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THE RUSSIA TODAY SOCIETY

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SOVIET RUSSIA

A SYLLABUS FOR STUDY COURSES

COMPILED BY

JOAN THOMPSON

ISSUED BY

THE RUSSIA TODAY SOCIETY

PRICE FOURPENCE

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FOREWORD

THE desire for knowledge about the Soviet Union has always been considerable, but since June 22, 1941, it has reached phenomenal heights.

The rapid growth of organisations like the Russia Today Society and the movement for British-Soviet unity has given the opportunity for this desire being satisfied in an organised way. Many groups and committees throughout the country are now running classes on the Soviet Union, but so far there has been a shortage of suitable basic material for class-work. This syllabus has been prepared by Mrs. Joan Thompson, a leading British expert on Soviet affairs, and can be relied on as accurate in every respect, while the list of reading material at the end contains all that is most essential for the student.

This syllabus covers the whole field in a general way. Other syllabuses have been prepared on health and medicine in the U.S.S.R., children in the U.S.S.R., Soviet geography, religion in the U.S.S.R., Soviet agriculture, etc., and can be obtained from the Russia Today Society. A series covering the whole range of Soviet life and activities is being planned and new items are coming out as rapidly as the exigencies of wartime will permit.

SOVIET RUSSIA

A Syllabus for Study Courses

Lecture I.

THE END OF TSARISM

TO most people in this country Russia used to be a land of mystery. As presented by novelists in the days of Tsarism, we were given a picture of hard-working but ignorant and superstitious peasants, degenerate and drink-sodden doctors and school teachers, crafty tradesmen, and a decadent nobility whose luxurious and magnificent way of living could not cure their ignorance and depravity. We read of St. Petersburg, the seat of a weak Tsar, himself governed by a mad monk, as a city of beggars and prostitutes, fine ladies and magnificent knights, starving workers and glittering banquets, rather than as the headquarters of a vast Empire, covering one-sixth of the earth.

When the war of 1914 came, our Russian Ally's great manpower was counted one of our greatest assets and the "Russian steam-roller" was expected to flatten out the German armies in the east. But the breakdown of the Russian armies through lack of equipment, munitions, rifles, even boots, showed up once more the internal rottenness of the Russian State which was unable even to maintain supplies of food to the big towns.

The discontent of the people rose so high that in March, 1917, the Tsar was thrown out and a provisional Government was formed. At the same time, "Soviets" were set up by the workers, peasants and soldiers—they were composed of delegates from factory workers, etc., something like Trades Councils in Britain. On November 7, 1917, these Soviets, led by the Communists, turned out the Provisional Government and set up a Soviet Government.

The Soviet Government set to work to give the people peace, land and bread. One of the first acts of the new Government was to declare the land to be the property of the whole community, and to place the redistribution of the vast estates of the landowners in the hands of local Soviets, elected by the peasants. This redistribution had already been begun by the peasants during the summer, and now it was given legal sanction and continued in a more orderly manner.

The big factories, mines and railways were declared national property. The organisation of the factories and other enterprises was taken over at first by committees elected by the workers; former owners, managers and foremen who would not work for the Soviet Government were turned out.

The reorganisation of Russia was made infinitely more difficult by foreign intervention. In order to secure a breathing space, the Soviet Government, led by Lenin, made peace with Germany, but it was not long before Soviet Russia had to meet attacks from a number of countries, which backed up reactionary Russian generals against the Soviet Government. In the words of the Dean of Canterbury:—

> Russia was invaded by Germany, England, France, U.S.A., Czechoslovakia, Poland and Japan. Forced into battle on every front, north, south, east and west, she emerged at length victorious indeed, but exhausted: her land ruined, her economy in a state of complete collapse; her fields overrun with soldiers and weeds, her mills and factories idle for lack of fuel and raw materials; her railways jammed with disabled locomotives, broken cars and damaged trucks; her bridges blown up and railway tracks decayed. The flow of industrial production, always immature, now dwindled to a fifth of its pre-war volume. Agricultural production dropped to half the level of 1914; fields stood untilled and unsown; cattle were removed in one war or exterminated in another. The whole land was starving.

Victory was achieved by the heroism of the workers, their Red Army and guerrilla detachments, supported by the overwhelming majority of the people, who knew that the defeat of the Soviet Government would mean the return of Tsarism and reaction. But the results of seven years of war and civil war could not be escaped, and the terrible famine of 1921 devastated the countryside and brought agricultural and industrial production to an even lower ebb. There was an acute shortage of such necessities as bread, fats, meat, footwear and clothing.

The Soviet Government had to revive industry and agriculture, with but little help from other countries. By 1927 the pre-war level of output had been reached; but this was hopelessly inadequate, and could not provide the basis for raising the standard of living of the whole people, and the educational and social aims to achieve which the Soviet Government had been established.

Therefore far-reaching plans for economic development were adopted, and in 1928 the first of the famous "Five Year Plans" was put into operation. Their success has brought Russia forward from a backward country to be one of the most developed countries in the world.

Lecture II

SOVIET PLANNING

THE economic basis on which the reconstruction in Russia was carried out was Socialist. The ownership of the land, the banks, industrial enterprises and transport was taken by the State from the former owners; production and distribution were organised by the State, with the help of the local Soviets, the Trade Unions and Co-operative organisations. In the towns and in the country, millions of people, including an increasing number of women, were drawn into the work of organisation and administration.

To carry out the Socialist reconstruction of a land covering one-sixth of the earth's surface, with a population of 130,000,000, devastated by war and famine, was a vast undertaking, made possible only by the fact that the Soviet leaders had vision, determination, patience and immense organising abilities, and confidence in the initiative of the people.

The immediate problem was to supply the needs of the people; to do this it was necessary to rebuild industry and to reorganise agriculture on a large scale. The peasants produced foodstuffs for themselves, but they needed implements and other manufactured goods; the town workers were dependent on the peasants' surplus (which at this time was almost non-existent) for their foodstuffs and raw materials.

Lenin saw that the use of the vast water-power of Russia to make electricity and carry it long distances was the key to the development of Russia's immense resources and the rapid industrialisation of the country. Even before the Civil War was over, while the Germans were still at the gates of Kiev, he said:—

> Without a plan of electrification we cannot tackle the work of actual construction. We need this programme as the first rough draft, to be placed before the whole of Russia, of an economic plan, calculated ahead for at least 10 years and showing the way now to give Russia in actual fact the economic basis that is required by Communism. . . . Communism is Soviet Government plus the electrification of the whole country. Otherwise the country will remain a country of small peasant economy, and it is up to us to realise this quite clearly.

When Mr. H. G. Wells visited Russia in 1920, he thought that Lenin's scheme for the development of great power stations to serve whole provinces with light, transport and power for factories and mines, was quite

impracticable. He said that "the little man at the Kremlin" had "at last succumbed to a Utopia, the Utopia of the electricians." Lenin only smiled at him and said "Come again in 10 years' time and we will show you." And "the little man" proved right.

By 1930 the First Five Year Plan was well under way, by 1932 it had been completed, nine months ahead of schedule. The Dnieper dam, with its huge hydro-electric station, supplying a whole group of new industries with power, had been completed, electrification of the whole countryside was well on the way; the giants of the First Plan, Kharkov, the Gorki automobile works, the new metallurgical bases in the Urals, Kuznetsk, Magnitogorsk, had all been constructed in record time and were turning out iron, steel, aluminium and machinery on a colossal scale. The rate of increase of industrial output during this period averaged 22 per cent. each year.

Agriculture had been revolutionised; huge State farms and machine-tractor stations had shown the peasants the miracles that could be achieved with machinery and scientific methods, working on large farms. As a result, collective farms had spread like wildfire over the countryside. Many of the *kulaks*, the large farmers who employed labour, and often made money by selling on the "black market," refused to come into the collective farms, and even slaughtered their cattle and destroyed their equipment rather than see them brought into the collective farms. The Soviet Government had to take stern measures against those who stood in the way of agricultural advance, which was to benefit the whole people and transform the backward and poverty-stricken individual peasants into prosperous collective farmers using modern methods and living at a high economic and cultural level. As a result of this transformation, the average grain harvest, which was 57 million tons in 1910-14, had increased to 70 million tons in 1928-32.

The critics of the Soviet Union had all been confounded, for they had maintained that the Five Year Plan was an idle dream which could never be carried out. But the success of the Plan was more epoch-making than these critics realised.

To achieve this miracle it was necessary to overcome the technical and economic backwardness of the country, the ignorance and lack of skill of the people, the wrecking activities of hostile elements, the difficulties created by the encirclement of the Soviet Union by hostile capitalist countries, and the never-far-distant threat of war. During the period of the first Plan the Russian people tightened their belts and built for their own and their children's future. They educated themselves and their children, trained technicians and craftsmen, used all the knowledge and skill they could get from foreigners. Where science

and skill were lacking they had enough initiative to improvise; they made many mistakes and learnt wisdom from them; where their building was perforce shoddy they recognised the fact, and regarded it as temporary.

They concentrated mainly on heavy industry, building big machines for the production of more machines, making themselves as independent as they could of the outside world, in view of the war which they knew was bound to come. They were realists and knew that the quarrels of rival Powers were bound to drag them into a world war sooner or later, and therefore they built up new industries and new industrial centres in remote parts of the Union. They shared necessities fairly among themselves, according to work done; many of the luxuries and some of the comforts we have come to regard as necessities, they did without; to some visitors from other countries their life appeared drab and unexciting; they themselves, and workers from other countries who understood what they were doing, found the work to build up a new society full of interest and excitement.

With the second Five Year Plan they began to reap their reward. Without any slackening in the tempo of heavy industrial production it was now possible to plan a great increase in the output of goods the people needed to give a steadily rising standard of life for the whole population, and a vast improvement in cultural and social amenities. By 1935 the wrecking activities of the *kulaks* had been made good, and the collective farmers were able to live in plenty, while providing the town workers with as much food as they needed. The slogan for the countryside was "Make every collective farmer well-to-do," and Stalin said:—

> This slogan not only affects collective farmers; it affects the workers to a far larger extent, because we want to make all the workers well-to-do, to enable them to live a prosperous, happy and cultured life.

By 1939 Stalin was able to report even greater triumphs:—

> We find that as regards technique of production and rate of growth of our industry, we have already overtaken and outstripped the principal capitalist countries.*

He gave figures showing that Soviet industrial production had grown ninefold since 1913, whereas that of Great Britain and the U.S.A. only exceeded pre-war by 13 and 20 per cent. respectively.

The Drawing-up of the Plans

How were the Plans actually drafted and carried out? On December 5, 1917, the Supreme Council of Public Economy was appointed to produce general plans and estimates to regulate the entire economic life of the

*Stalin's Historic Speech—March, 1939. (Lawrence & Wishart).

country. All its resources had to be assessed, all the needs of the people estimated and the pace of production speeded up. During the years of Civil War and Intervention no long-term plans could be made, hand-to-mouth methods had to be used; and it was not until 1921, when the country had settled down to a period of peaceful reconstruction, that Lenin's idea of "giving the masses a shining, unimpeded prospect to work for" could be carried out.

In that year the Supreme Economic Council set up a State Planning Commission to study and tabulate the whole resources and needs of the country, with a view to making an immense Plan for 15 years ahead, divided into three sections. Every farm, every institution, every enterprise in the whole Union must be known to the Planning Commission, its personnel, its needs and its products estimated and fitted into their places in the whole scheme. A quota has to be worked out for each year for each Soviet Republic or autonomous region, and for every unit within it. The needs of the community must decide the activities of the producers, the relative importance of different kinds of expenditure must be sized up, unforeseen difficulties and accidents allowed for, the risk of war must be considered and due provision made for it.

Important points of policy, e.g., the relative proportion of the country's income to be spent on education or defence, are not settled by the Planning Commission, but by the Government and the Congress of Soviets.

When all the necessary information has at last been collected and considered and the provisional plan is ready, it is sent out to all the organisations and enterprises for their comments and suggested amendments. Into the furthest corners of the land the great Plan penetrates—among the fishers and hunters of Siberia and the Arctic seas, amongst the tropical vegetation of Batum and Erivan, from the borders of Mongolia to the shores of the Karelian Lakes, excited groups of factory workers, railwaymen, peasants, schoolboys and girls, research workers, engineers, doctors, nurses, co-operative store workers, dairymaids and cooks gather to discuss their part in the Plan. Often they wish to add to their quota, maintaining hotly that they can do more than is demanded of them, sometimes complaining that they can only fulfil their part if they are allocated more material or better equipment, making suggestions, improving on the Plan, moulding it to the will of the people. Many and heated are the discussions, each one feels his or her responsibility for the success of the whole, wants to feel that the quota of "our" farm, "our" factory is something to be proud of, but yet a norm that can and will be fulfilled.

When all the details have been discussed in the various districts the suggestions and amendments are sent back to the Planning Commission, where they are all carefully

considered and all improvements incorporated, then the jig-saw puzzle is put together again and the whole Plan is finally passed by the Soviet Congress and becomes the standard of work for the next five years. In this way Lenin's advice is being fulfilled that the Government should "centralise the energy of the whole country" and should "rouse the workers by a grand programme for the next 10 or 20 years." The Plan in its final form is indeed an expression of the will of the people, and is regarded by them as something peculiarly their own.

Each factory, farm or institution goes into the attack on the Plan like an all-conquering army, with bands playing and banners flying. The workers divide themselves into "brigades" which challenge one another to socialist competition. The figures of Plan-fulfilment are displayed proudly on the walls of every department or workshop. Various symbols, ranging from a snail to an aeroplane, have been devised to denote the percentage fulfilment of the norm set for each month, and woe betide the brigade that suddenly wakes up to find its worksheet adorned by a neat little drawing of a snail or even a tortoise! Its members wilt under the jeers of the other workers, its leader is overwhelmed with shame, he hastily calls a meeting, and a heart-to-heart talk ensues in which everyone's failings, and not least his own, are laid bare and traced to their sources; a new plan of work is evolved and the brigade sets to work with redoubled energy, determined to purge its shame by achieving 100 per cent. achievement in the shortest possible time.

Rewards and premiums are given to individuals, as well as brigades, for specially good work, and many ordinary factory and farm workers have received the Order of Lenin, the highest honour in the land. But the main incentive in the Soviet Union is not the glorification of the individual, but the happiness and prosperity of the whole community, so far more stress is laid on co-operation than on competition. Although friendly rivalry is used to spur on the laggards and add a little excitement, socialist competition ends always in co-operation. The collective farm which has just beaten its weaker brother in a competition to get in its seed in record time sends its best machinery and its keenest shock brigades to help the loser get in the seed; wherever there is a breach in the production front the best shock workers are thrown in, they help the slower ones, train them in better methods and inspire them by their own example.

The Stakhanov movement, which was really a rationalisation of all labour processes, carried through by the workers themselves, raised the productivity of labour at an astonishing rate, and led to a big increase in wages, while vastly improving industrial efficiency. Stakhanov, a miner, by reorganising the methods of work at his section of the coal-face, increased the daily output of each

pneumatic pick from 6½ tons to 70 tons. Similar feats were performed by shock workers throughout industry and agriculture and the movement spread rapidly, transforming methods of work and creating vast enthusiasm. Speaking to a Conference of Stakhanovites in 1935 Stalin said: "We have before us new people, working men and women, who have completely mastered the technique of their jobs, who have harnessed it and driven ahead."

This vast improvement in technique made it possible to over-fulfil the second Plan in many sectors, and to set much higher standards for the Third Plan, which was already well under way when the Nazis invaded Russia. By such methods in the short space of 20 years the Soviet Union has been able to build up an efficient large-scale industry; to organise 20 million peasant households in collective farms with up-to-date machinery, scientific methods and record production; to increase the national production and the total annual wages, while substantially reducing prices; to give work, training, culture and a steadily rising standard of life to all its people. And it is because of their new technique, the efficiency of their organisation, and the vast enthusiasm evoked by their new way of life that the Soviet peoples have been able to stand up to the vast German military machine, have displayed such magnificent morale and confidence when retreating before superior forces, and are now able to drive back Hitler's hordes and inflict on them a crushing defeat.

Statistics

	Actual Output			Plan for
	1913	1928	1937	1942
Gross Production of all industry (in milliard roubles of 1926-7 value)	5	8	55	112
of which { investment goods	10	10	40	68
consumption goods	13-15	18	95.5	180
of (investment goods)	5	8	55	112
which (consumption goods)	10	10	40	68
Machine-building and metallurgical (milliard roubles of 1926-27 value)	1.1	2.1	27.5	63
Chemicals (milliard roubles of 1926-27 value)	0.4	0.5	6.0	13.4
Locomotives (Conventional Units)	418	478	1,581	2,410
Motor-cars (thousands)	—	0.7	200	700
Electrical Power (milliard Kw. Hrs.)	1.9	5.0	36.4	75.0
Oil (million tons)	9.2	11.7	30.5	54.0
Coal (million tons)	29.1	35.5	127.9	183.0
Pig-iron (million tons).....	4.2	3.3	14.7	22.0
Steel (million tons)	4.2	4.2	17.6	27.5
Rolled Steel (million tons)	1.5	1.8	5.5	11.0
Cement (million tons)	1.5	1.8	5.5	11.0
Paper (million tons).....	0.2	0.3	0.8	1.5
Cotton Textiles (million metres)...	2,227	2,742	3,447	4,900
Woollen Textiles (million metres).	95	93.2	108.3	177.0
Sugar (million tons)	1.3	1.3	2.4	3.5
Leather shoes (million pairs) ...	—	29.6	164.2	258.0
Grain (million quintals)	801-806	733	1082.0	1300.0
Cotton seed (million quintals) ...	7.4	8.2	25.8	32.9
Sugar beet (million quintals)	109	101	—	282

(from "Soviet Economy and the War," by Maurice Dobb, M.A.)

Lecture III

SOVIET DEMOCRACY

THE Soviet idea of democracy is that it affects the whole life of the people, and brings everyone into activity, sharing in the control of work, life and leisure. To the Soviet citizen it means the right not only to vote for representatives in local and national governing bodies, but also the right to have a say in every question of importance to his or her daily life. The right to criticise the manager of the factory and get him removed if he is not competent or treats the workers badly. The right *not* to be bullied. The right not only to choose delegates to the Soviets, local as well as national, after very careful consideration and discussion of the qualifications of all nominees, but to recall them if they do not carry out their promises after election. The right to discuss all important laws *before* they are passed. And, above all, the equal right of every citizen to participate in every aspect of government, regardless of money, position, sex, race or grade of work. Any worker can rise to the highest positions if he or she has the ability; there are no special difficulties to be overcome by any grade of worker, for all have equal opportunity. "Every kitchen-maid," said Lenin, "must be taught how to govern"; and the composition of the Soviets and the Council of People's Commissars makes it quite clear that there has been no favouritism in the application of this principle.

The Soviet Constitution

The present Soviet Constitution, finally ratified in December, 1936, takes the place of the first and second constitutions of 1918 and 1924 and reflects the development of the Soviet Union towards a classless society, and the full responsibility of all citizens.

Like the earlier constitutions it is based on the Declaration of Rights made on the first day of the Revolution:—

> The abolition of all exploitation of man by man; the complete abolition of the division of society into classes, the ruthless suppression of the exploiter and the establishment of a society organised on Socialist lines.

It confers equal freedom on all the nationalities and racial groups of the Union, uniting 16 national republics in a form of federal union, giving the same rights to men and women of every race, tongue and colour. (Article 123).

This constitution, like all former ones, guarantees to

all citizens the right to work, to leisure, to education and training, and to material security in old age, sickness or accident.

It differs from former constitutions in widening the franchise to all adult citizens (18 years) without regard to status and social origin—in other words, priests and sons and daughters of former landlords or nobility can now vote; in making elections to all Government organs (except the Council of Nationalities) direct instead of indirect; by introducing a secret ballot; in giving equal representation to the town and country; and in organising all elections on a territorial basis, instead of on the basis of the mine, factory or trade union organisation.

All these improvements reflect the development of the Soviet peoples from the stage of illiteracy and class divisions, to a stage where the country people have already reached almost the same standard of culture as those in the towns, and where socialism is so well rooted in the people that there is no danger in enfranchising all citizens. Note also the logical attitude towards youth; young people of 18 are called upon to work for and defend their country —they are also considered fit to vote and to sit in any of the governing bodies for which they may be chosen.

The apex of the Soviet democratic system is the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., which is divided into two chambers, the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities, both elected for a period of four years. The Soviet of the Union is directly elected by all citizens, each constituency of 300,000 inhabitants electing one deputy. The Soviet of Nationalities, which aims at giving each national grouping its fair representation, is elected on the basis of 25 deputies from each Union Republic, 11 from each Autonomous Republic, five from each Autonomous Region, and one from each National Area. (Article 35).

The Chambers sit at the same time, meeting not less than twice a year; each has an equal right to move new laws, which are approved by a simple majority of each Chamber. In case of disagreement between the Chambers conciliation machinery is provided, and if necessary the Supreme Soviet can be dissolved and new elections take place, or a referendum may be conducted on the point at issue.

Between sessions, the authority is in the hands of the Presidium (presiding committee, or executive) of the Supreme Soviet, which is elected at a joint sitting of both Chambers. The administrative authority, the nearest approach to our Cabinet, is the Council of People's Commissars (appointed by the Supreme Soviet), the chairman of which is comrade Stalin, who is therefore the Soviet Premier, in addition to being the General Secretary of the Communist Party.

The basis of the governmental pyramid is formed by

the local town and village Soviets, which play an important and responsible part in the life of the people. District and regional Soviets play their part in the co-ordination of local and central government, and each Union Republic has its own central Soviet, and its own constitution.

The Soviet economic system is based on the Socialist ownership of all the means of production and distribution. Land and all its resources, factories, mines, railways, etc., belong to the State, i.e., the community as a whole. Collective farms, co-operative organisations, or local Soviets, own their enterprises, products, implements, socially, as a community, and have free use of the land for an unlimited time. (Articles 4-10). This does not mean, as some people think, that there is no personal or family property in the Soviet Union. Personal property in the form of clothes, furniture, savings, minor implements, etc., is safeguarded by law and can be inherited by near relatives. Collective farmers have the use of a small plot of land and own their own houses, small animals and poultry. Many workers also own their houses, and can combine in co-operative societies to build them.

The new constitution in its draft form was circulated in millions of copies throughout the land; it was exhaustively discussed in all the places where workers congregate, and many suggestions made for its improvement. It fully justified Stalin's declaration: "No one will dare deny that our Constitution is the most democratic in the world!"

Multiform Democracy

As the Webbs point out in their comprehensive study of *Soviet Communism*, Soviet democracy is multiform. Each individual has a three-fold representation, as citizen, as producer, as consumer. They say:—

> It is impossible to enumerate all the channels, and it would be difficult to exaggerate the extent, of the participation in the public affairs of the Soviet electorate of 90 millions of men and women . . . To begin with, the universal electorate does a great deal more than elect. At its incessant meetings it debates and passes resolutions by the hundred thousand, in which it expresses its desires on great matters and on small; by way of instructions or suggestions to the deputies whom it chooses and can at any time recall, and who habitually take notice of these popular requirements, even when it is not found immediately practicable to carry them into effect.

As consumers the people are represented through the Consumers' Co-operative, which has over 70 million members, a large number of whom personally participate in the complicated business of distribution.

As producers they are represented in their trade

unions, which are carried on not mainly by paid officials but personally, without pay, by something like 100,000 "activists" among the trade unionists themselves as part of their social service. There is no hostility or division between the trade unions and the factory or mines management; problems are discussed by the "Triangle" which consists of representatves of the management, the trade union and the Communist Party. The manager is himself a trade unionist, has usually risen from the ranks of the workers, and thus there is no division of interest between him and the rank and file workers. All are working for the good of the community and it is to the advantage of all to speed up production and get the plan fulfilled. As there is no unemployment and work is paid according to its amount and quality everybody stands to gain by the speediest and best quality work. Production Committees are held in which all keen workers take part and all their suggestions and inventions are encouraged and carefully considered. Thus any tendency to bureaucracy is immediately and openly criticised; the wall newspapers and factory or farm papers are full of criticism of a witty and trenchant character; people in responsible positions who are lazy, get drunk or neglect their duties find themselves the subject of brilliant and biting caricatures; worker correspondents are no respecters of persons, and the director of any factory or institution does not escape lightly if he cannot keep his establishment up to the scratch.

In collective farms the general meeting of members plays an important part, and the farm newspapers are equally active, mobile Press units even accompanying the brigades to the fields' camps in time of the sowing and harvest campaigns.

There are many voluntary associations in the Soviet Union, undertaking various kinds of public service, but the ordinary political parties are absent.

The position of the Communist Party in Soviet democracy

Political parties are based, in capitalist countries, on the separate interests of different social classes. In a society consisting only of working people, there is only one Party—the Communist Party.

In other countries, the basis for different political parties is the existence of different social classes; the parties come into existence to further the conflicting interests of these classes. But in the Soviet Union there are no such conflicting class interests, as there are only working people; there is therefore only the one Party, the Communist Party.

This is the Party that led the fight of the oppressed people against the Tsars; it was later responsible for

carrying through the Revolution of 1917, and for building up Socialism in the Soviet Union.

It forms only a small proportion of the population—about 3 per cent.—but its policy (based on the economic and political theory known as Marxism) has won the support of the overwhelming majority of the people. The most active and hardworking members of the community are in the Party, the ones who most obviously know what they are talking about, who are readiest with the solution to every problem, and so they are the ones who get elected, who carry out the job well and get promoted to higher positions.

Is Stalin a dictator?

Before the war Stalin had no Government post; he was General Secretary of the Communist Party and exercised his influence in the affairs of State solely in virtue of that position. He was in no sense, nor is he now, a dictator inside the Party, for all important decisions are taken by the Central Committee of the Party, of about 70 members. In an interview with Emil Ludwig in 1932 Stalin was emphatic on this point. He said: "Single persons cannot decide." (S.C. Vol. 1, p. 432-3).

Lecture IV

SOCIAL SERVICES, WOMEN AND YOUTH IN THE U.S.S.R.

There is an old Russian proverb, which used to be a favourite in the villages: A hen is not an animal and a woman is not a human being. This is significant of the old Russian attitude towards women, particularly among the peasants. Women worked as hard on the land as men, in the East much harder, in addition to bearing and rearing large numbers of children. But they had no rights, none of the produce belonged to them. Their husbands could, and frequently did, beat and ill-treat them, but they had no redress, and would be brought back by the police if they ran away. In East Russia, among the Moslem population, women had to wear thick horse-hair veils, girls were sold to their husband's people at an early age (sometimes while in the cradle) and had to work like slaves in their father-in-law's house.

Already in Tsarist days women in industrial areas were beginning to break away from this bondage; Socialist women, such as Krupskaya, drew women workers into discussion circles, and in the struggles against the Tsardom women worked, fought and died side by side with their men comrades, playing a heroic part in mass demonstrations and street fighting. When new army regiments were brought up to shoot down revolutionary workers it was the women who went amongst them (as in Moscow in 1905), taking the rifles from their hands and persuading them to join their brothers and sisters in the struggle. When the Soviet Government was established in November, 1917, women were guaranteed real and complete equality with men in every sphere of life. "A victory for socialism," said Lenin, "is impossible, until a whole half of toiling mankind, the working women, enjoys equal rights with men: and until she is no longer kept a slave by her husband and family." Whether married or single, women voted on the same basis as men, and were equally eligible for all public office and all grades of employment at the same rates of pay as men. When they married they retained whatever they already possessed and shared equally with their husband in whatever was acquired during the partnership. A peasant could no longer beat or starve his wife; the homestead and proceeds of their

joint work belonged as much to her as to him; she could leave him and take for her own use half the land, and her share of animals and implements.

But legal and social equality alone was not enough, women had to be helped to throw off the inertia, ignorance and prejudices due to centuries of oppression. The first of many conferences of working class and peasant women was held in Moscow in November, 1918, in which 1,200 delegates, representing a million working women, discussed freely the difficulties, grievances and special problems of women. Women were drawn into the work of socialist construction; energetic leaders and "storm detachments" were drawn from amongst them, and immediately set to work to organise, educate and bring them into active work.

The Soviet leaders and the women themselves realised that by bearing and rearing children women were performing a service to the State, in which they must be aided by the State, if they were to stand on anything like equality with men, who suffered from no such handicap. And so they set to work to build up maternity hospitals and clinics, creches, nursery schools, and school canteens, not only in the towns and new industrial centres but all over the countryside, in every collective farm and State farm. Pregnant women and nursing mothers were given special privileges, they could not be dismissed from their work and must be transferred to lighter work where necessary; they received free medical and ante-natal treatment, adequate time off before and after the confinement at full pay, plus special allowances for baby clothes, nursing, etc. Every factory, enterprise or institution must provide a creche for the use of its workers, and give the nursing mothers time off to feed their babies. So great is the care for the children's health that a mother who cannot feed her own baby is not just given instructions how to prepare its food—she calls at her clinic each day and receives the requisite number of bottles of milk, prepared according to medical orders; no worker has to stay up at night with an ailing child—any child showing symptoms of illness is kept at the creche and looked after by qualified nurses.

But it is not only babies who keep women tied to the home in most countries, as we are discovering now that we are anxious to make full use of their labour; it is the everlasting round of domestic drudgery, the separate meals with the constant shopping involved, the supervision of children after school, the claims of husbands and brothers, the sick and the aged. Lenin said: "Without tearing women away from the stupefying domestic and kitchen atmosphere it is impossible to secure real freedom, it is impossible to build a democracy, let alone Socialism." Communal dining-rooms, factory canteens, school and college restaurants, where good three-course meals are

provided twice a day at low prices, go far towards solving the food problems of adults and children alike. Factory canteens are larger and much more pleasant than their counterparts in this country. The kitchens are well planned, with plenty of up-to-date machinery for washing-up, preparing of vegetables, etc., and an adequate staff working in seven-hour shifts. Thousands of meals are served at a time in bright, airy rooms, with clean tablecloths and willing waitresses.

There are many institutions for caring for the children after school hours and in the holidays, children's circles and clubs, Pioneer Houses, holiday camps, special halls in the parks, children's theatres and cinemas; these will be dealt with more fully when we come to education.

That women have been set free to take part in all kinds of work is fully demonstrated wherever one goes in the Soviet Union; they can be seen in the streets driving trams, or mending the roads; in the fields driving tractors and combines, reaping or threshing; they are found in all sorts of official positions, as chairmen of collective farms, managers of shops and factories, judges, members of the Supreme Council of Soviets, ambassadors or diplomats. There are more women teachers and doctors than men, and many women hold important positions as specialists in hospitals, clinics, and scientific institutes. Forty per cent. of industrial workers are women. The Soviet Union is the one country in the world where women will tell you that they are better off than the men!

Education

There are no unwanted children in the Soviet Union today, no ragged and under-nourished children. Children are regarded as the most important asset of the State and, if the parents are unable or unfit to look after them properly, they are cared for by the State in suitable homes. This rarely happens, though, for mothers are now so well instructed in child welfare and so well aided by the State that there are now very few problem children.

Education in the Soviet Union is free and compulsory for all children from the age of 7 to 15. The majority of young people go on to some form of secondary or technical education, which is free and carries with it a maintenance allowance for all those who reach a certain standard; others pay a small fee. The same arrangement is in force for University education, which is thus much more accessible to all young people than it is in other countries. Schools and universities are co-educational: all children, regardless of sex, colour or nationality, have absolute equality of opportunity, and any who are specially gifted get free training in schools of art, drama, music or dancing.

There are infinite varieties of training in the Soviet Union, for adults as well as for the youth: Trade Schools,

for skilled industrial work, have courses varying from six months to two years; Workers' Faculties bring workers up to the standard necessary for entering a University; there are numbers of Agricultural Colleges, and a variety of evening and spare-time courses. The campaign to teach everyone to read and write was carried with the greatest vigour into the furthest corners of the Union; no one was allowed to be "too old to learn"; enthusiastic young Communists taught Uzbek and Kirghiz grandmothers to write their own names; caravan schools were sent among the gipsies and nomads; special boarding schools were provided for children from isolated Arctic settlements; 38 primitive peoples were provided with new alphabets, and the work of writing down many native dialects is still going on. As a result of all this, Russia has made an immense leap forward on the education front; from a country with 80 per cent. illiteracy, with thousands of "dark villages" where no one but the priest could read or write, she became in 20 years the country with the highest standard of education for the whole population than any other country in the world.

Education for citizenship begins at an early age. Already in the creches and nursery schools, which have charge of the children up to the age of seven, they learn to help one another, take turns in serving the meals, and join in communal games and action songs. In school work as in games, children work as one of a team, specially gifted children helping those who fall behind, friendly encouragement and patient explanation making it much less likely that a child will fall into the category of "dull and backward," so complacently accepted in many schools in this country.

Understanding of the economic basis of society, of the historical background of their own country and of the world, a scientific and realistic attitude to all the problems of life are gained by Soviet children while still at school. All the cultural and social activities and institutions connected with the schools and training colleges help to develop their initiative and knowledge and turn them into useful citizens of a Socialist State. Youth plays an important part in Soviet life and government; 284 deputies of the Supreme Soviet are under 30. Marvellous Pioneer Palaces and children's clubs are being built with laboratories and playrooms where children can invent, create, dance or act, play in orchestras or amuse themselves in any way they choose. The children's theatres and cinemas do not provide the children with "dope" or shoddy sentiment; only the very best is considered good enough for Soviet children. The last speech of the Boy, in the children's play "The Negro Boy and the Monkey," performed before the war in the Children's Theatre in Moscow, is significant:—

These presents are from the children of Moscow to

the children of the dark forest. For the Moscow children wish every child in all the world, be his colour white, red, yellow or black, be his race what it may, and be his language what it may, to enjoy the same full richness of life as Moscow children now enjoy.

Trade Unions

When a boy (or girl) enters industry, which he may do, usually after a technical training, at the age of 17, he joins a trade union, through which he participates in the democratic control of his hours, his wages, and the administration of the social and cultural funds of the factory. For the Soviet trade unions have control over the social insurance funds of the Government.

The Trade Unions build and administer Rest Homes and Sanatoria, to which thousands of workers go every year to spend their two to four weeks' paid holiday; they set up factory creches, Clubs and Palaces of Culture, provide swimming baths and stadiums, and many other amenities for the workers. They stimulate workers' education, organise training courses, dramatic clubs, concerts, debates, etc. Health insurance and old age and disability pensions are in the hands of special Commissariats, but the workers, through their trade unions, see to it that they are adequate and universal. In this connection the Webbs write:—

> "The Soviet worker realises, as the wage-earners of no other country do, that the future maintenance, in any adversity, of his wife and children, together with his own, have become a direct charge upon the community's yearly production, and a charge of which the administration is now entirely in the hands of his trade union organisation."*

Health Services

The most novel feature of the health services in the Soviet Union is that the ideal behind them is less that of curing individual cases than of creating a healthy community. Medical, dental and convalescent treatment are all free, a great deal of it is preventive; the doctors are paid by the State, and it is their job to keep people well, so no doctor has any vested interest in illness. There are splendid hospitals and clinics attached to all the big enterprises, where all kinds of treatment, such as mud baths, electrical therapy, massage, ultra-violet and other ray treatment, dental treatment, etc., are given under the best possible conditions. All workers are regularly examined and all signs of ill-health treated in their very earliest stages. Conditions in factories and mines are carefully regulated in the interest of the health of the workers. The

*Soviet Communism, by B. and S. Webb. Vol. 2.

Commissariat of Health is "responsible for all matters involving the people's health, and for the establishment of all regulations promoting it, with the aim of improving the health standards of the nation, and of abolishing all conditions prejudicial to health."

Such is the success of the Commissariat's methods that the death rate and infant mortality rate, which used to be much higher than those of other European countries, have now been more than halved; the birth rate is round about 40 per thousand, nearly double that of other countries, with the result that the population increased by 16 per cent. between 1926 and 1929, and the annual increase is about three million.

Sport

It is the job of the State medical service in the Soviet Union to keep the people fit; in this they are very ably assisted by the State's encouragement of the Sports and Physical Culture movement.

Large sums of money are allocated every year by the Government and trade unions to provide facilities for sport and physical culture all over the country. There are five national colleges for the training of athletes and instructors, and the big sports clubs, such as Dynamo and Spartak, have huge and well-equipped stadia in all the big towns, while trade unions, co-operative societies, schools and universities provide additional sports grounds in the smaller centres and villages. The Dynamo Stadium in Moscow seats 90,000 spectators; it is used for football and volleyball matches, motor-cycle, cycle and foot races, tennis matches, and athletic shows; late at night, when the athletes are all tired out, a floodlit platform serves for variety entertainment.

The trade unions provide swimming baths, yachting and other river clubs, skating rinks, tennis, football and volleyball facilities for their members. Leisure time recreation is more fully provided for in the Soviet Union than in any other country in the world. It is no uncommon thing to see tens of thousands of workers enjoying themselves in multifarious ways in the parks, which have cinemas, circuses, open-air theatres, mass dancing and games, special children's halls and playgrounds with trained helpers to look after them. Such parks are a feature of every town in Russia, and are being created in the villages also.

Defence

Many forms of sport are a useful corollary to the two years' military training which Soviet youths, with few exceptions, enter on at the age of 18. Ski-running, and the long distance ski races across Russia which Soviet sportsmen took part in before the war, can obviously be

turned to great advantage now, as also the passion for parachute-jumping which has seized the Soviet youth in recent years. General all-round sportsmanship is encouraged and a "Ready for Labour and Defence" badge is awarded to all those who pass a standard test in parachuting, jumping, ski-ing, running, mountain climbing, weight-lifting, boxing, cycling and wrestling. Roughly five million men and women wear the first degree badge, and 70,000 the higher quality second degree badge. Over a million Soviet children have won a similar badge for the easier sports. All this is organised under the care of medical experts and research workers who see to it that the training produces real fitness without overstrain.

Large numbers of workers and peasants (amounting before the war to over 12 millions) belong to "Osoaviakhim," or league for Aviation and Chemical Defence, a voluntary association pledged to active personal co-operation in defence of the country. Men and women in this association, which has branches in every factory and collective or State farm, form rifle and aero clubs, and study military science and aerial and chemical warfare. The efficiency and splendid co-ordination of the guerrilla warfare so successfully carried on behind the German lines is not accidental, it can be traced to the far-sighted training in home defence given to Russians of all ages for many years prior to the war.

The Council of Defence, presided over by the Commissar of Defence (Stalin himself, since July, 1941), co-ordinates the work of the Commissariats of Defence, the Navy, the Aviation industry, the Armaments and Munitions industries; thus the Soviet Union has a centralised control of all the armed forces and of the industries providing them with arms and munitions. There are a large number of military academies and classes for the training of officers; admission is open to all on ability alone, and all full-time students are paid while studying. There are no class distinctions in the Red Army; there is strict discipline while on duty, but officers and men live together on terms of equal and affectionate comradeship.

The fact that all members of the Forces are politically trained and well educated and encouraged to vote, stand for local and supreme soviets, and fully participate in the political life of the country is of vital significance. The Red Army man fights with enthusiasm and initiative, because he knows what he is fighting for and why; he can come to the workers of occupied and enemy countries as a comrade with a message that they can understand—hence the great change in the attitude of so many German prisoners after contact with the Red Army.

There are now more than 12 million trained men in the Soviet Union, giving a steady supply of fresh forces to the fighting front. Alongside them are large auxiliary forces of women, first-aid workers, nurses, commissariat

and liaison officers. All these forces spring from the people and are one with them. The whole Soviet people are fighting for something which they hold dearer than life itself; for their own homes, farms, factories and institutions; for towns and villages which they have created themselves and therefore regard as peculiarly their own; but, more important still, for a new way of life which they themselves have initiated and carried through, in spite of the most appalling difficulties. To preserve this they have shown themselves willing cheerfully to sacrifice everything—to burn their homes, their crops, their towns. Against such a spirit no tyranny can prevail.

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