political party and wise government who know in what direction to lead the people to victory.

#### IV

The October Revolution inaugurated the transformation of capitalist Russia into Socialist Russia and set the country on the road of social progress. Among the fundamental transformations in the life of the peoples of Russia in the post-October period, first mention should be made of the successful implementation of socialist industrialisation, the conversion of Russia from an agrarian and backward country economically dependent on other countries into a mighty socialist industrial power.

Commencing the building of socialism, the Soviet people proceeded from the premise that heavy industry is the backbone of socialist economy, of the country's defence capacity, and of the constant advancement of her population's welfare. That is why in unfolding their peaceful work of socialist industrialisation, the Soviet people focussed their efforts primarily on the development of heavy industry, as only on its basis is it possible to obtain expanded reproduction, and the rapid rise of labour productivity which is imperative for the complete victory of the new, socialist, social system.

Before the October Revolution Russia was on a medium level of industrial development. Though a big country, she had a poorly-developed heavy industry. It is common knowledge that tsarist Russia was much behind the big capitalist countries in the production of pig iron and non-ferrous metals, coal, oil and electric power. She had no tractor, automobile, aircraft or machine-tool industries, and hardly any chemical or agricultural machine manufacturing industries to speak of. Agriculture accounted for two-thirds of the country's production and industry for only one-third. Russia was equipped with modern implements of production one-fifth to one-tenth the extent of the big Western capitalist countries and was fifty to a hundred years behind them technically and economically.

But even those industrial facilities that tsarist Russia had, the Soviet Republic was not destined to get. The country's national economy was completely wrecked during the first world war and then during the struggle against the whiteguards and the foreign military interventionists (1918-1920). In 1920 output of her large-scale industry was only one-seventh of the 1913 figure.



Pig iron output in 1921 was about three per cent of pre-war, ore but 1.7 per cent, textiles 5 per cent. For the output of metal the country dropped to about the level of the early 18th century. The railroads were in a state of utter collapse which threatened to paralyse the country's entire economic life.

Thus, the Soviet Republic had to begin industrialisation by restoring the factories and mills, mines and blast and open-hearth furnaces. Everything had really to be started from scratch.

Thanks to the correct policy of the Soviet Government and the heroic efforts of the people, industry as well as other branches of the national economy were in the main rehabilitated in the space of four to five years after the end of the Civil War, i. e., by 1926. Only then were the Soviet people able to direct their major efforts to socialist industrialisation of the country, to the reconstruction of the entire national economy on the basis of modern technology and engineering.

The concrete tasks of industrialisation consisted in re-equipping with new machinery and expanding the old factories and mills, building new ones and creating many new branches of industry which tsarist Russia did not have, set up an industrial base for agriculture, and establish a new defence industry.

Accomplishment of these grand tasks naturally entailed enormous difficulties, and first of all posed such an infinitely complex problem as finding the vast amount of capital necessary for industrialisation.

And the Soviet people splendidly coped with these truly gigantic tasks. They mustered the funds by mobilising the internal resources, overcame all difficulties, routed the enemies who sought to divert the country from

the road of building Socialism to the road of capitalism, and in the course of not quite full three prewar five-year plan periods, in approximately 13 years, converted the agrarian country into an industrial socialist power.

History never knew such a gigantic sweep of new industrial development, such ardour of new construction, such labour heroism of millions of workers. Under the first five-year plan (1928-1932), 1,500 industrial enterprises were built and put into operation; under the second (1933-1937)—4,500. The tempo and scale of socialist construction in the USSR rose with every year.<sup>1</sup>

On the eve of the Great Patriotic War, in 1940, Soviet large-scale industry produced nearly 12 times as much as that of tsarist Russia in 1913. The output of the machine-building and metal working industries increased respectively 41 times.

In an unprecedentedly brief historical period the USSR built up a mighty industry, advanced to first place in Europe and second place in the world for the volume of industrial output, and surpassed all countries for the rate of development. In 1929-1937, for instance, industrial production in the USSR grew on the average of about 20 per cent a year—a rate no capitalist country ever knew, even in its greatest boom and under the most

<sup>1</sup> This is treated in greater detail in:

"Results of the First Five-Year Plan of the Development of the National Economy of the USSR," Moscow, 1933.

"Results of the Second Five-Year Plan of the Development of the National Economy of the USSR," Moscow, 1939.

"Soviet Economy Development," Moscow, 1946.

"The USSR and the Capitalist Countries," statistical data, Moscow, 1939.

R. S. Lifshitz, "Studies in the Distribution of Industry in the USSR," Moscow, 1954.



favourable conditions. Such unprecedented growth of production cannot be regarded as simple and ordinary development of the country from a backward into a progressive one. This was a revolutionary leap, whereby the Soviet Union was transformed from a backward country into an advanced one, from an agrarian into an industrial one.

To build up the socialist society in the USSR it was necessary to create not only a mighty industrial base, but also to transform agriculture on socialist lines, which was one of the most difficult tasks of the socialist revolution.

Whereas in industry the socialist system of management, which made it possible to effect expanded reproduction and a high rate of development, was established from the very beginning of the Revolution; in agriculture, small individual farms, which were the basis of the capitalist economic system in the countryside, prevailed. The task was gradually to get the more than 20,000,000 small peasant farms, which for their size could not use modern machines and scientific methods, voluntarily to change over to large-scale socialist farming, and thus achieve a radical upsurge of agricultural production and improvement of the living standards of the working people of town and countryside. The line of uniting the small individual farms into large collective farms, that is, the line of collectivising agriculture and on this basis eliminating the rural bourgeoisie, the kulaks, was the only possible line for satisfying the requirements of town and countryside, for building socialism. And this line, indicated to the Soviet people by their Communist Party, was taken by the labouring peasantry who by numerous examples saw with their own eyes its correctness and ad-

vantages. A decisive requisite that ensured the success of the collectivisation of agriculture was industrialisation of the country, which made it possible amply to supply the collective farms with agricultural machines, and extensively to develop all forms of co-operation through which the peasants learned collective management.

Mass collectivisation of agriculture in the USSR unfolded in 1929. In the course of eight to ten years individual peasant farming gave way to socialist farming. By the beginning of the second five-year plan period, that is, by 1937, already 243,700 collective farms were organised, uniting 18,500,000 peasant households, or 93 per cent of the country's total peasant households. Working on the farms were already 454,500 tractors, 128,200 combines, 126,100 complex and semi-complex threshing machines, 144,500 motor trucks. Mechanisation of the main farm work reached 70-80 per cent. By 1937, the area under all agricultural crops increased by more than 30,000,000 hectares. The gross grain crop topped 7,000 million poods and nearly twice exceeded that of 1913. Socialist agriculture in the USSR made further progress in the succeeding years.<sup>1</sup>

Collectivisation of agriculture was a veritable revolution, equivalent in its outcome to the Revolution of October 1917. The distinguishing feature of this revolution is that it was accomplished from above on the initiative of the state, and directly and actively supported from below by the millions of poor and middle peasants. A decisive social force in this great revolution in the

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<sup>1</sup> M. A. K r a y e v, "The Victory of the Collective-Farm System in the USSR," State Publishers of Political Literature, Moscow, 1954.



countryside was the alliance of the working class and the labouring peasantry.

This revolution in the countryside solved fundamental problems of socialist construction in agriculture: it eliminated the most numerous class of exploiters in our country, the class of kulaks, the mainstay of capitalist restoration; it placed the most numerous labouring class, the peasant class, on the path of socialist construction; it furnished the Soviet regime with a socialist base in agriculture—the most extensive and vitally necessary, yet least developed branch of the national economy. From small-scale and low productive, agriculture became large-scale, mechanised and highly productive. The revolution opened wide prospects for the development of the productive forces in agriculture, for the further advancement of the material and cultural standards of the peasantry and all the working people of our country. The achievements in collectivisation strengthened the alliance of the working class and the collective-farm peasantry—the basis for greater successes of the Soviet people, the Soviet Socialist State.

The Soviet people made also tremendous cultural progress. One of its major results was the implementation of universal compulsory elementary education of children and the abolition of illiteracy among the adult population. It is this that made it possible completely to wipe out illiteracy in the Soviet Union. Beginning with 1938 the Soviet people commenced the gradual introduction of universal secondary (10-year) education.<sup>1</sup>

Indicative of the Soviet Union's cultural successes

<sup>1</sup> "Resolutions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," 7 th Ed. part III, pp. 362-363.

are the following figures: elementary and secondary school attendance rose from 8,000,000 in 1913 to 29,400,000 in 1937; enrollment in institutions of higher learning increased respectively from 112,000 to 550,000, whereas in Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Japan taken together it totalled only 420,700. Widespread higher and secondary specialised education has made it possible to build up an army of specialists in all fields, from among the people.<sup>1</sup> These successes in bringing to the Soviet people all the achievements of modern culture are particularly significant, as they have been accomplished in the space of only two decades and in a country where prior to the Revolution the bulk of the population was illiterate.

The constant solicitude of the Soviet government for the development of public education, science, literature and art ensures the steady advancement and flowering of Soviet culture, all the benefits of which belong to the people.

The great Russian Revolution for the first time in human history created a state system based not on the oppression of one people by another, but on the equal participation of all the peoples of the country in the building of the new society. History knows many examples of multi-national states. But they all, as a rule, were created by the sword and fell apart under the blows of the sword. The October Socialist Revolution has proved the utter untenability of the methods of "solving" the national question by forcible enslavement and exploitation of

<sup>1</sup> "Results of the Second Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the USSR," Moscow, 1939, pp. 64, 113.



one nation by another and national discrimination, national enmity, invalidation of national sovereignty.

In the Soviet Union the national question has been solved in an altogether different way: the way of preserving national sovereignty, the voluntary union of the toilers of different nations on principles of full and genuine equality of the peoples.

Having proclaimed and realised in practice the right of nations to state self-determination, including secession and formation of independent states, the Soviet system has demonstrated to the whole world how alien to it are strivings for conquest with regard to other nations, and at the same time exposed to the whole world those who talk of self-determination while in practice subject enslaved peoples and colonies to brutal exploitation. Implementation of the Soviet policy on the national question prepared the ground for mutual trust and voluntary union of all the peoples of Russia into a great multi-national socialist power: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Soviet regime did not stop at just proclaiming national equality. It for the first time in history not only formally but actually abolished national inequality. Suffice it to cite the example of the industrial progress of the non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union. Thus while gross output of large-scale industry in the Soviet Union as a whole had increased 12-fold by 1940, as compared with tsarist Russia, the increase in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic was 20-fold, in the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic 27-fold, in the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic 153-fold and in the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic nearly 308-fold. As a result of this, the industrially backward non-Russian outlying areas of

the former Russian empire were transformed in Soviet times into economically-developed countries, rich in modern technical facilities.

Prior to the Revolution, almost the entire population of the non-Russian outlying districts could neither read nor write. Now thanks to the fundamental transformations carried out by the Soviet regime the overwhelming bulk of the population of the people's republics have become literate. Compared with 1914 attendance at elementary and secondary schools in 1940 increased: in the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, 9-fold; in the Armenian SSR, 9.4 times; in the Kazakh SSR, 10.9 times; in the Turkmen SSR, 35-fold; in the Kirghiz SSR, 47-fold; in the Uzbek SSR, 73-fold; and in the Tajik SSR, 822-fold. Forty-eight nationalities for the first time received written languages under Soviet rule.

And so, the Soviet people have for the first time in history built a new, the most progressive social system: Socialism. They have established in their country socialist ownership of the means of production as the economic basis of the socialist society. Already in 1937 state property (belonging to the whole of the people) and co-operative and collective-farm property comprised 98.7 per cent of all the productive funds of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup>

With the triumph of socialism the whole structure of Soviet society has completely changed. There have grown up: a new working class, free from exploitation and unemployment; a collective-farm peasantry, free from the yoke of landlords and kulaks and all forms of exploitation; a new genuinely people's Soviet intelligentsia,

<sup>1</sup> "Results of the Second Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the USSR," State Publishers of Political Literature, Moscow, 1939, p. 8.



springing from the workers and the peasants. The social composition of the population of the USSR in 1937 was as follows: factory and office workers, 34.7 per cent; collective-farmers and handicraftsmen organised in producers' co-operatives, 55.5 per cent; individual farmers and handicraftsmen not belonging to producers' co-operatives, 5.6 per cent, miscellaneous (students, pensioners, etc.), 4.2 per cent. Thus, already in 1937, 94.4 per cent of the population were engaged in socialist economy or were closely associated with it, all exploiting classes were thoroughly eliminated, and the causes of the exploitation of man by man were completely abolished.<sup>1</sup>

As production steadily grows the conditions are created for the maximum satisfaction of the constantly growing material and cultural requirements of the working people of the land of socialism.

A basic index of the steady rise of the material welfare of the Soviet people is the growth of the national income of the USSR, two-thirds of which go to satisfy the material and cultural requirements of the population, and one-third remains at the disposal of the state, the collective farms and co-operative organisations and is used for the expansion of socialist production and other state and social needs. An idea of the growth of the national income in the Soviet Union is afforded by the following figures: from 21,000 million rubles in 1913 the national income grew to 96,300 million rubles in 1937. In the years of the second five-year plan alone (1933-1937), public consumption in the USSR had more than doubled, sales in the state and co-operative trading networks expanded more

<sup>1</sup> "Results of the Second Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the USSR," State Publishers of Political Literature, Moscow, 1939, p. 9.

than 3-fold, real wages of factory and office workers more than doubled, the national payroll increased from 34,000 million rubles to 81,000 million rubles, and the state social insurance fund from 4,600 million to 5,000 million rubles.<sup>1</sup>

The victory of socialism in the USSR has found legislative embodiment in the Fundamental Law of the Soviet State, the new Constitution of the USSR, adopted on December 5, 1936, the Constitution of victorious socialism and fully developed socialist democracy.

The Constitution reflects the profound changes that have taken place in the life of our people under Soviet rule. According to the Constitution, the Soviet Union is a Socialist State of workers and peasants.

The Constitution has secured to the citizens of the USSR and guarantees them great social and democratic rights: the right to work, the right to rest and leisure, the right to education, the right to maintenance in old age and in case of sickness and disability. It grants the citizens of the USSR universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot; guarantees the equality of rights of citizens of the USSR irrespective of nationality, race or sex; gives full freedom of conscience and freedom of anti-religious propaganda. It likewise guarantees freedom of speech, the press, assembly and meetings, the right to unite in public organisations, the inviolability of the person and the home, the privacy of correspondence, the right of asylum to foreign citizens persecuted for defending the interests of the working people, or for scientific activities, or for struggling for national liberation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Soviet Economic Development," collection of statistical material, Moscow, 1946, pp. 105, 107.

<sup>2</sup> Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.



The Constitution has given legislative embodiment to the world-historic fact that socialism has in the main been built in the USSR, and that the country has entered a new stage of development, a stage of consummating the construction of the socialist society and of gradually passing to the communist society whose supreme principle will be: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs."

The Great Patriotic War was an all-sided test of the stability and viability of the Soviet social and state system created by the Great October Socialist Revolution and consolidated by the triumph of socialism. In this war the heroic struggle of the Soviet people for the honour and independence of our country fused with the struggle of the peoples of Europe, Asia and America for their national independence. The Soviet Union, however, bore the main burden of the war and played the decisive part in its outcome. Together with the troops of the Allies the Soviet armed forces routed nazi Germany and her satellites and thereby saved world civilisation from the fascist vandals. This will forever remain one of the greatest events in history.

The war halted the development of the Soviet Union by approximately ten years and brought untold suffering to its people. The direct loss alone caused to the USSR by the nazi German invaders runs into the huge sum of 679,000 million rubles.<sup>1</sup>

Without assistance from outside the Soviet Union has successfully healed the wounds of the war and already under the first postwar five-year plan greatly advanced

<sup>1</sup> Announcement of the State Commission "On Material Losses," State Publishers of Political Literature, 1945, pp. 1-3

all branches of its economy and culture. Suffice it to say that industrial output in the USSR in 1950 exceeded that of the prewar year of 1940 by 73 per cent, and in 1954 nearly trebled the 1940 figure. Some 8,600 large-scale state enterprises have been rehabilitated or built anew in the Soviet Union in the postwar years. The basis of the might of the Soviet state and the growth of the national economy has always been and still is heavy industry. In 1954 the total output of large-scale industry in the USSR as compared with 1913 increased 635-fold, the production of the means of production in this period grew nearly 60-fold, the production of electric power—more than 675-fold, machine-building—160-fold.

On the basis of the development of heavy industry, technical progress, and achievements in science, the USSR has scored a new great victory: on June 27, 1954, the world's first station run on atomic power started operation in the USSR and began supplying electric current to the national economy. Thus the Soviet Union initiated the peaceful use of atomic power.

Deeply confident in the success of their great cause, the Soviet people are erecting the edifice of the communist society. The Socialist system has set an example of new relations between states. Underlying the foreign policy of the Soviet Union is Lenin's principle of the possibility of lasting peaceful co-existence of the two systems—socialism and capitalism—and their peaceful competition on terms of mutual respect and national sovereignty of each country, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, settlement of disputed issues by negotiation.

Lenin, as far back as 36 years ago, in reply to a corres-



ponent of the American newspaper, *The Chicago Daily News*, said:

...“We are decidedly for an economic understanding with America—with all countries.”<sup>1</sup>

At the first international economic conference attended by Soviet representatives, in Genoa in 1922, the Land of Soviets put forward a comprehensive programme of economic cooperation with the capitalist world.

Since then experience, in the shape of a long line of trade agreements and many years of mutually advantageous economic relations, has confirmed the validity of Lenin's principle of the possibility of co-existence.

The Soviet Union's persistent and systematic struggle for peace has not been and is not occasioned by temporary weakness of the newly-born society, and not by transient interests of the moment or by temporary correlation of international forces: work for peace is organically inherent in the Soviet system to which a policy of conquest and violence with regard to other peoples is absolutely alien. The Peace Defence Act, passed by the Second Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on March 12, 1951, graphically demonstrates how much the Socialist state cherishes the interests of the people. In the Soviet Union have been instituted international prizes “For the Promotion of Peace Among Nations,” which emphasises the fact that the peoples of all countries are equally interested in peace.

Surveying the road traversed by the Soviet state in the thirty-seven-odd years of its existence we see that the great achievements of the Soviet people in all spheres

of social, economic, political and cultural life spring from the Great October Socialist Revolution.

The Revolution is the law-governed consequence of the natural historical development of society. It arose and triumphed not as a result of fortuitous causes, of a certain concurrence of circumstances (Russia's defeat in the war, the mistakes of tsarism and the Provisional Government, the wrong policy of the Allies, etc.), but as a result of profound objective processes of development both in Russia and world imperialism. This alone explains the invincible power of the socialist revolution and its gains.

If our country in a brief historical period has emerged victorious from two wars—the war against the interventionists and the second world war—and succeeded in building up a mighty socialist industry and a highly developed socialist agriculture, and has greatly raised the cultural and living standards of the masses, it testifies to the inexhaustible viability of the Soviet system, and the invincibility of the cause for which our people fought and accomplished in the Great October Socialist Revolution.

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, Vol. 30, Russ. Ed., p. 32.