

# An Engineer Looks at Russia



A British-  
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Publication

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by

WAL HANNINGTON

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**BRITISH-SOVIET SOCIETY**

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Wal Hannington

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By Wal Hannington

## OUR JOURNEY

**A**T the end of 1946, I went to Russia as a member of a delegation appointed by my trade union, the Amalgamated Engineering Union. The delegation itself has issued its own report. This is merely a record of the experiences and conclusions of one individual.

Our first personal contact with the Russians was when we stepped off the train at Berlin, at 7.30 on the morning of November 20. We were met by Soviet representatives who had cars waiting to take us to the hotel in the Russian sector, where we were to stay the night before going on by plane to the Soviet Union.

After an excellent breakfast we expressed a desire to make a tour of what remained of Berlin, and our Soviet hosts readily placed cars at our service for this purpose. The awful extent of the destruction which Nazism brought upon this city has to be seen to be understood.

Early the following morning, we were driven in cars to the Russian airfield on the outskirts of the city, where we boarded the special plane which was to carry us to Riga, our first port of call in the U.S.S.R. We stayed one night in Riga, capital of the Latvian Soviet Republic, and then flew direct to Moscow.

During our stay in the Soviet Union we were to be the guests of three Russian metalworkers' unions covering heavy engineering, light engineering, and automobile building and, as we stepped from the plane at the Moscow airfield, we were warmly greeted by the presidents of these unions—Comrades Grankin, Babbayan, and Borisoff—who, along with committeemen of their unions and a corps of press reporters and photographers (including cine cameras), had assembled on the airfield in a temperature of 22 degrees below zero (centigrade) to welcome us to their country. Introductions over, and photographs taken, we proceeded to a room in the airport where every member of the delegation was invited to the microphone to make a speech on the short wavelength of the Moscow radio. We each spoke extempore without any check on what we were going to say.

From the airport we drove over the wide ice-covered highway that leads into Moscow, a distance of about fifteen miles, to the Metropole Hotel, where rooms had been reserved for us. After our first meal at the hotel with our Russian hosts we were asked what parts of the Soviet Union we would like to visit and what we would like to see. Nothing had been cut-and-dried, our programme was to be in accordance with our own wishes and the Russians would make the arrangements accordingly. When we informed them that we would only be staying in the Soviet Union about one month, they expressed regret that we were not able to stay much longer. Our programme was then jointly worked out so that every available

moment could be utilised so that we could see the utmost in the comparatively short period of our visit. When flying conditions delayed our movements on a couple of occasions, prompt adjustments were jointly made in the programme to avoid any waste of time.

The three main centres covered were Moscow, Donbas (Ukraine) and Leningrad. In addition to the inspection of dozens of factories, we went to the Russian theatres and saw performances ranging from ballet, opera and drama, to light comedy, circus and the cinema. In addition we went to the famous Moscow Puppet Theatre. We also visited engineering apprentice schools, palaces of culture, creches, kindergartens, poly-clinics, museums, art galleries, historical exhibitions, the Winter Palace at Leningrad and the Kremlin in Moscow.

In addition to what we saw, we had many talks with factory directors, trade union organisers and shop stewards, and conferences with trade union executives, including Mr. Vassili Kuznetsov, president of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, from which we learned much about industrial conditions and the work of the Soviet trade unions.

In a booklet it is not possible to record all that we saw and heard—that would require a very long book—but I shall try to describe a number of things which I found of particular interest, and which I believe will interest other people, particularly trade unionists.

### THE SOVIET TRADE UNIONS

**T**HERE are 140 separate trade unions with a combined membership of 27 millions. They are organised on a purely industrial basis. It is the industry you work in, not the trade which you follow, that determines which union you belong to. For instance, in an engineering factory all the workers belong to the same union irrespective of whether they are machinists, electricians, boilermakers, labourers or office staff. If an engineer is working in the coal mining industry, he belongs to the Miners' Union. If he is a maintenance worker in a textile factory he would belong to the Textile Workers' Union, and so on, in all industries.

A system of transfer membership operates with all the unions so that, for instance, if a maintenance engineer changed his basis of employment from textile to mining or printing to pottery, his union membership would be transferred to the appropriate union catering for that industry, and as long as he works in that industry he would pay his contributions to that union. There is no complication about this, because under the system of trade union transfer the member carries his period of membership and his rights to benefit into the union to which he transfers. This system of trade union organisation means that in each industry the workers belong to a single union. The basis of the union structure is the factory or plant. In other words, the union branch has a factory, not a geographical, basis.

We were the guests of three unions. The Heavy Engineering Union (which includes iron and steel production and big-scale machine building), the Light Engineering Union, and the Automobile Workers' Union. The line of demarcation between these industries is apparently clearly defined and there is no overlapping in the work of the Unions.

Regional conferences, composed of elected representatives from the factory branches within a given industry, are held at which the regional committee of the union is elected by secret ballot for a term of two years. The central committee (executive council) of the union is elected by secret ballot at the Annual Convention of Regional Delegates. Within the central committee of each union a small administrative body, known as the Presidium, is elected. This varies in number from five to eleven according to the size of the central committee, which might be anything between 25 and 60 members according to the size of the union.

The Soviet trade unions are linked through the All-Union Trade Union Congress, which meets periodically to decide general trade union policy and to elect the All-Union Central Committee of Trade Unions, which corresponds to the General Council of the T.U.C. in Britain.

I was very much impressed by the work of the Soviet trade unions and especially by the power which they exercise in industry. They are, in fact, the governing authority in the field of production. They are part of the management in the factory. No factory director ever decides matters relating to production and administrative policy without full consultation with the trade union representatives, i.e., shop stewards in his factory, and, if necessary, with the trade union regional committee. The idea of the factory director deciding questions of policy on his own and then arbitrarily issuing his instructions to the workpeople in the manner which we know so well in Britain never occurs in a Soviet factory. Where differences of opinion are likely to exist, the most full and frank discussion takes place before the matter is resolved. Such discussions are not confined to the director's office, but are also carried on amongst the workpeople at factory meetings.

The Soviet trade unions are the custodians of the great Five Year Plans and play a fundamental part in the organisation of production. They can do this without any doubts or hesitations because the Socialist basis of society in the U.S.S.R. provides a system of planned economy in which they have no fear of overproduction and economic slump resulting in unemployment. Greater production to the Soviet worker means greater social security, and a commensurate increase in the standard of living of the entire Soviet people. I realised that that was the explanation for the keen enthusiasm which I found amongst the workers in all the factories which we visited to achieve and surpass the terms of the present Five Year Plan.

The Russian trade unions also cover a wider field in other respects than do our British unions. In addition to regulating wages and working conditions they play a very decisive part in such matters as housing, social insurance, child welfare, education and cultural development, factory regulations, safety and welfare, health, recreation and sports.

In the central committees of the trade unions these questions are attended to by special departments at the head offices of the unions, each department being under the personal charge of a member of the central committee. At workshop level similar departmentalisation exists, with elected representatives responsible. In the large factories commissions are elected to attend to each of the subjects.

In our interview with Comrade Kasakov, chief of the organising department of the All-Union Central Committee, I was informed that approximately six million of the 27 million Soviet trade unionists are undertaking active duties in some phase of union work

I was very much impressed by the relationship of management and workers in the factories which I visited. The factory directors and chief engineers whom I met were all enthusiastic and energetic leaders and most of them were under 43 years of age. Discussions with them revealed that they had a very thorough technical knowledge of engineering. The Soviet directors were not simply administrators such as we often find in British factories, but were men who also had a sound practical knowledge of the trade.

When I asked directors whether any antagonism existed between them and the union representatives in their factories they showed surprise that such a question should be put. They stated that they were members of the trade union themselves. In some cases they were members of the factory trade union committee, having been elected to it by the workers in their factory.

I saw that an entirely different relationship exists in the Soviet factories between management and workers from that which exists in Britain. There is there a marked co-operation between the two which makes an enormous difference to production.

The factories belong to the State and, therefore, belong to the people, because it is a Workers' Socialist State. Hence, the factory director in the Soviet Union has no different class basis to the worker, but only a difference of status and function. Therefore, he has no grounds for a spirit of antagonism towards the trade union or the workers. On the contrary, I found that a real spirit of teamwork is an outstanding feature of industrial administration in the Soviet Union. The Russian workers are proud of their past achievements and full of confidence and optimism about the future, because they know that they collectively plan and control their own future.

Trade union consciousness is very strong in the Soviet Union and, although membership of a trade union is voluntary, the overwhelming majority of workers belong to their respective unions. At the factories which I visited I was informed by the chairman of the factory committee that the number of non-unionists amounted to less than four per cent of the entire personnel in the factory. It is important to note that in the U.S.S.R. trade union organisation at every level has a technical section to which directors, foremen and technicians belong, thereby maintaining a very close link between the administrative staff and the workers. I always found that the director was equally as proud as any worker to proclaim his trade union membership.

In every factory there is a trade union factory committee elected annually. The procedure for these elections in large factories employing thousands of workers is as follows: In each department of the factory a meeting is held and for every ten workers one delegate is elected to attend the annual factory conference, at which the election of the factory

committee takes place, consisting of a representative from every department in the factory. This committee, in effect, is the branch committee of the union. In addition to this, there are local committees which make provision for workers employed in local offices and small establishments which are not large enough to have their own committee. These local committees consist of one elected representative from each of the small establishments in a given locality.

In large factories, in addition to the factory committee, departments in which there are more than 100 workers employed also elect a department committee. In every department of a factory there is a trade union dues collector, who is responsible for collecting the trade union contribution monthly from the trade union members and paying it to the secretary of the factory committee, whose function is similar to that of our branch secretaries. The amount of the trade union contribution is based upon the wage of the worker, and is equivalent to one per cent of his monthly wage. Therefore, the director and highly paid workers pay a larger contribution to the union funds than the lower paid workers.

In large factories a full-time trade union organiser—equivalent to our shop stewards' convenor—is elected by secret ballot of the trade union workers. All full-time officials of the trade unions, whether factory, regional, or national, are elected by secret ballot. Candidates for regional posts are nominated and elected by the factory delegates at the regional conferences, and those contesting for national posts are nominated and elected by the delegates at the national congress of the union. All members of the union are eligible for nomination, irrespective of whether they belong to the Communist Party or not.

At all levels of election the qualifications of the candidates are very freely discussed before the ballot takes place. Free criticism and discussion about the candidates is an outstanding feature in all trade union elections and in political elections to the State Soviets.

Trade union officials who fail to carry out their duties satisfactorily can be recalled. The demand for a new election has to be supported by not less than one-third of the membership represented by the official.

The Soviet trade unions are not party organisations. Membership is open to all workers. Neither are they any more State-controlled than the unions in Britain. On the contrary, they exercise more influence on the affairs of State than our unions do, because the Soviet trade unions are the recognised basic organisations of industrial administration in the system of Socialist economy. In all matters relating to industrial management the trade unions exercise a decisive power; in the fixing of wage rates and piecework prices, in the drafting and operation of the Five Year Plans, in framing the labour legislation and factory laws governing hours of labour, factory health conditions, and safety measures.

I had evidence of this power of the Soviet trade unions not only in conferences with the chief trade union leaders of various departments of the All-Union Central Committee, but also in numerous talks with factory committee representatives, factory directors and others.

## AT THE SOVIET FACTORIES

I VISITED various engineering factories in the regions of Moscow, Donbas, and Leningrad, along with other members of the delegation. We were always escorted by the President of the appropriate Soviet trade union and interpreters. On arrival at the factory we were always cordially received by the director and other members of the management in company with the trade union organiser, or chairman of the factory committee, in the director's room. After an exchange of greetings, the director would then explain the history of the factory, the character of the work and the plan of production. We were then invited to ask any question on which we required information.

After we had exhausted our questions, we were then invited to make a tour of inspection in the factory. The director always accompanied us and gave us full explanations on the technical processes of the job. Also, without any restraint, we talked to any workers we wanted to, regarding their job, their wages, or their general working conditions. The workers always showed great interest in our visit and we received many friendly greetings. I never saw any sign of "heads down, the director is about," such as I had often experienced in British factories. There always seemed to be a friendly relationship between director and worker.

After a tour of the factory, which sometimes took several hours, we always returned to the director's office for a final talk. We were then asked if we had any more questions, and after questions, we were invited by the director to make any criticisms concerning the work or the management. I seldom found any grounds for criticism, and when I did, it was only on minor points, but it was always listened to with serious attention and usually answered by a sound explanation. In fact, the complete frankness which was shown in all our talks at the factories not only revealed a spirit of full trust and friendship, but seemed to me evidence of the strength and confidence which exists in the industrial administration of the Soviet Union.

No question was barred. We even addressed questions to directors and chief engineers in the presence of their staff and factory committee representatives concerning their personal history and the salary which they received. These questions were never evaded. They were always met with good humour and received a straight and detailed answer. For instance, at a very large plant at New Kramatorsk, Ukraine, producing steel and heavy engineering equipment including turbines and rolling mills, and which normally employs 23,000 workers, the chief engineer, who is 56 years of age, told us in reply to our questions that he was the son of a Ukrainian peasant and at the time of the 1917 revolution, when he was 26 years old, he was completely uneducated, could neither read nor write. After the revolution he availed himself of the opportunity to study under the Soviet educational system, won his scholarships and graduated to the University. He studied engineering and mathematics, and then worked in industry and received promotion to a number of administrative posts and in 1937 was appointed chief engineer at the New Kramatorsk plant.

The salaries of directors and chief engineers whom we questioned were usually around 3,000 roubles a month, and in addition they receive bonus

payments according to the extent to which they fulfil the plan of production. One director told us that his income reached 8,000 roubles some months.

The frankness with which they discussed these questions was interesting, and I could not help wondering what kind of reception such personal questions would have met with if addressed to British engineering directors by a trade union delegation.

It is impossible to record here all the information which I gathered, but a few brief notes on each factory will give the reader some idea of industrial conditions.

### **Bodolsk Sewing Machine Factory**

This factory is in the small town of Bodolsk, about 15 miles from Moscow. Its sole product is sewing machines. It has its own foundry and makes and assembles the machine from the casting to the finished job. The factory includes a needle-making department.

In 1942 the sewing machine plant was transferred to the Urals and continued to produce sewing machines during the war whilst the factory at Bodolsk was equipped with special machinery for armament work. The sewing machine plant was brought back to Bodolsk in January, 1946.

At the end of 1946, this factory employed 9,750 workers—7,691 males and 2,059 females. The reorganisation was not then complete, but their production was 5,000 sewing machines per month. They aim at producing 150,000 in 1947, an average of 12,500 per month, and in 1950, the last year of the Plan, they aim at 500,000 machines, approximately 41,700 machines per month.

Ninety-eight per cent of the workers belong to the trade union. The two per cent unorganised are mainly new workers.

### **The Stalin plant, Moscow**

This is an automobile manufacturing plant situated on the outskirts of Moscow. The factory was started under private enterprise in 1914 and employed 800 workers. After the 1917 revolution it became State-owned and in various years big extensions were made. Today it employs 40,000 workers. It consists of a number of large buildings adjacent to each other, very well planned, surrounded by wide, tree-lined avenues and flower gardens. The equipment of this factory also was moved to the Urals during the war, when German armies were advancing on Moscow, and with new equipment the factory continued to work on armaments. After the war only 50 per cent of the original plant was brought back from the Urals and with new equipment added, the factory is now getting into full swing. The 50 per cent of equipment left in the Urals is also being added to and, therefore, the original factory has become the basis of two great motor manufacturing establishments.

The Stalin plant, Moscow, has its own steel furnaces and foundry and also produces all its own tools and stampings. It is, in fact, a complete manufacturing establishment for motor lorries and cars. Its chief production today is 3-ton lorries and a super-luxury car. The drawing office is now working on plans for the mass production of a luxury motor bus.

The plant will not be developed to full capacity until 1948, but today the 3-ton lorry is in mass production and 165 lorries per day are rolling off the assembly line. We studied the conveyer track assembly line and I was of the opinion that this was equally as efficient as the best of our British assembly lines.

I saw the cars, which are indeed a super-luxury job, equal in finish to any of the best American cars. They are approximately 45 h.p., 8 cylinder. These are not a mass production job, and are not in constant production. Therefore, it was not possible to obtain any definite figures about monthly production.

#### **Moscow Toolmaking plant.**

This factory was started in 1919 by a group of Russian emigrants who returned from America after the revolution. They were highly skilled toolmakers, whose knowledge and training was especially valuable to the Soviet Republic in those early days when the Soviet Government was confronted with the industrial backwardness inherited from the Tsarist regime. This group of efficient revolutionary tradesmen left the comparative luxury of life in America to return to the very hard conditions of the revolutionary period in Russia in order to devote themselves to the industrial development of the new Socialist system. The Soviet Government gave them the necessary facilities to start this toolmaking plant and the precision work which they began in a small way has developed on a very large scale not only in this Moscow factory but in many similar plants throughout the Soviet Union.

Today the Moscow factory employs more than 2,000 workers, 40 per cent of them being women, many of whom have a very advanced knowledge of precision toolmaking. We talked to a young woman of 23 years of age who was working on gauge inspection and correction. She informed us that she was on the top skilled rate. In the machine shop we saw many women doing skilled work on form grinding and complicated screwcutting. The number of youths who were doing advanced work on centre lathes was very noticeable. For instance, I saw a lad of 17 years of age doing a very good job on Hob relief turning. In addition to his skill, this lad had a record as a Stakhanovite worker, i.e., one who maintains a very high production standard. I have never seen in Britain such a high proportion of young workers as I saw in this factory doing precision toolmaking. It was a very modern plant and included certain machines which were quite original and which had been designed and built in that factory.

The director of this factory today is a keen man, forty-two years of age. The assistant chief engineer is a woman about forty years of age, who is also in charge of the apprentice school attached to this factory, giving practical and theoretical training.

Like many other Moscow factories, the plant at this establishment was transferred to the Urals during the war. With this plant restored to its original place, the workers are proud to announce that they are now one month in advance of their quota in the Five Year Plan and expect to increase this advance in 1947.

#### **We Visit the Donbas, Ukraine**

Our Soviet comrades said they would like us to see not only the good side of things in the Soviet Union, but something of the difficulties which are confronting them as a result of the war. Therefore, we decided to visit the Donbas area in the Ukraine, where some of the heaviest fighting took place.

We travelled from Moscow by air to Stalino and were flying for more than five hours over the vast, war-devastated regions of the Ukraine. From Stalino airport we had another journey for about 100 miles by special bus over the smashed roads and temporary bridges to New Kramatorsk in the heart of the Donbas. We had left Moscow at 9 a.m. and arrived at our destination at 8 p.m., having covered a distance of about 800 miles over the whole of which towns and villages had been destroyed and the countryside laid waste.

There was no hotel in New Kramatorsk, but our Russian hosts had made excellent provision for us in a large apartment flat which had been repaired and made habitable.

Kramatorsk had been built in the 1930s as a modern town. It was now in complete ruins, but it was still possible to discern its fine layout, the wide, tree-lined streets, the well-planned blocks of workers' flats and the parks and flower gardens.

When the Nazis invaded this town in their advance to the Caucasus they publicly executed 6,000 workers and sent another 6,000 to Germany as slaves. They seized the 80,000 books in the town library and burnt them, along with other works of art, in great bonfires on the streets. Later, they were driven out by the Red Army for a short period, but they came back again and in their final retreat they destroyed everything. Not a building was left whole. Those that could not be burned were dynamited. Reservoirs and wells were poisoned. Absolutely nothing was left intact.

#### **The Stalin Steel plant, New Kramatorsk**

The principal industrial establishment in New Kramatorsk was the Stalin Steel plant and heavy engineering works. This establishment, like everything else, had been completely wrecked by the Germans in their final retreat. We visited this great plant and saw the immensity of the destruction. The construction of this plant was started in 1930 and took four years to build. It stands on 10,000 square metres of ground. The furnaces produced 180,000 tons of steel per year. Before the war, 23,000 workers were employed in the steel plant and heavy engineering works.

Out of a total population of nearly 100,000 before the war, only 800 were living in the town in the last days of the German occupation. Those who had not been killed or sent as slaves to Germany had been evacuated to the Urals to work, or were with the Red Army, or scattered about the countryside with detachments of partisans.

From these facts one can get some idea of the colossal task which confronted the Soviet authorities in the Ukraine in restoring Kramatorsk and its industry. Well, our delegation saw that job being done, and we were amazed at the progress which had been made in such a short time.

In the director's office of the Stalin plant we heard the story of this effort from the beginning, a story of devotion to service, of selflessness and dauntless courage which stirred in us the deepest admiration. But, with modesty, we were reminded that there were hundreds of Kramatorsks in the Ukraine.

Five days after the Germans had finally retreated from this town, the Stalin plant director returned to commence the work of reconstruction. Under his leadership 1,200 workers were mobilised from the surrounding area to tackle this task. For the first month they worked under terrible difficulties; scanty food; no clean water supply; no heat; no light; no place to lie down at night except amongst the ruins. Steadily, in spite of their personal privations, they began to bring Kramatorsk back to life. Each day, more of the old workers who had been fighting with the partisans returned to the town to assist in the herculean task and each day the reconstruction effort mounted. The population steadily increased and were housed in the repaired basements of the burned-out buildings and in temporary hutments on the outskirts of the town. Part of the power station and Stalin plant was restored and set in motion again.

Such progress has been made that by the end of 1946 four steel furnaces were in full action again, and the machine shops were making blooming mills, turbines, and other heavy equipment.

The engineers of New Kramatorsk still have a huge job of reconstruction to do before the plant is fully restored, but with only half the pre-war number of workers their production had already reached 60 per cent of pre-war output; their 1947 target is 100 per cent. The plant has been awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labour by the Soviet Government for surpassing its production plan.

#### **Orjhenikidze Works**

We also visited the pre-Soviet factory in the old town of Kramatorsk, adjacent to the new. It had been badly damaged by the Germans, but not so completely as the plant in the new town. It is a machine-tool factory, and has now been restored to working order. Before the war, 7,000 were employed, today 5,000, of whom 1,200 are youths between the age of 16 and 17 years.

In their discussions on the production plans, the workers have declared their intention to treble the pre-war production before the end of the Five Year Plan.

#### **Kirov Plant, Makeyevka**

Makeyevka is also in the Donbas, about sixty miles from Kramatorsk. The steel works which we visited, now known as the Kirov plant, was started in 1898. Following the 1917 revolution, big developments were made at this establishment and before the war it had become an outstanding modern plant. As elsewhere in the Ukraine, the Germans completely wrecked this plant before they retreated, but quickly following the liberation by the Red Army, the work of reconstruction was commenced. Before the war, 18,000 workers were employed here. Today there are 13,000, and as more labour becomes available the aim is to increase the number to 25,000.

The progress of reconstruction in the midst of the ruins left by the Nazis has certainly been a marvellous achievement. Two of the four open-hearth furnaces were again in full working order. They also had eight blast furnaces in action, and will shortly have 18. Here I saw a very modern system used in the making of small steel ingots, with a conveyer track of travelling moulds which run under a continuous flow of molten metal and finally empty out down chutes into transport wagons.

We spent six hours at this plant. I was greatly impressed by its efficiency in every respect, and consider that it compares with the best that can be found in Britain or the U.S.A.

The director, Birobrov, is 42 years of age, the assistant director is 35 years, and the chief engineer is 43 years.

#### **Chemical Plant**

We also visited the coke ovens and chemical plant at Makeyevka. The reconstruction work is now well advanced and they have reached 50 per cent of the pre-war capacity in coke production, turning out 19,000 tons of coke per 24 hours. The by-product plant, which before the war produced benzol and tar, has not yet been restored, but when it is they will also produce ammonia sulphate for agricultural purposes.

#### **Linotype Machine Factory, Leningrad**

Leningrad is the city which will stand immortal in history for the heroism of its people who withstood the siege of the German armies for 900 days. Vast numbers died of starvation, but the city never surrendered. Before the war, its population was approximately four million. In 1946 it was only two million, but is increasing again steadily.

During our stay in Leningrad we had all our meals in the banqueting hall of the Astoria Hotel.

When the German armies had reached the outskirts of Leningrad, the High Military Command was so sure they were going to capture the city that they actually decided the date and place of their victory banquet. Printed invitation cards were issued, some of which ultimately fell into the hands of the Red Army and are now preserved as museum pieces. The magnificent hall where our delegation sat for their meals was the place chosen for the Nazi feast which never took place, because the indomitable courage of the Leningraders held back the invaders for nearly three years until they were finally routed.

We made a visit to the Leningrad linotype machine factory. The factory was built for machine-tool production in the Tsarist days and in 1925 and 1932 big extensions were made by the Soviet Government. In 1932 the factory began the production of linotype machines, but during the war it turned over completely to arms production and reverted back to linotypes only in 1945.

During the siege the plant was damaged by German artillery bombardment, but it has now been restored and is producing 30 linotype machines per month as against 25 per month pre-war. This increase has been made with less workers. Before the war there were 3,500 workers employed,



whilst today there are slightly less than 3,000, of whom 70 per cent are women and girls.

We saw all the processes of production and the finished machine. It is certainly a first-class linotype of Russian design.

#### **Krasnia Gvardia factory, Leningrad**

This is a surgical instrument factory. It was started during the reign of Peter II and was the first factory of its kind in Russia. It became world famous for the craftsmanship of its workers and the quality and variety of its instruments. After the 1917 revolution, this factory was named "Krasnia Gvardia" which means "Red Guard," because the workers here took a leading part in the formation of the civilian Red Guard brigades during the revolution.

The Soviet Government's policy of removing the restrictions which had formerly dominated the medical profession, and giving encouragement and facilities to much larger numbers of young men and women to study and obtain their degrees in this field of science inevitably increased the demand for surgical instruments and, therefore, in the years following the revolution this factory was greatly extended.

Before the German armies reached the outskirts of Leningrad the plant and equipment of this factory was transferred to the Urals, and has not yet been fully restored. But today 1,500 workers are employed here. There are many fine old craftsmen here who have worked in this factory all their lives. The director of the factory proudly stated that the workers here had fulfilled the first Five Year Plan in four years. He also said that there is still an urgent need for more instruments, because of the tremendous number of Red Army men who suffered major war injuries.

In our tour of the factory we were very much impressed by the skill of the women workers as well as the men. Before we left, we were taken to a large exhibition room where we saw many hundreds of different instruments made in this factory. They were explained to us by the resident medical professor, who also stated that from time to time scientific conferences of prominent surgeons and scientists are held here.

#### **The Stalina works, Leningrad**

This is a heavy engineering plant which, before 1917, belonged to a German firm. It then employed only a few hundred workers, but in 1928, and each subsequent Five Year Plan, the Soviet Government made big extensions and just before the war it was employing 7,000 workers. In 1930 it designed and produced a 100,000 kilowatt turbine. During the war it turned over to the production of armaments and although during the siege the factory was hit 500 times by shells and 18 times by aerial bombs, and suffered many casualties, it never closed but continued under fire, turning out weapons for the defenders of Leningrad. Also it sent special volunteer brigades of workers to the Leningrad front to repair tanks. These workers often manned the tanks and went into battle. A very close friendship grew up between the workers of this factory and the soldiers. During the leave periods soldiers and officers frequently came to this factory to meet the

workers and express appreciation for the job they were doing. At mass meetings they entered into what the Soviet people call "Socialist emulation," each pledging still greater efforts to defend their city and defeat the Fascist enemy. Much heroism arose from the spirit of this contact. This bond of unity between soldiers and workers saved the city.

In 1945 this factory started the production of turbines again and they are now making six mighty turbines for the Dnieper Dam power station, which is now being rebuilt. The turbines, which were installed at this mighty hydro-electric power station and destroyed during the war, were American. The new ones will be entirely the product of Soviet engineers. We saw this work in an advanced stage of construction.

In addition to the new work, this factory is also engaged on repairing damaged plant from various power stations in the Soviet Union.

I was very much impressed by the quality of workmanship and the size of many of the machines. I saw there what are probably the largest vertical lathes in the world, and they were designed and built in Leningrad.

When we returned to the director's office after our tour of inspection we were asked for our opinion and criticisms. We had no criticism to make!

The director is 42 years of age. He started work as an apprentice fitter and his father was a conductor on the railway. Before we left him he warmly thanked us for visiting his factory and ended by expressing the hope for closer contact between the British and Soviet engineers and for permanent friendship and peace between the two nations. We heartily reciprocated that sentiment.

#### **VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

**I**N my visits to the factories I saw what at first appeared to be a waste of labour by the unnecessary coupling up of persons on certain jobs which could be done by one person—two workers at machines which only required one operator. But I soon discovered that there was a very sound explanation for this. The worker who appeared to be unnecessary was, in fact, an inexperienced worker receiving practical instruction from a skilled fellow worker.

The Soviet Union suffered seven million killed in the war and many millions more gravely wounded. Field-Marshal Montgomery was undoubtedly correct when, on January 6, 1947, he declared that, in his opinion, "the nation which suffered most severely in the war was Soviet Russia." The result of these terrible losses on the battlefield and the mass extermination of the civilian populations by the Nazis in the vast areas which they invaded has produced a problem of manpower shortage in industry, a problem which the Soviet Government is tackling in its usual bold way.

Certain kinds of skilled and semi-skilled labour are urgently wanted; therefore, in Soviet industry, instead of waiting for this labour slowly to emerge by normal experience and development, workers who show the necessary aptitude are placed under the personal instruction of a qualified worker for a short intensive training until they are capable of doing the job alone.

It means a temporary sacrifice of the productive effort of that worker, but on the other hand it does mean the rapid advancement of that class of labour which is most urgently needed.

Many of those who were receiving personal instruction from men were women workers. In the Soviet Union the men have no fear about training women for the job, because there is no danger of women being used as cheap labour. Women have equal rights with men, and the cardinal principle of the rate for the job is never in question.

In addition to the specialised training mentioned above, full opportunities are provided for the youth thoroughly to learn their trade and those who have the ability do not necessarily have to wait until they reach the age of 21 before they occupy the status of skilled workers and receive the full rate.

The school-leaving age in elementary schools in the Soviet Union is 16 years, and before they reach that age the educational system makes especial provision for the boys and girls who wish to enter industry. Between the ages of 14 and 16 years they attend special apprentice schools attached to the factories where they receive a very sound elementary training before they start work in the factory to follow their apprenticeship to a higher stage.

Their general education does not cease when they attend these schools. The curriculum is so arranged that on alternate days they receive practical trade instruction and general education. The general education lessons include much that is connected with technical theory.

At these schools the pupils do a six-hour day under qualified tutors. Their training and education is completely free, the necessary books are supplied without charge and the pupil receives a payment of 250 roubles per month.

I visited the apprentice school for girls at the linotype machine factory, Leningrad. There were about 60 girls present between the ages of 14 and 16 years. Most of them had lived in Leningrad during the siege and every one of these had lost a near relative through starvation during that terrible period.

I was told that those who were physically able to do so continued to attend their elementary school for studies, except on days when the German bombardment was too severe.

It was not possible to talk to these children about their sufferings without a feeling of deep emotion. When I asked them what they thought of the future their faces lit up with hope, and it was most inspiring to see and hear how confident they were about the rebuilding of their country and the eagerness which they expressed to study and make themselves proficient so that they can play their part.

Nowhere in town or village did I see any signs of youth hanging around street corners with nothing to do or behaving like young ruffians. There is a strong social consciousness amongst the Soviet youth which expresses itself in a keenness to learn and contribute to the well-being of their country.

They know that economic and social progress depends upon the will and the work of the people and, therefore, they take a keen interest in production and are very proud if they can win the honourable title of "Stakhanovite." They are inspired by the knowledge that they are citizens of a Socialist

State and that the country and the wealth created by the people belongs to the people.

This must not be taken to imply that Soviet youth have no thought or time for recreation. On the contrary, recreation and sport are prominent features of Soviet life. Facilities are provided by the Government and the trade unions on a scale such as we have never reached in Britain. To see the Soviet youth as I did in their clubs, dance halls, concert rooms and theatres is to witness how enthusiastic, happy and carefree they can be in their leisure hours.

## WAGES IN THE SOVIET UNION

**W**HAT wages do the workers receive in the Soviet Union? It is not a question to which a simple answer can be given. First, the rate of exchange between Russian and British currency is no guide whatever. For instance, I met a jig borer at the Stalin Automobile Plant in Moscow who earned 2,500 roubles a month. The official exchange rate is 21 roubles to the £, and at that rate the jig borer was earning £119 per month! Well, his wage was a high one, but nothing so high as that figure would indicate in English terms.

The best measurement is of course purchasing power—the relationship of wages to prices. Here again other factors must be taken into account if we wish to get a true estimate of the position. First, in regard to social services, the Soviet Union is far in advance of any other country in the world. The insurance benefits are much more generous than ours, and the Soviet worker pays no contribution.

The Webbs once described the benefits of social insurance in the Soviet Union as a "socialised wage" and estimated it as equivalent to an addition of one-third to the ordinary wage.

Secondly, one must take into account the very low rents in the Soviet Union—decided by the local Soviets and calculated on the principle of a percentage of the wage of the worker. In Soviet law this must not exceed ten per cent, though the usual rent is between four and six per cent of the income. Some workers in Britain pay landlords as much as 30 and 40 per cent of their wage in rent.

### Two Price Levels

Thirdly, there are two price levels in the Soviet Union. One for rationed goods and the other for unrationed goods. The latter fall mainly into the category of luxuries. In foodstuffs the rationing system appears to be quite generous in regard to the essentials of life. For rationed goods, workers are registered at special shops in the locality or at stores connected with their place of work. Large factories also have their own farms and the produce from these farms—meat, milk, eggs, cheese, butter, vegetables and fruit—can be purchased as unrationed goods by the workers in that factory at low prices.

Apart from these, unrationed goods are sold in what are known as "Commercial Stores," which are State-owned establishments in which prices are much higher—similar to the position in Britain between utility and non-utility prices.

It was explained to me by one of the trade union leaders that as soon as the system of rationing is ended (this is expected before the end of 1947) these "Commercial Stores" will have their prices adjusted to a normal level, but in the meantime the money derived from the high price sale of these unrationed goods is being used for the economic restoration of the war-devastated areas of the Soviet Union and the supply of essential needs to the people of these areas.

In my enquiries into the wages system I obtained a very comprehensive account at a discussion at the Palace of Labour with Kaganovitch, deputy-chief of the wages department of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. I also discussed wages with factory directors, factory committee representatives and trade union organisers.

### **Eight Basic Rates**

In the Soviet Union there are eight grades of basic wages in the engineering industry, covering all workers from the new apprentice to the fully skilled worker. These grades are not based upon age or sex, but on ability. In addition to the basic wage, all production workers are employed on a system of piecework, and non-productive workers receive additional payments in the form of a collective production bonus. The supervisory staff—including the director—are paid at rates relative to their status and responsibility, and they also receive bonus payments when the factory fulfils or overfulfils its production plan.

The Soviet system of piece-work is very interesting. It not only provides the ordinary incentive to increase production by a corresponding increase in the amount of money earned, but at a certain stage of production there is a progressive increase in the price of the job.

This is arrived at by fixing what is called a "norm" of production on each job. The "norm" is a production figure which it is estimated can be reached by the worker of average ability. When the worker passes that "norm" the piecework price of the job is increased for each percentage increase in production. A number of systems are used, according to the type of job, but one example which was given to me will help to explain what is meant by the progressive piecework price.

*Example:* The piecework price is one rouble per unit produced. The production "norm" is ten units. Therefore, a worker who produced five units would receive five roubles as piecework earnings over and above his basic wage. If he produced ten units he would receive ten roubles. But beyond ten units he would increase his piecework earnings as follows:—

Units	Roubles	Extra payment in roubles
10	10	Nil
11	11.35	.35
12	13.50	1.50
13	17.50	4.50
15	22.50	7.50

It will be seen from this example that for the five units produced beyond the "norm" of ten, the worker would receive 12½ roubles as compared with ten roubles for the "norm" of ten units.

One can realise how, under such a system "Stakhanovite" workers are able to earn very high wages which enable them to spend quite lavishly in the commercial stores. They have less need to save money because they are covered by a very complete system of social security and under the Socialist system of economy they cannot invest money in a private business and live by exploiting their fellow men. Therefore, they either spend what they earn, or lend it to the Government for economic and social development by purchasing State Bonds.

In the Soviet Union the conditions under which the work has to be performed is also taken into account both in regard to the length of the working day and the calculation of piecework earnings. For instance, workers engaged on work classified as unhealthy do a six-hour day instead of the normal eight-hour day. Workers engaged on hot work—for example, foundry workers—are given special increases in the piecework price when their production exceeds the "norm." For increases up to 25 per cent above the "norm," the piecework price is increased by 100 per cent, and beyond 25 per cent above "norm" the price is increased by 200 per cent.

### **No Antagonisms**

In the Soviet Union wage standards are not decided by a tug-of-war between two classes in society. On the contrary, they are systematically planned in accordance with the national plan of production. Therefore, the Soviet worker has no need to fear unemployment arising from production exceeding the purchasing power of the people, because under the Soviet system of planned economy the living standards of the people are geared to the production output of Soviet industry.

This does not mean that there is no variation in incomes. There certainly is a considerable variation according to the service which the citizen renders to society in professional or industrial skill and responsibility.

In factories which I visited I found no evidence whatever to substantiate the charge which is frequently levelled against Socialism, namely, that it destroys personal incentive and establishes a monotonous uniformity of existence, but found that the very opposite was the case in the Soviet Union.

Minimum wage standards are laid down in all industrial establishments, but the earnings above those minimums vary considerably.

Let us take a few examples.

At the Stalin automobile plant in Moscow the minimum wage for any adult worker is 450 roubles per month, but on the conveyer assembly line the minimum rate per month was 630 roubles and the maximum was 1,200. In the toolroom of this plant we met a worker who told us that his earnings are between 2,000 and 2,500 roubles per month.

At the heavy machine building plant in New Kramatorsk, Donbas, the minimum adult wage was 450 roubles per month, and the highest earnings were 3,500 roubles per month.

At the Makeyevka steel plant the leading hand on the open-hearth furnaces had a basic wage of 2,500 roubles per month. In addition to that, he receives bonus payments according to the fulfilment of the production plan.

At the linotype machine factory, Leningrad, the basic rates of the eight grades are as follows:

Grade	Rate per hour in Roubles
1	1.51
2	1.69
3	1.94
4	2.17
5	2.51
6	2.89
7	3.33
8	3.85

This would give to the apprentice in Grade 1 a monthly basic wage of approximately 217 roubles and to the skilled worker (male or female) in Grade 8 approximately 595 roubles. Over and above the basic wage there are piecework earnings or production bonus. I found that the average earnings in this factory were roughly 800 roubles per month. In the tool-room the average was 900 roubles. A worker, recently demobbed from the Soviet Army, operating a tool miller, told us that his earnings in the previous month had been 2,100 roubles.

At the toolmaking factory in Moscow I spoke to a youth of 17 years of age on a centre-lathe doing hob relief turning. He had already established himself in Grade 5 and had earned 900 roubles in the previous month. A woman worker of 32 was in Grade 6. She was operating a form grinder and had earned 1,300 roubles in the previous month. A young woman of 23 employed on gauge inspection was in Grade 8, the top skilled grade.

#### Factory Canteens

We made an unexpected visit to a factory canteen one day in Makeyevka, Donbas. We took a meal which consisted of a large plate of vegetable soup, grilled pork and chip potatoes (substantial quantity of both), a glass of tea and a slice of bread. The cost of that meal was 3 roubles, 90 kopecks.

The average wage in that factory for adults was 750 roubles per month. Reduced to a weekly basis that would be 187½ roubles per week. If, for the purpose of this calculation, we estimate the rouble at 6d. in English money, we see that the average wage is £4 13s. 6d. per week and the cost of the meal which we had was slightly less than 2s.

Meals served in Soviet factory canteens are today on the rations and, consequently, the prices are on a par with the prices in the rationed shops, and it is my opinion that in spite of the set-back caused by the war, the standard of living in the Soviet Union is a comparatively good one, especially if we take into account the fact that the Soviet worker is able to spend a larger proportion of his wages on food than the British worker, because of very low rents, free medical service, low charges for electricity and water, and very cheap fares.

The big thing to remember about living conditions in the Soviet Union is that they are directly related to the agricultural and industrial development of the nation. They are not subject to capitalist competition, Stock Exchange gambling or market restrictions. Wages in the Soviet Union are planned in relation to production, and there is no employing class which has the power to impose wage reductions on the workers at will.

The factory director in the Soviet Union has no power to interfere with basic wages or piecework prices. If circumstances arise which appear to justify an alteration, there must be full consultation and agreement with the trade union committee, and then only on condition that such alteration does not violate the labour conditions laid down in agreements between the Trade Union Central Council and the appropriate government department.

If the trade union committee in the factory disagrees with any alteration proposed by the director, he is forbidden under the labour laws to impose such a change.

Since all industrial development in the Soviet Union is planned, wages are also planned and the total amount of wages paid in any period is decided as part of the whole plan of production, based on estimates of resources and labour productivity.

The trade unions play a leading part in drafting the Plan and seeing that it is carried through. I saw much evidence of the fact that the trade unions are really the dominant power in Soviet industry because the Soviet State IS a Workers' Socialist State.

#### THE FIVE YEAR PLAN

**T**HE first Five Year Plan was launched in the year 1928. It was followed by a Second and Third Plan, but the Third Plan was never completed because the war intervened.

At the end of the war the Fourth Plan was started and will be completed in 1950.

We can all remember how the press in Britain and America scoffed at the announcement of the first Plan. Judging the situation from the standpoint of capitalist economics they simply could not believe that a Five Year Plan was practical, and much less could they believe that the people of the Soviet Union could achieve the great industrial developments which were laid down in that Plan in five years. Well, it is now a matter of history that the Soviet workers not only achieved all that the Plan called for, but in many respects they over-fulfilled the Plan long before the expiration of the fifth year. The Soviet workers carried through the second Plan with the same enthusiasm and success as the first, and the third Plan, until it was interrupted by the war, was also being fulfilled. Today the principle of planning—once so derided—is accepted in most of the countries of the world.

We can now realise how important these Plans have been, not only to the history of the Soviet people but to the history of all democratic nations. It was the enormous industrial development brought about by these Plans which enabled the Soviet people to withstand the mighty onslaughts of the German armies and to play such a major part in bringing victory to the democratic powers.

What is the secret behind the success of these Five Year Plans? It is this: that the Plans are the product of joint consideration between the Soviet Government and the trade unions, and full discussion and agreement between the workers and the management in all industrial establishments.



There are no vested interests to stand in the way of the operation of the Plan or to cheat the workers out of the improved standards of living which are provided for in the Plan.

The Plan is first prepared by the State Planning Commission in close consultation with the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. The State Planning Commission is appointed by the government and consists of experts in all fields of economy and culture.

The draft Plan is then submitted to the executive councils of all the trade unions, to the central economic boards of the various industries, to the factory managements and the trade union factory committees. Meetings of the workers in the factories are then held to discuss the Plan.

The draft Plan is discussed in the greatest detail at all these levels and returned to the State Planning Commission and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions with all criticism and suggestions. On the basis of these, the final Plan is then drawn up.

The Plan is a five-year estimate of industrial and agricultural resources, the labour power available, how much new plant is needed and where new factories are to be built, the extent to which production can be increased and the extent to which the standard of living and the social and cultural conditions of the community can be improved. It is, in fact, a complete economic and social Plan.

On the basis of the Five Year Plan, yearly Plans for each industry are then worked out in more detail. In each factory the yearly Plan is discussed between the management and the factory trade union committee and broken down into quarterly and monthly Plans. These are discussed at factory meetings of the workers, so that in this way the practical knowledge and experience of the man and woman on the job goes into the final preparations of the Plan.

The workers understand that the Plan is for the economic progress of their country in general and for their individual advancement in particular and, therefore, they are enthusiastic in their desire to fulfil the Plan. At fairly regular intervals the trade unions call production conferences of workers and management to check up and, if need be, revise their part of the general plan. These conferences can, and often do, on the basis of experience, decide to exceed the quota set for their particular factory. It was by means of hundreds of such decisions made by the workers themselves that the first Five Year Plan was actually completed in four years and three months.

In every factory which I visited I saw the large notice boards containing the production charts which indicate to the workers the progress made in connection with the factory plan. I also saw the photographs of the "Stakhanovite" workers displayed in each department and the red pennants on the bench or over the machine to indicate that that worker is a "Stakhanovite".

This term "Stakhanovite" arose from a working miner by the name of Stakhanov who, in 1935, by his ingenuity and resourcefulness thought out a way of enormously increasing his coal output and beating all known records in coal production. The Soviet Government honoured him for his service to

the nation, and the enthusiasm engendered by his example developed into a great "Stakhanovite" movement which continues to this day. In every factory workers strive for the honourable title of "Stakhanovite."

We talked to "Stakhanovites" on the job in factories which we visited and congratulated them on their efforts. We always found them to be very modest workers, but proud of their title. Their fellow workers were also proud to claim that they had "Stakhanovites" in their group or department.

To win the title of "Stakhanovite" does not necessarily entail greater physical effort on the job. It is often a reward for initiative on the part of the worker who, on the basis of his practical experience, evolves a method for doing the job in a way which will greatly increase output. Every encouragement is given to the Soviet workers to make proposals for improving the methods of work, and therefore there are always inventions and suggestions coming in from the workers for the consideration of the management and the factory committee.

In the Soviet Union there is no danger of new inventions becoming the secret property of one firm with which it seeks to defeat its competitors. All new inventions are pooled and used as extensively as possible for the good of the whole community.

In our talks with Soviet trade union representatives, we heard the term "Socialist emulation" frequently used. This is a feature in Soviet industry connected with the Five Year Plans, in which workers on a particular shift or in a particular factory challenge those in another shift or factory to compete in raising their output quota. The rival results are chalked up on boards in the factories and, in the case of competitions between large factories, are reported in the Press.

The Government and the trade unions encourage "Socialist emulation," and each month the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions and the executive council of the appropriate union decide which factory has worked best. The best factories are rewarded with a large bonus payment from the Government and the presentation of an Order known as the Red Banner of Labour. Outstanding workers during the year receive a decoration known as the Order of the Red Banner.

Each month approximately 3,000 factories covering all industries receive the "Socialist emulation" bonus. The bulk of it is paid to the workers in the form of additional bonus on their wages and by agreement on the part of the workers a percentage goes into the factory fund for the development of the factory clubs and rest homes.

In some of the factories which we visited we saw displayed in the directors' offices the magnificent Banners of Labour, which signified that they had been declared amongst the best factories in productive effort under the Five Year Plan. Directors and workers shared in the pride of this achievement.

Today, unfortunately, much of their effort has to be devoted to restoring the tremendous damage done to their country by the German Fascist invaders, and had it not been for the war the progress which would have been made in the life of the Soviet people by the third and fourth Five Year Plans would no doubt have been most astounding to the rest of the world.

Nevertheless, it was very inspiring to note that the spirit of achievement on

the part of the Soviet workers has not been weakened by the war but, on the contrary—as we heard declared many times—they are determined to rebuild their towns and villages, their factories and farms, their schools and cultural institutions, on a grander scale than ever before.

### TRADE UNION NEGOTIATING PROCEDURE

**S**TRIKES are not illegal in the Soviet Union, but they do not take place, because industry belongs to the people, and there is no employing class that could be adversely affected by a stoppage of work other than the workers themselves.

Of course, differences of opinion frequently arise concerning wages and working conditions, but adequate and expeditious negotiating machinery exists for settling these problems.

At the Palace of Labour in Moscow, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions has a special department for dealing with wage questions. This department has sections covering 13 industrial groups which are representative of all industries.

Also, the executive council of each trade union has its own department for dealing with wages questions, and this department is connected with a similar department in the regional council of the union, and in every factory there is a trade union committee known as a rates and disputes committee, elected by the workers in that factory.

Any worker who has a complaint regarding his wages raises it with the trade union representative in his department, who sits on the factory rates and disputes committee. The factory administration is represented on this committee, and if there is a "failure to agree," the matter is referred to the T.U. regional council for them to give a ruling on the matter. The rates and disputes committee are notified of this, and if the factory administration still disagree, the case is referred to the T.U. executive council.

In that case the factory director must attend the hearing to defend his action and, if he is at fault, he can be reprimanded by the executive council of the union.

If the case is still not settled under this procedure it can be taken to the All-Union Central Council. I was informed that this seldom happens, because usually the case is settled at regional level. It is laid down that within three days of the worker raising his complaint it must be discussed in the factory rates and disputes committee. Within a further three days it must be referred to the T.U. regional council, and within 10 days from the regional council to the executive council of the union.

When the case is decided in favour of the worker he always receives full retrospective pay without question. If the worker is wrong in his complaint the factory committee always give him a full explanation, but if he is not convinced that he is wrong, he nevertheless has the right to take his case through the whole of the procedure.

With regard to general wage levels, these vary from industry to industry in much the same way as in Britain, but the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions always endeavours to regulate these in a fair way according to the importance of the industry and the character of the work performed.

If a union wishes to make a claim for a national wage increase in a particular industry, it can do so by lodging its claim to the All-Union Central Council, and if the case is proved, it is taken up with the appropriate Government Ministry.

At the Palace of Labour there is another department of the All-Union Central Council called the "Protection of Labour" Department, whose function is to see that the labour laws regarding conditions of employment and safety regulations are observed in all industrial establishments. Similar departments exist at executive and regional level in each union. These labour laws are drafted jointly by the trade union executive and the appropriate Government Ministry and, having been passed by the Government, it devolves upon the trade unions to see that they are fully implemented.

Therefore, in addition to the trade union departments mentioned above, the workers in every factory elect their own factory inspectors. These inspectors are trade union members employed in the factory, and their election is by secret ballot. In large factories a committee of factory inspectors is elected, known as the protection of labour committee. The function of these factory inspectors is to see that the management adhere to the Labour Code regarding safety measures, health conditions and hours of labour.

These factory inspectors have considerable power and can fine the factory director up to 500 roubles if, after warning, he continues to violate labour laws. If the director thinks the fine is unjust he has the right of appeal to the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions.

There are also State factory inspectors whose special job is to visit the factories within a region to check up on the operation of the labour laws. They have the power to institute court proceedings against a factory director who is guilty of very seriously violating the laws for the protection of labour, and he can be sentenced to a term of imprisonment up to three years.

The above brief explanation about negotiating procedure and factory inspection clearly indicates the power of the Soviet trade unions in regard to rates of wages and working conditions.

### SOCIAL INSURANCE

An outstanding feature in the life of the Soviet people is their system of social insurance, in which the Soviet Union is far in advance of any other country in the world.

The control and administration of the social insurance scheme is in the hands of the trade unions, and they have charge of all its funds. No private profit-making insurance societies exist. The central control is the Social Insurance Commission of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. Each union also has its Social Insurance Commission, and every factory, office and institution elects its own Social Insurance Council. In the large establishments the chairman of the trade union factory committee is also the chairman of the factory Social Insurance Council. These councils not only dispense the benefits which are due to a worker, but they see that proper medical aid is provided, call a doctor to the house, arrange for placing the patient in hospital, sanatorium, or rest home, and see that the

children are cared for and, if necessary, place them in nurseries or kindergartens.

The trade union commissions regularly report on their social insurance work, and the factory councils likewise report to meetings of the work-people in their factories. Financial accounts in regard to the factory are published in the factory paper and on the notice boards for the information of all workers.

All workers in the U.S.S.R., without exception, are covered by social insurance, and no contributions whatever are made by the worker out of his wages. All social insurance is free and, therefore, no system of insurance cards and stamps is needed.

The funds are derived directly from the financial accounts of the factories, offices and other places of employment, and the payment to be made is calculated on a percentage of the total wage bill of that establishment. This percentage is fixed by the Government and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, and varies from industry to industry, and is worked out on an actuarial basis in accordance with the nature of the trade and the possible claims for benefit. For instance, in the chemical industry the percentage of the wages bill in each establishment which has to be paid by the management to the Social Insurance Fund is 9.7 per cent; in coalmining it is 9 per cent; in automobile engineering 7.2 per cent; in light engineering 6.5 per cent; and in some trades and professions 5 per cent.

These contributions cover all expenditures for every category of social insurance benefit, but the cost of medical aid, i.e., doctor's services and hospital treatment, which is all free of charge to the worker, is met by direct allotments from the State budget.

Financial benefits of social insurance in the Soviet Union cover:— (1) sickness; (2) invalid pensions; (3) industrial accident and disablement; (4) maternity; (5) family allowances; (6) old-age pensions; and (7) pensions to families deprived of their breadwinner.

The social insurance funds are also used by the trade unions to maintain rest homes and sanatoria.

Up to 1930, unemployment benefit was also paid, but from that year it ended because unemployment ceased to exist in the Soviet Union and, under their system of industrial planning, it has never arisen again. The surplus funds of unemployment insurance were, therefore, used for the development of workers' rest homes.

#### **SICK BENEFITS**

Benefit is paid from the first day of sickness. There are no unpaid waiting periods, and benefit continues until working capacity is restored or until a special Medical Commission declares the worker a permanent invalid. After that he becomes entitled to an invalid pension. There is no time limit on the period of sick benefit or invalid pension.

The amount of sick benefit depends upon the length of industrial service and whether the worker belongs to a trade union or not. A worker who is a trade union member and has had six or more years employment in one establishment receives a sick benefit equal to one hundred per cent of his

wages. The six years would include any period of absence from work due to sickness.

In the Soviet Union workers are free to leave their place of employment and seek a job elsewhere, but if they do so they understand that this can affect the amount of sick benefit in the event of them becoming sick. This is intended to discourage workers from changing their jobs too often, because such changes are not helpful to industrial planning.

Also, workers who do not choose to join a trade union are not compelled to do so, but they are not entitled to the same standard of social insurance benefits as trade union members, because they contribute nothing to the maintenance of the trade union movement which administers social insurance.

However, the lowest payment of sick benefit is 50 per cent of the worker's wage. The vast majority of the workers receive sick benefits amounting to between 80 and 100 per cent of the wage. Young workers under the age of 20 receive benefit regardless of the period of employment.

In the case of partly-disabled ex-servicemen who have to lay off sick, their benefit is 100 per cent, irrespective of whether they have been with the establishment six years or not.

Although hospital and sanatorium treatment is free to all workers, they nevertheless continue to receive their social insurance benefit whilst they are in hospital or sanatorium.

Women have equal rights with men in all phases of political, industrial and public life and, therefore, they receive the same sick benefits as men. In the Soviet Union there is no such thing as a lower wage or lower insurance benefit because of sex.

#### **INVALID PENSIONS**

Invalid pensions are paid upon loss of capacity to work. There are three categories of invalids according to the degree of disablement.

- (1) Workers who have completely lost their ability to work and require an attendant;
- (2) Workers who have completely lost their ability to work, but who do not require an attendant;
- (3) Workers who have lost their ability to work at their trade, but can perform other work which is less remunerative.

The pensions which invalid workers receive are based upon a percentage of their previous wage as follows:—

First category	.. .. .	67 to 69 per cent
Second category	.. .. .	47 to 49 per cent
Third category	.. .. .	33 to 35 per cent

If a worker had been continuously employed in one establishment from three to fifteen years before becoming an invalid, another ten to 25 per cent of his pension would be added.

#### **INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT DISABLEMENT**

In the case of industrial accident or illness through industrial disease which permanently incapacitates the worker, he or she is entitled to a

pension according to the disablement category stated above, as follows:—

First category ..	100 per cent of previous wage
Second category ..	75 per cent of previous wage
Third category ..	50 per cent of previous wage

In this case these pensions are paid regardless of the length of their employment record. Also, if the worker in category two or three met with his accident because of fault on the part of the management at his place of employment, he has the right to sue the establishment in the People's Court for full wages during the whole period of his incapacity.

#### MATERNITY BENEFIT

Every mother, on the birth of each child, receives a payment of 210 roubles from the social insurance fund to cover the expense of the baby's layette and feeding. In addition to this initial payment, they receive a fixed lump-sum payment on the birth of the third child and all subsequent children as follows:—

<i>Allowances paid to mothers having</i>	<i>on birth of</i>	<i>In lump sum</i>
2 living	3rd child	400 roubles
3 "	4th "	1,300 "
4 "	5th "	1,700 "
5 "	6th "	2,000 "
6 "	7th "	2,500 "
7 "	8th "	2,500 "
8 "	9th "	3,500 "
9 "	10th "	3,500 "

Mothers with ten children living, on birth of each succeeding child, receive a lump-sum payment of 5,000 roubles.

#### FAMILY ALLOWANCES

In addition to the above lump-sum payments a monthly allowance is paid on the above scale for the fourth child and each succeeding child as follows:

Fourth child .. .. .	80 roubles per month
Fifth child .. .. .	120 roubles per month
Sixth child .. .. .	140 roubles per month
Seventh child .. .. .	200 roubles per month
Eighth child .. .. .	200 roubles per month
Ninth child .. .. .	250 roubles per month
Tenth child .. .. .	250 roubles per month
Each succeeding child ..	300 roubles per month

These monthly allowances are paid for children from one to five years old.

Every mother has the right to place her child in a nursery or kindergarten free of charge, the former taking children up to the age of three and the latter from the age of three to the age of seven. On attaining the age of seven all children must attend school.

Special provision is also made for married women who work in industry or office. Expectant mothers are given compulsory leave 35 days before childbirth and 42 to 56 days (depending on their state of health) after child-

birth. During the whole of this period they receive full wages in addition to their social insurance benefits. This right of leave with full pay is enjoyed by all women who have been employed at their places of work not less than three months.

#### OLD-AGE PENSIONS

All workers become entitled to old-age pensions upon reaching a specific age and completing a specific period of employment. Men receive the pension at 60 years of age if they have worked for at least 25 years, while for women the minimum age is 55 and the minimum period of employment is 20 years. Workers employed underground or in harmful occupations receive the old-age pension when they reach the age of 50 if they have an employment record of at least 20 years.

The amount of the old-age pension is fixed at a minimum of 50 and a maximum of 60 per cent of their wage or salary, depending on the character of the work performed by the claimant.

All old-age pensions are payable for life, and the amount is the same, irrespective of sex.

Teachers, agronomists and medical personnel working in rural districts receive a pension of 50 per cent of their salary, regardless of age, when they have completed 25 years' employment. This is payable to these workers before reaching the age of 60 for men and 55 for women, providing they continue to follow their profession.

In addition to the social insurance pensions, there are also personal pensions paid by the State to persons who have performed meritorious service in the development of the Soviet State and society, or in the field of science and art.

Also, academicians, professors, instructors at higher educational institutions and the members of the staffs of research institutes are granted academic pensions. All such pensions are higher than the social insurance pensions.

#### DEATH AND PENSION ALLOWANCES TO DEPENDANTS

Special pensions are paid to families who have lost their breadwinner by reason of his death through natural causes or accident.

Such pensions are payable to children, brothers and sisters up to the age of 16; to students up to the age of 18; to children, brothers and sisters above the age indicated if they are incapable of work; to disabled and superannuated parents, wife or husband, and to parents, wife or husband able to work, but having children under the age of eight. These family pensions are based upon the second category rate of the invalid pension, and are as follows:—

Where there is one dependant, a monthly payment of 50 per cent of the invalid pension.	
Two dependants .. .. .	75 per cent
Three dependants .. .. .	100 per cent
Four or more dependants .. .. .	120 per cent

One only needs to glance at this brief review of the social security provisions now in operation in the U.S.S.R. and to reflect upon the terrible



conditions under which the people of Russia lived in Tsarist days before 1917, vividly to realise the progress which has been made in the social conditions of the people since the workers took over political and economic power and established the Soviet system of government.

### REST HOMES AND SANATORIA

**E**VERY worker in the Soviet Union enjoys the right to rest and leisure, and the Soviet Government provides the necessary facilities for the enjoyment of this right. Before the 1917 Revolution there were many beautiful health resorts in Russia, but they were the playgrounds of the Russian nobility and wealthy class. One of the earliest decrees of the Soviet Government, signed by Lenin, was that the facilities of these health resorts, including the magnificent country palaces, mansions and shooting lodges of the aristocracy, should become the property of the State and the holiday resorts of the people.

The palaces and mansions became rest homes and sanatoria, and many of the beautiful private parks and woodlands of the Russian nobility became the holiday camps for the working-class children.

In addition to these places which already existed before 1917, hundreds of new places were built in the following years by the trade unions for their members. In 1940, the trade unions alone had 662 rest homes and 331 sanatoria.

Many of these were situated in the Crimea, Yalta, the Black Sea coast and other areas invaded by the German armies during the war. Needless to say, they were destroyed by the Nazis before they retreated. But the work of reconstruction is proceeding at a rapid pace. In an interview at the Palace of Labour with Comrade Martov, the director of these establishments for the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, he informed us that since the war they had restored 359 of these buildings, and now had 707 rest homes and sanatoria belonging to the trade unions. Many more are still to be built. In 1946, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions gave 304 million roubles for this work.

In addition to the State and trade union establishments, many factories have their own rest homes and sanatoria.

Rest homes are really holiday resorts to which workers go when they are in need of a rest. They have the right to choose which rest home they go to, providing, of course, that it is not already booked up. In this regard, trade unionists have preference of choice over non-unionists in any of the rest homes.

The period for staying at a rest home is 12 days, not including travelling time, which in some cases may take several days there and back.

During these vacations, workers continue to receive their wages, and no charge is made upon them by the rest home. Free travel vouchers are also issued to them if they are trade union members.

For those workers who need sanatorium treatment, the place is decided by the physician, and their period of stay is not limited—it varies according to the nature of the complaint and the progress of the treatment.

In the summer holiday period whole families can go to holiday resorts and special rest homes on the coasts, riverside, and in the country.

### PALACES OF CULTURE

**T**HERE are many magnificent workers' clubs in the Soviet Union. These are often called—most fittingly—Palaces of Culture. We have no workers' clubs in Britain that could possibly compare with those that we visited in Moscow and Leningrad.

In addition to Palaces of Culture, which are run by the trade unions in the district, there are others which belong to the workers in a particular factory.

We visited the Palace of Culture belonging to the Stalin Automobile plant in Moscow, which employs 40,000 workers.

It is a large building with splendid interior decorations and fittings. One can get some idea of its size from the fact that, in addition to dozens of large rooms, it has a dance hall for 2,000; a cinema seating 1,200; a concert hall seating 400; a gymnasium; a library with 65,000 books, and a children's library with 20,000 books. In addition, it has a Lenin reading library with 50,000 books, where workers can sit and study the political classics in comfort and quietness.

We visited many of the rooms, where groups of workers were pursuing their particular interests—the studio for painting; the schools for classical dancing, singing and dramatic art; and the children's section rooms, where we saw astonishing wood carvings and water-colour paintings done by children between the ages of eight and 14 years.

We saw the singing room, where workers were receiving voice training from one of the leading singers of the Moscow Opera House.

There are nearly 2,000 amateur artists at this Palace of Culture, and before we left the director arranged an impromptu concert for us that was a most talented and delightful show.

This was a workers' club on a really grand scale, catering for dozens of recreational and educational interests, and abundantly fitted out in every respect; a place where not only the parents can spend pleasurable evenings, but where they can also take the children and allow them to join with other children in cultivating their talents under the guidance of capable tutors, or doing various other things which they enjoy.

In Leningrad we visited the Viborg Palace of Culture, which is controlled by the trade unions in Leningrad. This place was opened in the year 1927, and before the war was considered to be the best workers' club in the city. It is difficult to imagine anything of its kind that could surpass it today. It also is a very large building. It has a theatre for seating 2,000; a concert room for 500; a cinema for 200; a large library and 120 large, well-furnished rooms for various recreational purposes, including classical dancing, singing, chess, painting and handicraft work.

Approximately 3,000 workers visit the Viborg club every day. Literature and art feature prominently in its activities, and famous Russian writers often lecture there. Well-known Soviet leaders, including Molotov, Vyshinsky, Voroshilov, and Budenny, have lectured here on political economy and other subjects.

Its library contains 73,000 books, and we were very interested to note that they included the complete works of Shakespeare and Dickens, and many books by other English classical writers.

During the bombardment of Leningrad, this Palace of Culture was badly damaged, and the trade unions allocated four million roubles to restore it. The restoration is now almost completed.

After going through the numerous sections of this club we were invited to see a musical comedy in the club theatre, played by a company of professional artists from Moscow.

The theatre was already packed with 2,000 people when we entered and were shown to seats which had been reserved for us in the orchestra stalls. The audience included many soldiers and sailors of the Red Army and Navy, and some high-ranking officers, wearing rows of decorations for distinguished service.

Just before the curtain went up, the theatre manager came to the front of the stage and announced our presence to the audience. The response was instantaneous. The entire audience rose to their feet applauding, and it was necessary for us to rise and acknowledge their greetings before they would resume their seats.

It was indeed a moving and memorable scene to witness that great audience of men and women who had fought and worked through the siege of Leningrad, enthusiastically acclaiming our delegation and, in effect, expressing their solidarity with the British workers. It was a spontaneous demonstration of goodwill towards our country—more significant than any formal declaration of friendship by statesmen could be.

The play which we saw was most amusing and brilliantly acted. At the end we were invited to meet the artists on the stage after the audience had left. There were about fifty players in the company, some of whom were very well-known Soviet artists. We warmly exchanged greetings, and the leading actors, on behalf of the entire company, expressed their great pleasure at having the delegates of our union present at their performance, and they wished us a very happy sojourn in their country.

During our stay in Leningrad we also visited the Palace of Pioneers. This establishment is specially for children and youths eight to 16 years of age. It was a magnificent place for the young people. Before the Revolution it was one of the palaces of the Tsars, originally built for the Empress of Alexander III. It now belongs to the children of the workers. In the royal ballroom, with its rich ceiling and brilliant chandeliers, we saw about 500 young people dancing to a first-class orchestra.

There are many rooms in this Palace, each devoted to some form of activity—cultural, industrial, sporting—including music, painting, literature, sculpture, physics, mathematics and astronomy. In the astronomy room we were invited to take a trip to the moon! The room was put in darkness, and then with a cinematograph and an ingenious system of lighting we were given the impression that we were travelling in a rocket to the moon, passing on our journey many well-known planets in the universe. We finally “landed” on the moon, and after a short stay returned to earth. It was all very realistically done, including an official guide explaining the places of

interest on the “journey.” One can well imagine the delight, as well as the education, derived by the children in making that imaginary “trip to the moon.” This was astronomy taught in a most fascinating way.

We saw other rooms with very interesting equipment for instructing the young people—a miniature power station; a telephone exchange; a ship's control room, including morse code and other signalling; a complete mechanical tramway system and an aeronautical room with model planes and an air tunnel. The equipment in these rooms were not mere toys; they were complete miniature replicas of the real thing and could be fully operated by the youth.

I feel sure there is no Youth Club anywhere in the world to compare with the Palace of Pioneers, either in the beauty of its architecture or in its equipment, facilities and cultural education. It is free to all children.

Twelve thousand young people are members of this club. Many more want to join, but there is no place for them yet, so preference is given to those children in the schools who show a keen interest in some subject, or who have good marks in their general lessons. Membership of the Palace of Pioneers is, therefore, an encouragement to the children to do their best in school. Because of the large membership, it is at present necessary to limit the attendance of the children to two hours an evening twice a week. This club also has fifteen pioneer summer camps, where the children spend their summer holidays.

The Palace of Culture and the children's club which we visited in Moscow and Leningrad are not exceptional examples in the social life of the people. Similar establishments to those we saw—not all so grand, of course—are to be found in every city and town throughout the Soviet Union.

#### OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST

**W**E visited many other places of interest in the Soviet Union, including theatres, exhibitions, the circus, kindergartens, poly-clinics, museums, art galleries, the Peter and Paul fortress, the Winter Palace, the Kremlin, and Lenin's Mausoleum. It is impossible to describe in this small booklet all the details of those places, but a few brief notes will, no doubt, be of interest to the reader.

In Riga, the capital of the Latvian Soviet Republic, we saw a brilliantly performed ballet called “Don Quixote.” The two principal dancers, who came from Moscow, were superb. The audience were so delighted with the performance that they compelled many encores.

In Moscow, we saw the opera “Queen of Spades” at the Grand Opera House, known as the “Bolshoi” (big) Theatre. This is a magnificent theatre where, before the revolution, all the seats were privately owned by the Russian aristocracy and wealthy class, with the exception of a top tier which was open to the public at high prices. It meant that the ordinary Russian worker never had the possibility of hearing an opera or seeing the ballet in this theatre under the old regime. It is now full every evening with audiences drawn from every section of the population, listening to, and watching, the best Russian singers and dancers.

The story of this opera is by Pushkin and the music by Tchaikovsky.

The singing and the acting were perfect. The most astonishing stage spectacle of colour and scenery was presented in the second and last acts.

Whilst in Moscow we also visited the famous Puppet Theatre and the circus, and at a theatre in Leningrad we saw superb acting in an historical drama entitled "The Great Monarch."

#### *Art Galleries*

We spent several hours at the Tretyakov Art Gallery in Moscow. Here, the principal works of art are paintings by Russian artists, but there are also many valuable etchings, mosaics and sculptures. In this gallery there are 2,000 masterpieces.

The paintings are drawn from all periods of Russian art, from the twelfth century to the present day, and are hung in period rooms, so that the visitor can trace the historical development of Russian art. Amongst the earliest works are paintings on wood depicting religious scenes. There were many paintings of the Tsars and Tsarinas which have been carefully preserved.

#### *The Winter Palace, Leningrad*

The Winter Palace of the Tsars is now a museum. Part of this great building, which stands in the Uritski Square, Leningrad, is known as "The Hermitage." This section was a museum before the Revolution. It was started as such during the reign of Catherine II and contains thousands of precious works of art which she collected. They have been carefully preserved and added to by the Soviet Government.

All the art exhibits in this museum are originals; there are no copies.

The collection of Rembrandt paintings to be seen here is the largest in the world. The paintings of Rubens, Leonardo da Vinci, Van Dyck, Raphael, Michelangelo and most of the world masters are here. There are also magnificent exhibits of sixteenth century tapestry and sculpture of various periods.

We went through the famous Winter Palace, from where the Imperial Guards, on the orders of the Tsar, shot down the workers who gathered in the Uritski Square in 1905 peacefully to present their petition. This event is known in history as "Bloody Sunday."

This palace has 1,059 rooms; the largest are now used to display works of art of various kinds.

Our delegation was privileged to visit the special rooms which contain the riches of the Tsars dating back to the fourth century. These rooms contain thousands of the most precious exhibits in gold plate, rare jewels, necklaces, brooches, rings, bracelets, watches, clocks, boxes, personal decorations, swords studded with precious stones, and many other objects of inestimable value. It is certainly a most fabulous collection of wealth—no longer the private possession of a single family, but the property of the State and the people.

#### *Peter and Paul Fortress, Leningrad*

This is a seventeenth century fortress built during the reign of Peter the Great. It stands on the bank of the River Neva, and within its high embattlements is the Peter-Paul Cathedral and a fortress prison—a Russian Bastille built in 1703. The cathedral was built in 1714-33, and its spire,

the highest in the city, is a prominent landmark. It is a famous Russian cathedral and contains the tombs of the Tsars since Peter the Great. The young official guide who escorted us on this visit was a very knowledgeable person. He would have gladly detained us for hours whilst he related the history of the church, but we found it too cold amongst the tombs of the Tsars to stay very long.

The internal construction of the Peter-Paul Cathedral is both interesting and revealing. It was designed to uphold the idea that the Tsars of Russia were mightier than the Church—that the throne was above the Church. The richly-decorative seat of the Tsar is in the nave facing the altar, but hidden from the view of the congregation. There is only one step up to the altar, but two steps up to the throne, and the position of the pulpit enables the preacher to address the congregation, but not the Tsar. The angels above the altar bear the insignia of the royal household—apparently they were the spiritual servants of the Tsar, not the messengers of God!

We walked through the dreary corridors of the fortress-prison and saw the cells where many revolutionary fighters languished and died before the working class seized power from the aristocratic despots of the old regime. We saw the dark "silence cell"—a cell within a cell—so constructed that the screams of the prisoner under torture could not be heard outside. We visited the cells in which Maxim Gorki and Prince Kropotkin were incarcerated for a period, and the cell from which Lenin's brother was led out for execution in 1887.

This prison was used up to the year 1917, but after that it was closed by the Soviet Government, and is now kept as an historic monument to remind visitors of the "glories" of the old order.

#### *Siege of Leningrad Exhibition*

This is a most remarkable exhibition, depicting the history of the 900 days' siege of Leningrad by the German armies. Our official guide, a very cultured and efficient young woman, who spoke perfect English, gave us detailed information about the thousands of articles which comprise the historical record of the siege. Stage by stage we saw unfolded the drama of those terrible days. Many Russian artists were associated with the organising of this exhibition—in the great paintings and models of siege scenes and the designing of the many very elaborate charts which record the military battles of the city's defenders and the poignant phases in the life of the civilian population.

One of the most moving exhibits was the actual death-diary of a young girl named Vanya, who recorded the death, one after another, of her whole family—nine all told—from starvation. She was the last to die, and this diary was later found in the house.

The exhibition includes a film taken during the worst days of the siege, which includes shots of hungry and weary people dragging through the snow-covered streets sledges laden with the bodies of dead relatives on their way to the burial grounds. Some of the pall-bearers collapsed in the snow themselves from sheer weakness and probably never recovered to finish their tragic journey.

This exhibition is very probably the greatest, most thoroughly-organised war exhibition which has ever been produced anywhere in the world.

### *The Lenin Mausoleum*

In Moscow we visited the tomb of Lenin, which stands in the Red Square outside the walls of the Kremlin. It is open to the general public for certain hours each day and still, 23 years after Lenin died, there is always a long procession of people passing slowly through the black marble mausoleum to see the embalmed body of this great leader of the Russian workers.

### *The Kremlin*

We visited the Kremlin and saw its seven historic churches with their gold-covered domes and the three palaces of the fifteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The great ballroom of the latter palace is now the hall of the Supreme Soviet, where the 1,139 Deputies from all parts of the U.S.S.R. assemble to debate the affairs of government. There are 1,200 upholstered seats on the floor of this hall and 900 in the balcony for visitors.

With the exception of this hall, the richly-decorated rooms of this palace are now used as an art gallery and museum. Here one can see an even more fabulous collection of crown jewels than at the Winter Palace, including the crowns and thrones of gold of the whole line of Tsars and Empresses of old Russia. The ceremonial horse saddles and harness studied with jewels are worth a fortune in themselves. Even the elaborate royal coaches of the succeeding monarchs, dating back to the days of the sedan chair, are on view here.

The luxurious life of the old rulers can be measured in the priceless presents which Catherine II, in particular, gave to her Court favourites.

The fifteenth and seventeenth century palaces stand today simply as buildings of historic interest. The exquisite craftsmanship and wealth embodied in the architecture; the artistic creations reposing in the walls, ceilings, floors, furniture and ornaments, is simply amazing. Contrary to many foolish slanders which have been made from time to time against the Soviet leaders, all this historic wealth has been carefully preserved by the Soviet Government as part of the national treasure.

## CONCLUSIONS

Let me summarise my impressions.

- (1) The Soviet trade unions play a very decisive part in the economic and social life of the nation. The workers, through their trade union organisations, control their own industrial conditions without any vested interests to restrict their progress.
- (2) The Soviet trade unions operate on the most democratic lines. The complete industrial basis of the unions and the co-ordination of their work through the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions ensures a correlated policy and an efficient administration. The problems of inter-union rivalry and conflict which so often arise in the trade union movement of other countries do not arise in the U.S.S.R., because the clearly-defined industrial structure of their trade union movement ensures a single trade union leadership within each industry.

(3) The strength of the Soviet system of government rests upon the principle of the common ownership of the land, industry and other essential services of the people. The workers have no fear of over-production because their economic system guarantees full employment and an advancing standard of life commensurate with their increasing productivity.

(4) I saw much of the extensive devastation caused by the war, and consider that in spite of the handicaps arising from such thorough-going destruction the industrial recovery which has already been made is astonishing. I believe that this progress is mainly due to efficient planning on a big scale, and to the spirit of pride and enthusiasm for industrial achievement engendered in the workers by the fact that they are citizens of a socialist country and have complete faith in the Soviet Government.

(5) I admire the splendid attention which the Soviet Government devotes to the welfare of children through a very extensive system of nurseries, creches, and kindergartens. I visited some these places and saw how efficiently they were managed by qualified and cultured young Soviet women. The interior decorations and the environment were perfectly suited to their purpose, and I found the children delightfully happy. The children entertained us quite spontaneously with singing, recitations and dances. This very well-organised system of nurseries, creches and kindergartens is one of the many social services enjoyed by the Soviet people today, and it will undoubtedly produce beneficial results in the health and mentality of the present and succeeding generations.

(6) I am also convinced that the Soviet Government sets an example to the world in the encouragement which it gives, and the facilities which it provides, for the education of the youth of both sexes, enabling them to become worthy citizens in every respect. The opportunity to advance to the highest positions in the State, in industry, in the professions, in the sciences, in art, exists for every Soviet citizen on the basis of his intelligence and ability. Wealth or family connections play no part in deciding promotion in the Soviet Union.

(7) At the factories and industrial plants which we visited I was very much impressed by the technical knowledge, efficiency and skill of the administrative staffs and the workers. I found that much more attention and facility is given to the training of engineering apprentices in the U.S.S.R. than is provided at present in Britain, and from what I saw of this training I believe that a generation of engineering craftsmen is being developed in the Soviet Union which will at least be equal to that of any other country in the world.

(8) The Constitution of the U.S.S.R. provides for full equality of the sexes. Women have the same rights and opportunities as men in politics and in the trades and professions. The principle of equal pay for equal work is never in dispute. Soviet women today, by their work in industry, are making a big contribution towards overcoming the present manpower shortage arising from the war and carrying through the plans of postwar reconstruction.

(9) Considering the terrible injuries inflicted upon their country by the German invaders, I found that the Soviet people are quickly restoring their



economic and social life. They are very confident about their future development and I believe that their system of planned economy will provide a rapidly advancing standard of life.

(10) I was very impressed by the Soviet systems of social insurance, and especially the measure of security which it provides in sickness and old age. The Soviet Government has set an example to the whole world in the provision which it has made for the social security of its people.

(11) In our discussions with the leaders of the Soviet trade unions, I found that they fully shared our desire for closer trade relationship between our two countries. I believe there is scope for very big developments in Anglo-Soviet trade—the Soviet Union supplying us with various raw materials and food-stuffs which we need, whilst in turn we supply them with many engineering products which would help them to restore more quickly the industrial equipment destroyed in the war.

(12) I am convinced that the Soviet people and the Soviet Government are fervently desirous of lasting peace. They have nothing to gain from war, and their most earnest hope is to be free from international conflict so that they can devote themselves to the peaceful tasks of developing the economic and social conditions of their country. But as much as they desire peace, they have a very strong sense of duty to their country, and are ready to defend it at all costs if it is again threatened by forces which seek to destroy their Socialist way of life.

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