



THE  
USSIAN EXPERIMENT

1917-1927

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BY

K. T. SHAH

*Professor of Economics, University of Bombay*

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TO

**Dr. R. N. RANINA**

AND THOSE OTHER EARNEST STUDENTS  
WHO BORE WITH PATIENCE THESE LECTURES.

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## P R E F A C E.

The Lectures here published in bookform were delivered as a course in extension of the usual Lectures on Economic History given to students going up for their M.A. Degree examination in the usual way. A knowledge of the economic development of the principal countries in the world has generally been considered a useful supplement to the study of the economic problems in any country; and though the most gigantic economic experiment of our times,—the Bolshevist regime in Russia,—is difficult to study for want of adequate and unbiassed information, it has a manifest attraction for the student of the subject, which would easily explain the attempt here made at an exposition and understanding of the forces influencing economic life in Russia to-day.

Literature, both official and authoritative, is scarce on the subject, particularly in this country. For the period before the World-War, however, the works of such patient students as Sir Mackenzie Wallace, or the several chapters in the *Cambridge Modern History*, not to mention the further sources indicated in the bibliography there attached, would more than suffice for an elementary study like the one attempted in the first Lecture of this series. For the subsequent Lectures, reliance has been placed, so far as official and authoritative data are concerned, on the *Statesman's Year-Book*, as well as on the recent publication in English called the *Soviet Year-Book*, published by George Allen and Unwin, and

compiled by Santalov and Segal. For an accurate estimate and insight into the men and their motives, the events and their significance, in the general scheme of the Revolution, works such as the **Russian Revolution (1917-26)** by Lancelot Lawton, (Macmillan): or **Russia in the Modern World Series**, by Makeev and O'Hara (Benn), are indispensable. These give a fair summary of the events in historical perspective that make up the Revolution, and even attempt a degree of estimate of the forces actuating the revolutionaries. It is, perhaps, not too much to wish that works like these were free from a bias and prejudice, which is certainly not very obtrusive in the first-named author, but which, obtrusive or not, inevitably affects the utility of the book. The frankly propagandist or polemical publications, like **Bolshevist Russia**, by Anton Karlgren, are preferable, inasmuch as the reader, warned of the dominant prejudice and bias of the writer, is able to make his own discount of the author's statements and estimates, as he goes along. On the other hand, the discursive pamphlets, like Trotsky's **Literature and Revolution**, or Eastman's **Marx, Lenin, and the Science of Revolution**, are decidedly better at giving an insight into the real forces making for the Revolution. The pamphlets written by Lenin, such as **the State and the Revolution**, were not available to the lecturer in English; and the quotations from them given in these Lectures are borrowed from one or the other of the writers already named. Such pronouncements of the real author of the Revolution would be invaluable, if one could read them in the original. Descriptive works, like the little book



by Mr. and Mrs., MacWilliams, called **Russia in 1926**, (J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.), are highly suggestive and informative, their only fault, perhaps, being that they are, after all, the impressions of individual observers. Could they always be safely relied on for a complete, faithful, picture of the Revolution, and of the New Russia under the Revolution? The best work in this regard that has come to the notice of the lecturer, is **the Mind and Face of Bolshevism**, by Rene Fülöp-Miller (Putnam). Mr. Fülöp-Miller deals with the collective phenomenon of Bolshevism in a spirit of sympathetic criticism, which however, cannot help regretting certain aspects of the phenomenon, like its great emphasis on mechanisation of life in all its departments, or the utterly materialistic viewpoint of the revolutionaries.

On this material these Lectures are based. The line of argument here followed is that of an objective analysis, study, and appreciation. The Lecturer has kept his own views in the back ground as far as possible. Men and events are left to speak for themselves, wherever possible, in their own words; and where the spirit of the events, or the motive of the men, is elusive, an attempt has been made to bring out the same so far as the available material permits it. A common thread, running through the whole scheme of Lectures presenting the phenomenon in its entirety, naturally performs this function; though the extreme complexity of the phenomenon makes it very difficult to say if all the aspects and facts have been grasped, if all the undercurrents understood. The reader, however, will not find much difficulty, the

Lecturer hopes, in grasping the elements of the problem, if he reads carefully the material placed before him.

The Lecturer, having drawn considerably on the sources of information mentioned above, has, finally, to acknowledge his gratitude to the authors or compilers thereof, as also to those earnest seekers after truth, who know or acknowledge no frontiers or boundaries in their search for truth. In one so blessed as the present writer with a number of friends,—earnest, thoughtful, and even daring, inquirers,—it would, perhaps, be invidious to select any single individual for special mention. Without naming any one in particular, however, the reflection may still be indulged in that the very fact that one finds such a large number of earnest students, in matters that do not immediately concern them, is a hopeful sign of the growing volume of serious, thoughtful, earnest studentship the absence of which is often particularly emphasised by detractors of India of the Miss Mayo type. The Lecturer's labour would not have been in vain if this little pamphlet helps to deepen the interest and facilitate the studies of such earnest inquirers.

UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS  
AND SOCIOLOGY,  
*Bombay, 1st November, 1927.*

K. T. S.