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IN THE LAND OF COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP
(Labour and Social Conditions in Soviet Russia To-day)

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(Labour and Social Conditions in Soviet Russia To-day)

BY

ANATOLE V. BAIKALOFF



*'Le courage est de chercher la vérité
et de la dire.'* JEAN JAURÈS

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INTRODUCTION

VERY often I have been asked by some of my English friends why Russian Socialists maintain such a hostile attitude towards the Soviet Government. It is contended that the Bolsheviks are building up Socialism in Russia; that they are reorganising Russian economic and social life in accordance with the ideals and interests of the Russian working classes; and that it is the duty of every sincere and conscious Socialist not to hamper the activities of the Bolsheviks, but to put aside what small differences of opinion there may be and help the Bolsheviks in their strenuous work for the benefit not only of the Russian, but also of the International proletariat.

This book presents my reasoned and detailed explanation why we, the Russian Socialists, are so bitterly opposed to the Soviet régime, why we are convinced that the Bolsheviks are the worst enemies of the Russian working classes, and why we consider the policy the Soviets are pursuing to be most detrimental to the interests of the Russian people and the International Labour Movement.

I shall consider myself fully rewarded for my labours if this book provides mental food for those sincere and honest men and women in the British Labour and Socialist Movement who still cherish illusions about Russian Bolshevism.

In writing this book I have tried to avoid any conclusions not fully supported by evidence supplied by the Bolsheviks themselves. I have tried to describe present labour and

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social conditions in Soviet Russia as if I did not know anything about them beyond that stated on the subject in the official Soviet Press. This explains the large number of quotations from the Soviet publications given in the book.

It has cost a good deal of trouble and labour to collect and piece together all this evidence. It is scattered in many Soviet publications, and most of the facts which give a true idea of present Russian conditions are found on the back pages of Soviet papers, set in the smallest type.

Some readers may wonder why the Bolshevik censors allowed such outspoken criticism of the Soviet regime to appear in the official Press. The explanation is that the Bolshevik journalists and writers, while criticising separate shortcomings and irregularities, never attempt to take the broad view and say that not individual Soviet officials, but the very system of political and economic dictatorship, is responsible for the dreadful conditions under which Russian workers live and toil.

Besides, if the Soviet Press did not reveal, from time to time, some of the most revolting crimes and offences well known locally, how could it be expected that anybody would read the Soviet papers at all? And the Bolsheviks want their papers to be read, as the Press is the most mighty weapon of their propaganda. Thus, willy-nilly, they must sacrifice some space in their papers to criticism of their regime; otherwise their papers would become absolutely dull and uninteresting.

Thus, though the Soviet Press cannot be considered an absolutely reliable source of information on Russian conditions, much can be learned from it if only one takes the trouble to dig deep enough, and to make a thorough -

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sometimes a wearisome and prolonged – search for the truth among masses of pure propaganda.

I may as well mention here that this book would probably never have been written but for the invaluable collaboration of my old friend, Mr. H. W. Lee, for many years secretary of the old Social-Democratic Federation, afterwards editor of *Justice*, and now of the International Department of the Trades-Union Congress, who most kindly undertook to revise my manuscript and correct my not altogether classical English style. I am also obliged to him for many hints and suggestions which his wide journalistic experience and thorough knowledge of international relations prompted him to make, and which proved most useful to me.

ANATOLE V. BAIKALOFF.

LONDON, *July* 1929.

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IN THE LAND OF COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP
(Labour and Social Conditions in Soviet Russia To-day)

CHAPTER I

THE RUSSIAN SOVIET GOVERNMENT. — HOW IT CAME INTO POWER. — ITS SOCIAL BASIS AND STRUCTURE.

Russian Workers during the War and the Revolution —
Anti-Socialist Character of the Communist Party —
Anti-proletarian Policy of the Soviet Government.

IN order properly to understand the social processes which have been going on in Russia since the Bolsheviki came to power, and to form a true and accurate opinion about the social order and conditions now existing in that vast country, we must first of all examine the historical and social origin of the Soviet political and economic régime, and study the social nature and structure of the Soviet Government.

This Government represents in present Russian economic, social, and political life a factor of the first magnitude. It runs industrial undertakings; it manages internal and foreign trade and railway and water transport; it manipulates the whole machinery of national finances and credit; it holds the monopoly of the Press; it regulates labour conditions; it tries to influence all social issues; it is the only organised political body in Russia.

It is claimed that the Soviet régime originated from the Socialist proletarian revolution in October 1917; that it is based socially on the Russian industrial proletariat; that

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the Soviet Government runs the Russian State machinery in the interests of the workers; that it carries out 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'; that its *pia desiderata* and ultimate object is the establishment of Socialism, not only in Russia, but in every other country of the globe.

Let us examine carefully all these claims.

It is undoubtedly true that the Soviet Government came to power after the successful *coup d'état* in October 1917. But was this *coup* really a proletarian and Socialist revolution? What were the social classes and elements that carried out this *coup* and helped the Bolshevist leaders to be victorious over their antagonists in the civil war that followed the October revolution?

Russia is a very young country industrially. Capitalism, in the modern sense of the word, began to develop in Russia only after 1861, when serfdom had been abolished. Although the industrial development on capitalist lines has since gone on by leaps and bounds, the period has been too short to allow a really industrial class – as this class is understood in Western Europe – to form itself within the social structure of the Russian State. Up to the end of last century the great majority of the Russian industrial workers retained their connections with the land. The eminent Russian sociologist, Professor N. Kábloukoff, was quite right when he said that 'industrial occupations in Russia do not provide the only means of subsistence for the persons engaged in them. Their main occupation is agriculture. Our industrial worker considers his factory job merely subsidiary to work on the land. He comes to the factory in winter, but in summer he returns to his village to till his piece of land.'¹

During the years immediately preceding the Great War

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the number of industrial workers in Russia who lost all connection with agriculture, and whose only occupation was industrial labour, had considerably increased. Nevertheless, in many branches of industry – cotton, building, mining, naphtha industries, river transport, etc. – the old conditions still prevailed. The great majority of unskilled labourers, such as navvies, peat-workers, lumbermen, fishermen, were recruited from the ranks of the superfluous agricultural population. It is estimated roughly that at the beginning of the Great War half the contingent of Russian industrial labour consisted of peasants who retained their land in the villages and periodically returned there.

The War had a most disastrous effect on the social structure of the Russian industrial working class. First of all the army, which had swollen to an enormous extent – altogether from ten to twelve million men were mobilised in Russia during the War – required a great deal of skilled labour – mechanics of every kind, electricians, smiths, etc. All these skilled workers, chiefly young ones, were taken from the ranks of the industrial working class, which was thereby reduced in numbers.

On the other hand, the war industries needed a great number of 'factory hands.' As these industries in Russia, as everywhere else, were organised on the 'mass production' principle, no exceptional skill, requiring a long period of training, was needed from the 'hands' whom the war factories employed. When they heard of the high wages paid in the war factories, peasants began in thousands to migrate from their villages into the industrial districts.

There was another cause which stimulated peasants and other non-proletarian elements to seek employment in factories during the War. Men engaged in the war

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factories were freed from military service. Everybody who wanted to escape being sent to the battle front sought a safe refuge in the factories.

All these factors, and many others of a more subsidiary nature, contributed to the fact that at the time of the October revolution the real proletariat represented only a small fraction of the total number of those men and women who were counted as 'industrial workers' and filled the Russian factories and works.

Lenin himself did not hesitate to acknowledge this fact. On 26th March 1922 he wrote to the Central Committee of the Communist Party: 'Since the War the industrial workers in Russia have become less proletarian than before, because during the War the elements who wanted to escape military service came into the factories.'²

During the first years of the Bolshevist dictatorship the process of *de-proletarianisation* of the Russian industrial workers went on even faster than in war-time. Conditions which then prevailed in Russian industrial undertakings were described by Zinovieff in his address to the Eleventh Congress of the Communist Party held in March 1922 in the following words: 'The working class, owing to the events of our revolution, has become *déclassé*. Workers have dispersed throughout the vast territory of the Soviet Republic. Part of them have found permanent habitation in villages; others have been obliged to change their trades almost every month in order to keep body and soul together in the most difficult circumstances. We have been able to save only a comparatively small nucleus of the industrial proletariat.'³

What was this nucleus? Zinovieff gives the following

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reply to this question: 'We know that even in our most important industrial centres, like Petrograd and Moscow, in our best works like the *Putilov Works* in Petrograd, we could save only a nucleus, but this nucleus is far from being good and sound. They are mostly aged workers, because youth is more enterprising. Being the best revolutionary part of the proletariat the young workers have migrated to villages, or found occupations in the army and in the State administration. Many of them have perished. We have now in our factories the backward part of the proletariat; we have the small bourgeois elements who went to the factories during the War.'⁴

Thus, the most prominent Soviet leaders were obliged to state emphatically that the social structure of the Russian proletariat on the eve of the Bolshevik October revolution, and immediately afterwards, was, from the Socialist point of view, very unsatisfactory. Real proletarians who could attain the necessary level of Socialist consciousness and of Socialist conceptions were in an insignificant minority. The great majority of the industrial workers were recruited from those social elements, peasantry, small traders, paupers, etc., who were unable, owing to their low social standard or their backwardness, to grasp the idea of a Socialist reconstruction of society.

The eleven years of the Bolshevik regime have brought about little change in the conditions in the recruiting of industrial workers. As the recent investigations show, the workers employed in the metal industry are still recruited, to a considerable extent, from the ranks of the agricultural population. At the *Sormovo Works*, for instance, the percentage of workers who retain their connection with

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land is as high as 43·6; at the *Dzerzhinsky Works*, 46·7; and at the *Lenin Works*, 54·3, etc.⁵

Besides this purely peasant element there are many workers, small artisans, traders, former minor government officials, etc., who were forced to join the 'proletarian army,' because they could not find any other occupation. How numerous are the 'non-proletarian' elements in the Soviet industrial undertakings can be judged by the fact that at the *Petrovsky Metal Works* only 11·5 per cent. out of 22,000 have been engaged in industry more than five years, and at the *Dzerzhinsky Works* the percentage of such workers was 12·3 per cent.⁶

In their bid for power the Bolsheviks were supported, not by the industrial proletariat imbued with Socialist ideas and ideals, but by those elements whom Lenin himself characterised as 'small bourgeois.'

It is also a well-known fact that the Bolsheviks were able to overthrow the Provisional Government and to vanquish the 'White' generals because they found support in the soldiers of the former Imperial Army. Now this army had been recruited mostly from the peasantry, and the soldiers who fought on the side of the Soviets not only did not care about the Socialist reconstruction of society, but had scarcely heard of it. They went over to the Bolsheviks because they wanted to oust the former land-owners, to seize the land and divide it amongst themselves, and to enjoy its possession in the usual peasant way of private, individual ownership.

The social ideal of those elements amongst whom the Bolsheviks have found their main support rested on an essentially capitalist conception of things. They were not out to reorganise the Russian State on a Socialist basis.

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They wanted the redistribution of wealth collected by the governing classes of the old regime, and not its utilisation for common use and welfare.

Lenin understood the psychology of his supporters very well when he threw into the masses his notorious slogan: 'Rob what has been robbed.' It is essentially a non-Socialist slogan because it signifies the burning desire of a person hitherto deprived of property to gain that property in order to enjoy it. He who robs is not a Socialist, because the motive which makes him to rob is not a social, but an individual one.

In his book on 'Social Differentiation,' a German writer, Herr Zimmel, tells a story about a woman – a charcoal-carrier – who, at the time of the revolution in Paris in 1848, called out to a well-dressed lady whom she met in the street: 'Now we are all equal, now you'll carry coals, and me wear silk stockings.'

This naïve formula contains a mine of social philosophy. It reveals the longing of the oppressed and downtrodden for social justice and equality, for better conditions of life. But the primitive mind of the poor charcoal-carrier could only find an expression for all these longings in the suggestion that she should change her social status for that of the lady. It never occurred to this poor woman that everybody under the new regime should be able to wear silk stockings, provided, of course, the economic conditions would allow it, or carry coals, *i.e.* do necessary and unpleasant work.

Social equality means that no one shall enjoy any social privileges. But the person deprived of all social privileges, when a social change provides him with an opportunity of securing these privileges, wants to enjoy them immediately,

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and his crippled sense of social justice demands that those who used to enjoy these privileges under the old regime should be deprived of them. Only then does he feel that a social change has really taken place.

The Bolsheviks, while preparing their conspiracy against the democratic Provisional Government, and when fighting the 'Whites,' exploited to the fullest possible extent the primitive psychology of the illiterate, mentally and socially backward Russian masses, whose social status was also greatly disturbed and displaced by the events and horrors of the Great War. Two examples may be given of the social demagogy which the Bolsheviks displayed so successfully for obtaining the support of the masses and gaining them over.

Soon after the Bolsheviks seized power the town population in Russia began to feel acutely the lack of foodstuffs. Private trading was prohibited, and food supplies were vested in the hands of the Bolshevik authorities. A card system of distribution was introduced, and the whole population was divided into four categories, the first being 'the proletarian category,' and the last 'the bourgeois category.' Very often the supplies were so low that even the holders of the 'first category' cards received only one quarter of a pound of an abominable stuff which could hardly be called 'bread.' But the 'proletarians' found a great consolation in the fact that the 'bourgeoisie' of the fourth category got nothing at all. Zinovieff, then dictator of Petrograd, once said: 'Under Socialism bread should go to the workers, and the bourgeoisie must be content with the smell of bread.' Does not this sentence remind us of the French charcoal-carrier of 1848?

Another example was the so-called 'housing policy,'

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which the Soviets practised during the first years of their régime. Decrees were issued ordering the 'proletarian' families to occupy houses which belonged to well-to-do people. In Petrograd the decree was published when many inhabitants had already left the city and migrated to the other parts of Russia in search of food and employment, and when there was a great number of empty houses and flats. A worker could have moved into any flat he might choose without being invited to do so by decree.

The experiment, however, ended in a fiasco. Although the 'proletarians' were greatly flattered by the privilege of living in bourgeois houses, and the bourgeoisie was greatly distressed by the invasion of their homes by dirty and uncultured 'tenants,' nevertheless the 'proletarians' soon began to feel themselves very uncomfortable in their new surroundings, and quickly quitted them for their former habitations. As a result many good houses and flats were damaged or destroyed, and furniture was spoiled or removed. But the longing of the poor for the 'silk stockings' had been satisfied.

Unfortunately, the illusion that the Bolsheviki, by their measures like food distribution and housing decrees, had created in Russia a new and just social order, was shared not only by the illiterate and backward Russian masses, but by many European Socialists who ought to have been more intelligent and conversant with Socialist theory and practice. Hence the sentimental feelings towards Bolshevism which are still so widespread in some European Socialist circles. The Bolsheviki, in spite of all the horrors which their régime has inflicted upon Russia, are considered to be bold social experimenters who have done their best to introduce Socialism in Russia.

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These innocent souls do not take the trouble to examine the real facts in the light of scientific Socialist theory, but prefer to live in the domain of pleasant illusions. . . .

The first question put at the beginning of this chapter, whether the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917 was a Socialist revolution, must be answered in the negative. The masses who made this revolution were animated not by a Socialist ideal of the reorganisation of the society on the basis of social and economic equality, but by the primitive pre-Socialist idea of the re-distribution of the wealth of the nation. They wanted to overthrow the former ruling class in order to enjoy its social privileges. They wanted to put the social ladder upside down, but not to abolish it altogether.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Bolshevik revolution was an anti-Socialist, anti-proletarian one. It caused the complete breakdown of Russian national industry, and it could not have done otherwise. Factories were closed, industrial equipment was damaged, taken away, or destroyed. In every way Russia was thrown back at least fifty years. The very means of existence of the industrial proletariat were annihilated, and the proletariat, as a class of society, almost ceased to exist in Russia. Even now, after eleven years of Bolshevik dictatorship, the pre-War level of production and the pre-War social standard remain an unattainable ideal for the Soviet economy.

All the teachers of Socialism, including Karl Marx, maintained that Socialism might be established as a result of the development of Capitalism and as not of its annihilation. Socialists want to inherit all the wealth accumulated by Capitalism in order to use it for the

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common benefit. Socialism is essentially creative, not a destructive force.

The Bolsheviki acted in an entirely different way; they destroyed everything. They wanted to make the ground bare in order to build upon it the new edifice of an ideal Socialist State. In their conceptions the Bolsheviki were following the teachings of Michel Bakounin and other anarchists whom the Socialists always considered as social reactionaries.

Let us now examine another question: Does the claim that the Soviet Government is a workers' government correspond to the facts? Does the Russian Communist Party, which forms the Soviet Government, represent workers in the same manner as the European Labour and Socialist parties do? Is the Government run by the workers themselves through their elected representatives? In other words – what is the social nature and the social basis of the Russian Communist Party and of the Soviet Government?

As we do not want to be suspected of prejudice towards the Soviets we shall not seek the answers to these questions in the works of anti-Soviet writers. The most prominent Soviet leaders shall express their own opinions:

‘The strength of the Russian proletariat, besieged from all the sides, rests with its Party, which is the backbone of the whole Soviet system, or, rather, the very heart of the system. Our (Communist) Party, about which our Constitution remains silent, is nevertheless the legal and real essence of the Constitution, as Comrade Lenin once said.’

This quotation is reproduced from a book written by a prominent Bolshevik professor of law, Mr. Gourevitch.

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His work is recommended as a text-book for students of Russian universities.

Lenin, in one of his books, to which Mr. Gourevitch refers, says: 'We must know and remember that legally as well as *de facto* the Constitution of the Soviet Republic is based on the assumption that the (Communist) Party corrects, directs and builds up everything in accordance with its principles.'⁸

Kameneff, in his address at the Ninth Party Congress in 1920, went a step farther, and described how the Communist Party must apply in practice the general principles established by Lenin in theory: 'The Communist Party is the body which governs Russia. The 600,000 party members are the persons who govern Russia, who govern the huge mass of non-Communist population. Every one of these 600,000 men and women is dear to us. . . . We must know how every one of them could be employed.'⁹ Kameneff suggested that, while distributing the jobs among party members, 'it would be necessary to apply the following general principle: if a Party comrade is a good locksmith he must be put at the head of some mechanical works.'¹⁰

But there are in existence some institutions with which, according to the written Soviet Constitution, the supreme State power rests: The All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, the Præsidium of this Committee, and the Council of People's Commissars. What would happen if one of these institutions were to pass a resolution or take steps which did not meet with the approval of the Communist Party and of the Party Central Executive Committee? This question is answered by Krestinsky, formerly the General Secretary of the Com-

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munist Party and now the Soviet Ambassador to Germany: 'When it is necessary to cancel some resolutions passed by the Council of People's Commissars, or to hold up temporarily a decree issued by it, the Central Committee of the Communist Party does it through the Præsidium of the All-Russian Executive Committee of the Soviets.'¹¹

There was a case when the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets prepared a decree on the organisation of the new Ministry, the Workers' and Peasants' Control Commission, and the Central Committee of the Communist Party was displeased with this decree. 'Then,' tells Krestinsky, 'the Central Committee was obliged to say: Will you please to work hand in hand with us?'¹² The decree was changed according to the wishes of the Communist Party.

Krestinsky's evidence on the manner in which State affairs are managed in Russia is supported by Lenin, who in 1920 wrote: 'There is not a single political or organic matter of importance which could be solved by a State institution of our Republic without guiding instructions being given by the Central Committee of the Communist Party.'¹³

At the Twelfth Congress of the Communist Party, held in April 1923, Zinovieff explained 'how we had to cancel twice the State Acts which had already been signed: the treaty with Italy, and the preliminary agreement with Mr. Leslie Urquhart. In both cases the instruments were signed by Comrade Krassin, and in both cases the signatures were annulled by the Politbureau on the initiative or with the consent of Comrade Lenin. Although we fully realised that it was inadvisable to cancel the agreements concluded by such an influential comrade as Krassin, we

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did it at the sitting of the Politbureau (Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party); Lenin took part in the deliberations of the Politbureau and voted for the resolution.¹⁴

In another address at the same Congress, Zinovieff, who at that time, when Lenin's fatal illness took a dangerous turn, was the leading man in the councils of the Communist Party, was even more outspoken. "There are some comrades who say that the party dictatorship is the thing which they do, but which they don't talk about. Why not talk about it? This shyness is all wrong. Why should we be ashamed to tell the truth which should not be hidden? We must find courage to say it openly and to defend it when necessary, especially now, when non-party workers see it clearly. We must not allow any revision in this all-important matter. Without District Committees of the Communist Party we cannot collect taxes, regulate wages, or manage industry."¹⁵

At the Thirteenth Congress Zinovieff was absolutely frank, and removed all doubts about with what body supreme power over Russia rested. Said he: 'Everybody knows that our Politbureau is the basic organ of State.'¹⁶

Thus the system of the Bolshevist dictatorship becomes absolutely clear. The supreme State power is being held, not by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, not by the Council of People's Commissars, not even by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, but by the Politbureau, which consists now of nine men.

The question 'What is the Soviet Government?' must be answered on the evidence supplied by the leaders of this Government. All the so-called Government institutions

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which, under the written Soviet Constitution, are being 'elected' by the people, are mere puppets in the show. The real power over Russia is in the hands of the handful of men who hold no formal responsibility to any State institution elected under the Soviet written law, and who, once appointed to the Politbureau, practically retain their positions for life.

But if the Russian Communist Party is a party of Russian industrial workers, then, perhaps, some justification can be found for the existing state of affairs, at least in the eyes of those who support the idea of proletarian dictatorship and are prepared to put up with the violation by the Bolsheviks of every principle of democracy.

In examining this question, we again shall use exclusively the evidence supplied by the Bolsheviks themselves.

According to recent data, the total number of the members of the Soviet trade unions at the middle of 1928 was 11,000,000. But as there are many workers who still remain outside the trade-union organisation, the total number of persons who obtain their living by the sale of their labour must be estimated at 14,000,000 at least.

The membership of the Russian Communist Party, including probationary candidates, is now about 1,500,000. The number of Communists in relation to the total number of Russian workers is, therefore, about ten per cent., that is to say, the Communists are not only a minority in relation to the whole population of Russia, but even to the number of those who could be socially classified as 'proletarians.'

This calculation is borne out by the statement made by Mr. Polonsky at the meeting of the Moscow District Communist Party. 'There are 150,000 members in our

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organisation. The Party streak amongst the Moscow workers is, however, rather thin, 8·8 per cent. of the total only.¹⁷

It would be wrong, however, to assume that all the members of the Communist Party are real proletarians. The Party is recruited from all the classes of Russian society, and the workers who actually work in factories, and are not filling posts in the Soviet administration, are in a minority.

At the time of the October revolution the Russian Communist Party had not more than from 45,000 to 50,000 members. How many of them were real proletarians? It is difficult to say, as no census had been taken at that time. But there is every reason to believe that the majority of the Party members belonged to other social classes than industrial workers. The Bolsheviks entered into the revolution as the Party of intellectuals, non-manual workers.

In 1922, four years after the October revolution, a Party census was taken. According to the data of this census, the social structure of the Party was as follows: out of the total membership of 514,529 only 90,900 or 17·6 per cent. were workers actually engaged in industry or transport. But as the factory employees were also included in this figure, it was impossible to ascertain the exact number of manual workers who were members of the Party.

We can form an idea about it only by referring to some subsidiary data supplied by the census. According to these data, in twelve industrial districts of Russia (Moscow and Petrograd excluded) there were 14,570 Communists engaged in industrial and transport undertakings, but only 4255, or 28·8 per cent., were actually working at manual

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jobs, the rest being employed on various administrative posts.¹⁸

If we apply the above proportion to the whole membership of the Party, we shall arrive at the conclusion that the percentage of real proletarians in the Communist Party in 1922 was only 5·1 of the total membership.

Lenin was fully alive to the fact that the Russian Communist Party could hardly be called a proletarian party, as the social structure of its membership was far from being proletarian. In his letter of 24th March 1922, already quoted, he wrote: 'There is no doubt that we consider as workers those persons who have not passed through the school of industry. Very often the small bourgeois, who only occasionally and for a short period were engaged in industry, are numbered among the workers.' In another letter, written two days later, Lenin said: 'There is no doubt that our Party is not sufficiently proletarian, as the majority of members do not belong to the labouring classes. If we would not shut our eyes to the realities of life, we must acknowledge that at the present time the Party proletarian policy is based, not on its social structure, but on the enormous undivided authority which the thin layer of the Party old guards enjoys.'¹⁹

These quotations show that Lenin understood very well that those 'workers' who were the members of the Communist Party were not real workers in the strict sense of the word, but small bourgeois elements. These elements became 'workers,' not owing to the natural social or economic causes, but quite accidentally, because of the conditions created by the Great War. Many were engaged in industry only for a short period of time; others went to the factories in order to gain admission into the ranks of the

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Communist Party. Lenin saw that the Communist Party, in counting all these elements as proletarians, deceived itself as well as others.

Since 1922 great efforts were made by the leaders of the Communist Party to increase the proletarian nucleus in the Party. Special campaigns of enlistment of the proletarian elements were inaugurated, and the admission of other social elements was made more difficult. It was stipulated by the Thirteenth Congress of the Party, 1925, that the number of genuine proletarians actually engaged in manual work should be not less than fifty per cent. of the total membership.

These efforts were, however, unsuccessful. By 1st July 1927 the number of workers in the Communist Party was only 36·7 per cent. of the total membership,²⁰ and by 1st January 1928, 40·8 per cent. In June 1928 the percentage of actual workers was only 44·5 in the Moscow Party organisation, which is the largest section of the Party.²¹

There is one more fact which deserves to be noted. The larger a factory, the more workers engaged in it, the less is the number of Communists. In January 1926 the percentage of Communists in relation to the total number of workers was as follows: in factories with less than 200 workers, 27·2; with less than 2000, 13·1; and with more than 5000, 8·7.²² This phenomenon is confirmed by Polonsky, whom we have already quoted: 'In larger factories and works the Party layer is rather thin, and the growth of the Communist cells is going on more slowly than in small undertakings.'²³

The leaders of the Communist Party are not successful in their attempts to 'proletarianise' their Party. Why? Because the Party itself is doing the utmost to 'de-

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proletarianise' the workers who join it. That this specific process is going on inside the Communist Party is evident from the following data. According to the Party census on 1st January 1928, out of every thousand Communists who were engaged in manual work before joining the Party, 499 have already abandoned their former occupations. About three-quarters of them secured posts in the Soviet administration, and 12·3 per cent. were sent to universities and technical schools, etc. In other words, they became members of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The total number of the Communists who occupied various administrative posts on 1st July 1928 was 438,832. Out of this number only 42·8 per cent. were Government officials or professionals before they joined the Communist Party. The rest were recruited from lower social classes, chiefly from the industrial workers.

Thus the most numerous social group in the Communist Party, and the most influential group, too, belongs to the class of large and small government officials. Although Communist writers and propagandists assert that their Party is the genuine working-class organisation, it is, in fact, the Party of government officials. The genuine workers play an insignificant and subordinate part in all the councils of the Russian Communist Party.

The following evidence confirms this statement. According to the constitution of the Communist Party, the Party Congress is the highest authority in all the Party affairs. The Congress defines the policy of the Party and elects the members of the Central Executive Committee and other officers. Out of 748 delegates, with casting votes, who attended the Thirteenth Congress, there were only fifty-four actual workers, or 7·2 per cent. of the total.

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The percentage of genuine workers at the Fourteenth Congress was 5·1, and at the Fifteenth Congress, 18·4.

In the middle of 1927 there were 12,564 members of the local Party Committees. Actual workers numbered only 1910, while the rest belonged either to the class of State officials or to the group of professional Party organisers and propagandists. (All these data are taken from *The Communist Vade-mecum* for 1927 and 1918.)

All this evidence points to the following conclusions: (1) The Soviet Government came to power as the result, not of a Socialist, proletarian revolution, but of a revolution carried out by small bourgeois elements, which was inspired, not by the Socialist idea of the reorganisation of society, but by the essentially capitalist conception about re-distribution of wealth. (2) The real State power in Soviet Russia rests, not with the popularly elected Soviet institutions, but with the small group of the Communist Party bosses. (3) The social structure of the Russian Communist Party is such that the majority of its members belong to non-proletarian elements.

But does the Soviet Government and the Communist Party, in spite of these facts, run the Russian State machinery in the interests of the workers? The chapters that follow will provide the answer.

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CHAPTER II

THE WORKING DAY

Soviet Labour Legislation - Overtime - Leaves - Seven-hours Working Day.

THE number of hours which a worker must work each day or week in order to ensure a decent living for himself and his family is a very important feature in the general state of the labour and social conditions which exist in a given country. Since the beginning of the organised Labour Movement, and even before, the duration of the working day has always been in the forefront, and many social struggles were given and accepted by the working classes on this ground. Therefore, when we make a general survey of the social and labour conditions in Soviet Russia, we must answer the question: How is the most important problem of the hours of work solved in the land of alleged proletarian dictatorship?

We acknowledge without the slightest hesitation that Labour legislation in Soviet Russia is, perhaps, the best and the most advanced of all countries. The Bolsheviki included in their Labour Code, published in 1922, all the demands and provisions which Labour and Socialist Parties have ever suggested in their programmes.

In regard to the working day the Soviet Labour Code provides the following stipulations: an eight-hours day -

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forty-eight hours a week – for all industrial, transport, agricultural, and domestic workers; a six-hours day for intellectual workers and for those engaged in dangerous trades and those harmful to the health; prohibition of overtime work; a weekly rest of at least forty-two hours for each worker; two weeks' holidays a year with pay; restriction of hours of night-work for men, and prohibition of it for pregnant and 'wet' women and for young persons.

If the regulations provided for by this legislation had been strictly adhered to by the Soviet authorities, then it could be said that some of the ideals for which organised Labour had been fighting were at last realised in actual life. But 'even the devil himself can quote Holy Scripture.' Therefore, it will not do to accept the provisions of the Soviet Labour Code at their face value. We must investigate for ourselves the actual state of affairs.

Much is made by the friends and supporters of Russian Bolshevism in this and other countries of Europe of the official Soviet statistics which assert that the working day in Russia does not now exceed, on the average, seven hours and twenty minutes, *i.e.* forty-four hours a week.¹

A close scrutiny of this statement reveals, however, that it is based on a statistical trick. The statistics were compiled in respect of members of the trade unions, but as the unions comprise a large number of non-manual workers whose hours, according to law, are six a day, the average for all workers in thereby artificially lowered. Besides, there was no actual census taken, and the figures were supplied by the managements of industrial and other undertakings. As we shall see later, these bodies usually give very inaccurate information about the conditions

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prevailing in the factories and works under their care. Their information, therefore, cannot be trusted.

If we carefully study the daily Soviet Press, especially those paragraphs printed in small type on the back pages, we shall see that the claims of the Soviet statisticians do not agree with the actual facts.

The Bolsheviks cannot conceal the fact that whole categories of Russian workers do not enjoy the benefits of Soviet legislation in respect of the compulsory eight-hours working day. For instance, agricultural labourers, numbering at least three and a half millions,² are working the same long hours as before the Bolshevik revolution.

Mr. Shakhnovsky, member of the Executive Committee of the Agricultural Workers' Union, made the following statement at the conference on Labour protection held in Moscow in February 1928: "The usual working day of agricultural workers is thirteen hours. Women and youths work even longer. Workers do not have leave or holidays. Seventy per cent. of agricultural labourers are working seven days a week. Even the Soviet farms do not comply with many of the stipulations of the Labour Code."³

A special inquiry undertaken in the Ukraine, in July 1928, revealed the fact that 'the Labour Code in respect of the agricultural workers, especially the regulations of the working day, are constantly infringed. Over sixty per cent. of agricultural labourers do not enjoy the weekly rest.'⁴

Domestic servants also work much longer than eight hours a day. 'There are many cases when a domestic servant is obliged to carry out very heavy work from early morning till late at night without any interval.'⁵

Mr. Schwartz, who has specially studied labour conditions in Soviet Russia, asserts that on the railways the

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eight-hours day exists only on paper. The same is true in respect of river transport, building industry, home industry, peat-workings and timber camps.⁶

But even industrial workers do not enjoy the benefits of the short working day the Soviet Labour Code provides for them.

‘There are 38,500 underground workers in the Don Basin coal-mining area whose working day, according to collective agreements and to the regulations of the Commissariat for Labour, must not exceed six hours. These categories of workers, however, work, on the average, six hours fifty-four minutes a day, and some even seven hours twenty-two minutes.’⁷

Similar conditions prevail in another important mining district – Shakhty – in the Northern Caucasus, where ‘the six-hours working day in the dangerous trades is not observed.’⁸

Sometimes the facts concerning the infringements of the Labour Code come to light only in the law courts. Such was the case of criminal proceedings against two managers of the *Chabukhty* Works in Samarkand, Central Asia. Conditions which existed in the works were thus described in the Soviet Press: ‘Workers were working under dreadful conditions. Safety devices for protection of workers against the accidents were lacking. The eight-hours day was violated. Sanitary conditions were so bad that many workers fainted and bled from their noses and throats.’⁹

There is little doubt that similar conditions exist in many other Soviet industrial undertakings. The facts are not made known, as the managers of these undertakings remain at their posts and are not in prison.

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'Many women workers (in the *Naro-Fominsk* Textile Factory) work, as a rule, nine hours a day, and 'wet' women eight hours instead of seven. The management, of course, does not formally permit this practice, but, at the same time, does not take steps to prevent it.'¹⁰

Here is another example of how the normal working day is infringed under the very eyes of the Soviet trade unions. 'There is no overtime work being registered in our works, say the officials of the factory committee at the glass-works, *The Proletarian* (White Russia); but the packers work nine and ten hours a day, and the extra hours are not considered as overtime.'¹¹

An official inquiry into the working hours of the cotton workers was carried out in March 1928. According to this inquiry, the average working day, including that for women, apprentices, and workers engaged in dangerous trades, was 7·86 hours. As the apprentices work only four hours a day, and about 1 per cent. of adult workers are engaged six hours a day, the average for the majority of workers must be considerably beyond the legal eight hours.¹²

The six-hours working day for non-manual workers is also not always observed. Mme. Filipova, member of the Central Committee of the Medical Workers' Union, said, at the Conference on Labour Protection, that 'the general conditions of labour for medical workers are extremely bad, and the working day, according to the inquiry which was carried out in eleven most important towns of the Soviet Union, is from eleven and a half to fourteen hours.'¹³ Koroleff, representative of the Teachers' Union, said at the same conference that the school teachers 'work on an average eight and a half hours a day.'¹⁴

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In some cases the workers themselves are interested in long working hours. In others the working day is being lengthened on the initiative of the Soviet authorities, who want to utilise factory equipment and machinery to their fullest possible capacity. It is a well-established fact that the growth of industrial production in Russia during the last three years has been achieved, not because technical conditions in the Soviet factories have improved, but because the workers were made to work more intensively.

The normal working day is very often considerably lengthened by the widespread practice of overtime.

According to the Soviet Labour Code, overtime work can be used only on very exceptional occasions and with the special permission of the local branches of the Commissariat for Labour. But, as usual in Soviet Russia, these regulations are not observed by the Soviet authorities, and overtime work is flourishing in the Soviet factories.

According to official data, the percentage of workers who worked overtime during the whole year in 1926 was 18·7,¹⁵ and in 1927, 18·0.¹⁶ In some branches of industry the percentage of overtime in relation to the normal working hours is rather high. Thus, in March 1927, workers in the metal industry worked 5·6 per cent. over the normal hours, in coal-mining 5·2 per cent., in oil 9·7 per cent., and in sugar refining 9·1 per cent.¹⁷

In a circular letter sent out by the Commissariat for Labour in February 1928, it was stated that 'overtime is widely practised in the following branches of industry: extraction of minerals, mining, metallurgical, food, paper, and railway transport.'¹⁸ Measures were suggested in this letter for decreasing the overtime, but apparently the managements of industrial undertakings did not pay any

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attention to the instructions, and, as the facts published later show, the usual practice was continued.

According to data supplied by the All-Ukrainian Coal Miners' Union, every miner in the Don Basin District works, on an average, forty-five hours overtime a month. In some cases the number of overtime hours is much higher.¹⁹

All these statistics refer only to cases of regulated overtime practised with the approval of the local branches of the Commissariat for Labour. There are numberless cases, however, where the managements of industrial undertakings force the workers to work extra hours without permission of the labour inspectors. We shall give a few quotations from the official Soviet Press in support of this statement.

'A great quantity of overtime work is carried on in the *Grosny* Oil-fields without permission of the labour inspectors.'²⁰ A special inquiry into the state of labour protection in Dniepropetrovsk (Ukraine) revealed many cases of infringement of labour legislation. . . . Overtime above the limit permitted by the labour inspection has been widely practised.'²¹ An analogous inquiry carried out in the Novorossiysk district (Northern Caucasus) also stated that 'latent forms of overtime were flourishing.'²²

Another important matter in labour conditions is the amount of holidays the workers usually enjoy. According to Soviet official data the average duration of these holidays is fourteen days a year a person.²³ But, firstly, as we have already seen, this privilege does not apply to many categories of workers. For instance, agricultural workers not only do not enjoy annual holidays, but even do not have a weekly rest.

Secondly, the official data included into the calculation

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non-manual workers who usually have a month's holiday. Thus we again encounter a statistical trick by means of which Soviet statisticians mass their figures in the form most favourable to the Soviet regime.

Finally, the periods for which factories are closed down on account of overhaul of machinery, or for necessary repairs, or owing to the lack of raw materials (textile factories), are also counted as 'workers' holidays.' The following quotation shows how it is done: 'Workers' summer holidays have already begun in the Leningrad factories and works. Many undertakings will grant leave to all the personnel at once, stopping the factories for repairs. . . . Match factories will be stopped for the period of one month.'²⁴

We must, however, acknowledge that in respect of holidays Russian industrial workers are, under the Soviets, better off than under the Tsarist regime. Then only those workers who were engaged in the State-owned undertakings (railways, arsenals, etc.) enjoyed a fortnightly holiday with pay; now the privilege is extended to all workers who are on the permanent staffs of State industrial undertakings. But the managing bodies of the Soviet factories have plenty of means to escape their responsibilities and to cheat the workers out of their rights. The most usual trick is the engagement of men on 'temporary jobs,' as the temporary workers have no right to claim leave with pay.

As this matter will be dealt with more fully later, we shall just mention here the fact that only a small number of workers, comparatively speaking, can enjoy the benefit of the annual holiday with pay: the majority are deprived of this privilege.

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The Bolsheviks are usually very eager to accuse their enemies and adversaries of the sin of hypocrisy. If a European Government make a proposal to limit armaments, the Soviet papers immediately raise hue and cry that behind this proposal is hidden a sinister scheme to make war against 'the only Workers' State in the world.' If a European Socialist suggests some remedy for the betterment of the workers' lot, the Bolsheviks immediately begin to abuse and to accuse him of 'treason to the workers' cause.'

But there never was, perhaps, a bigger act of political hypocrisy than the promise to introduce, within the next five years, a seven-hours working day in Russian State industrial undertakings which the Soviet Government made with much ado in November 1927, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution.

The promised reform was dictated by two chief considerations: one political, and the other economic. In their struggle with the Trotsky opposition Stalin and his group devised the plan to gain over the sympathies of the working masses by promising them to introduce the seven-hours working day. Trotsky objected to this measure, and suggested that it would be more advisable to ensure for the workers higher wages than to shorten the working hours. The Stalinists used this objection as a pretext for accusing the opposition of neglecting the workers' interests, and the reform was solemnly declared.

But, perhaps, even more important were the economic considerations which prompted the Soviet Government to make this demagogic promise.

It is well known that enormous difficulties were encountered by the Soviets when they found themselves

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obliged to begin the restoration of Russian national industry from the dreadful state into which it had fallen during the first years of the Bolshevik regime. Many factories were destroyed; others were damaged and needed capital repairs; machinery became worn out and had to be replaced. A great amount of capital was necessary in order to make good all the damages and to ensure the further development of industry.

The Soviets, however, were unable to provide the necessary means. Accumulation of private capital within the country could proceed necessarily only very slowly. The country was impoverished by civil war and subsequent famine. Besides, the Government, which protests to be a sworn enemy of Capitalism, puts every obstacle in the way of the accumulation of capital by private persons. It had been hoped that the profits accruing to the nationalised industry could be used for the restoration of industry. These hopes, however, were realised to a very limited extent. Management of the nationalised industrial undertakings was so bad, corruption amongst Soviet 'captains of industry' was so rampant, incompetence of the Soviet officials was so great, that industry could hardly make both ends meet. All the attempts of the Soviet Government to borrow money in foreign countries were frustrated.

Two ways for providing capital for the restoration and reconstruction of Russian national industry remained open to the Soviets. One was the exploitation of the peasantry by keeping down the prices of agricultural products, and the other was the extensive utilisation of the existing machinery and industrial equipment.

We shall deal with the first way more fully in a chapter in which we shall describe the relations between the

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Soviets and the peasantry. As to the second way, it has been apparent that more or less satisfactory results could be achieved only if factories could be made to function without break or intervals. The problem was solved by the introduction in the factories of the three-shift system, each shift working seven hours a day.

Thus the much-advertised reform, which evoked pæans of admiration from the European friends and supporters of the Soviets, actually had nothing to do with the alleged benevolence of the Soviet Government towards workers. As a matter of fact, the Bolsheviki, while pledging themselves to introduce the seven-hours working day, were acting in the same way as those preachers who, as Heinrich Heine once said:

‘ . . . trinken heimlich Wein,
Und predigen öffentlich Wasser.’

We have now to examine in some detail three separate sets of questions in connection with this ‘reform.’ Was the introduction of the seven-hours day in the interests of Russian workers? Has it been advisable to introduce the three-shift system under the conditions prevailing in the Russian industry? How is the pledge of the Soviet Government being carried out in practice?

Undoubtedly, it is far better for a worker, *when other conditions of labour remain the same*, to work seven hours a day instead of eight. And if the Soviet ‘reform’ had not resulted in making general labour conditions in Russia worse, it would not have been possible to criticise it from the Socialist point of view.

As will be shown later on, the piecework system of

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remuneration is now general in Russia, especially in the textile industry, where the seven-hours day has, so far, been introduced. Under the new system the working day is being shortened by 12.5 per cent.; consequently, a worker must work more intensively if he wants to maintain his wages at the former level. As the Soviet Press reports, the introduction of the seven-hours day has been always accompanied by the intensification of labour. Workers who before the reform 'minded' two looms were made to mind three, and so on.²⁵ Intensification of labour and the output of manufactured goods per worker increased. But as the managements simultaneously lowered the rates of piecework, wages remained on the same level as before, or increased only very slightly.²⁶

Other conditions of labour under the new system became even worse. This especially refers to the distribution of working hours between the shifts. In some factories the system of three shifts was established, each shift working seven hours without an interval; in others, the working day was divided into five periods, one of seven hours and four of three and a half hours each, one shift working seven hours without interval, and two with one interval of three and a half hours each.

Both these systems were condemned by a special conference of sanitary doctors held in Leningrad in July 1928. Doctors found that work for seven hours without an interval put too great a strain on the constitution of a worker and was very harmful to his health. Long intervals were, however, more harmful from the sanitary point of view, as, during them, the worker did not take his rest, but occupied himself in household and other work, and returned to the factory very tired. This resulted not only

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in deterioration of the workers' health, but also in reducing the productivity of labour and in increasing the number of industrial accidents.²⁷

As a good many women are engaged in the textile factories, and as the law forbids night-work for pregnant and 'wet' women, the question arose how the requirements of the labour legislation could be adjusted to the new conditions of work. All efforts to solve this problem satisfactorily proved to be unsuccessful, and women are now obliged to work night-shifts. The same refers to young workers, who are also working at night, though night-work for them is expressly prohibited by the Labour Code.²⁸

At a special conference of the Scientific Institutes for Protection of Labour, held in Moscow in March 1929, the results of the seven-hours day reform were surveyed. It was stated later in the Soviet Press²⁹ that 'at the factories where the reform was introduced it is noticeable that the number of industrial casualties and the percentage of absenteeism from work on account of illness tend to increase.' In other words, the conditions of labour at the factories working seven hours a day have become worse.

The introduction of the three-shift system in the factories where only two shifts were working before involved the engagement of additional workers. Of course, from the point of view of combating unemployment this was very good. But, on the other hand, the influx of additional workers resulted in making the housing crisis in the industrial areas even more acute. There were no new houses near the factories provided for the additional workers, and they were housed in barracks which were

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already overcrowded. As we shall see later, the housing conditions in Russia are so bad that the influx of additional workers created in some cases real distress.

That the leaders of the Soviets, when introducing the seven-hours working day, were not guided by the desire to benefit the workers, is evident, not only from the fact that the conditions of labour under the new system became worse, but also from the manner in which the whole reform was carried out. Instead of reducing the number of working hours in a week, as in Canada and the U.S.A., the Bolsheviks reduced the number of hours in a working day. Introduction of the three-shift system, in order to prolong the functioning of machinery during twenty-one hours a day, shows that the reform was carried out with a view to secure the fullest possible utilisation of factory equipment and machinery.

But it is highly doubtful if the seven-hours day is beneficial for the Russian national economy. There are many indications that the general conditions prevailing in Soviet Russia make the reform impossible from the economic point of view, not only in the near, but even in the more or less distant future.

It is evident that in order to maintain under the seven-hours day the output of goods at the attained level, it is necessary to raise the efficiency and productivity of labour. But the growth of productivity of labour depends on the general social and industrial conditions under which the workers live. It can be attained if the factories are equipped with modern machinery, and if the most advanced technical methods are employed. But in this respect the Soviet Government is greatly handicapped. As has been already pointed out, it cannot provide the necessary capital

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from within the country, and the prospects of obtaining credits from abroad are highly problematical.

Thus the increased exploitation of the existing industrial equipment will cause only the speedier wearing out of machinery and the speedier approach of the final breakdown of Russian industry. One of the Soviet economists, Mr. Strumilin, calculated that the introduction of the seven-hours day in the whole of Russian industry will require the investment of at least 300,000,000 roubles (£30,000,000) in addition to the sum which is necessary for the reconstruction of industry. Where is the money to come from when even the most urgent repairs are being held up for the lack of capital?

All this forces us to the conclusion that the much-praised Bolshevik reform is not only harmful to the interests of Russian workers, but may prove disastrous for the whole of Russian industry.

There are many signs that those Soviet officials whose duty is to watch the developments of Russian industry realise the dangers which threaten the whole fabric of national economy if the seven-hours day is introduced in all Russian industrial undertakings. Measures to hush up the 'reform' are already being taken. According to the Supreme Economic Council's decision, the seven-hours day will be applied at the end of the 1928-9 economic year only to 15 per cent. of the industrial workers. The whole industry will be benefited by the 'reform' only in 1932.³⁰ Such caution is explained by the necessity of thoroughly studying the problem and by the fact that conditions in many industries are not yet ripe for it.

What were the practical results of the introduction of the seven-hours day in some of the textile factories? A

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special census, taken in March 1929, showed that the average length of the working day in the factories working under the new system decreased by a little more than half an hour. 'The actual seven-hours day is applied only to 52·5 per cent. of the men engaged in the factories, and to 65 per cent of the women. The average duration of the working day is 7·45 hours for men, 7·34 hours for women, and 7·30 hours for all workers, including boys and girls.'³¹

In May 1928 a statement by the Central Committee of the Communist Party was published in which the preliminary results of the seven-hours day reform were surveyed. The statement says that although the reform resulted in providing employment for some thirteen thousand additional textile workers, and in increasing the output per unit of existing machinery, it did not produce the effects which had been expected. Many difficulties were encountered; managements did not take the necessary measures to ensure the continuous supply of good raw materials. Jobs were distributed amongst workers in a very haphazard manner. New rates of pay for piecework were held up for a long time. Factories were not adapted to the new conditions of work. It was stated in the document that the reform in many cases produced discontent among the workers because labour conditions became worse.³²

While comparing the length of the working day under the Tsarist regime and under the Soviets we must admit that, generally speaking, conditions are now better than they used to be. On the whole the Russian industrial workers have now shorter hours than before the War.

But this fact can hardly be credited to the Bolsheviks; in any case, it cannot be produced as a kind of justification

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of the Bolshevik revolution. It must be remembered that the Bolsheviks overthrew not the Tsarist, but the democratic regime. The main forces of Russian democracy rested with the Russian Socialist parties, who, of course, would have taken care to ensure for Russian workers the best possible conditions of labour. A draft project of the Labour Code was prepared, and would have been passed by the Constituent Assembly, if the Bolsheviks had not dispersed it by sheer force. As the Russian national economy would not have gone through the period of destruction which it experienced during the first years of the Bolshevik regime, there would have been more chances of Russian Labour legislation being founded upon a sound economic basis.

What needs to be emphasised is this: the length of the working day under the democratic regime would not have been longer than under the Soviets. The sacrifices which Russian workers were called to make during the last eleven years have been made in vain. Nothing exceptional that could have justified these sacrifices has been gained.

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- ²¹ *Trud*, No. 104, 6th May 1928.
- ²² *Trud*, No. 174, 28th July 1928.
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CHAPTER III

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Piecework Remuneration – Minimum Wages – Nominal and Real Wages – Voluntary Contributions – Cheating the Workers – Rate of Exploitation.

ALMOST immediately the Bolsheviks seized power they proclaimed the abolition of 'wage slavery.' In strict keeping with Communist principles everybody in Russia was expected to work according to his capacity, and was supposed to receive according to his needs. All Soviet citizens, irrespective of their abilities, training, education, and qualifications, were divided into four categories, and in return for their work were given by the State, not wages, but food rations. The Bolsheviks were going to establish a new 'Communist' system of the distribution of all the necessities of life based on the principle of an abstract 'unit of labour' – a certain amount of time necessary for doing a certain amount of work. The Bolshevik theorists at that time quite seriously discussed such subjects as 'nullification of money' (the lowering of value of money to nil by means of an excessive issue of paper notes), or 'naturalisation of wages' (remuneration of workers in kind). But all these fantastic projects were abandoned in 1921, when the so-called New Economic Policy – N.E.P. – was introduced.

And it was well the projects were abandoned, because

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by the spring of 1921 Russian workmen and their families were literally dying of starvation. As a prominent Bolshevik economist, Mr. Strumilin, declared, average real wages, including food rations, during the first half of 1921 were equal to 3 gold roubles (6s.) a month!¹

Russian national industry also suffered enormously owing to the practical application of Communist theoretical ideas. One of the leading Soviet authorities on the subject, the late Mr. Krassin, once said that 'the principle of equal wages cost Soviet Russia thousands of millions of gold roubles in losses.'²

It is outside the scope of this work to follow all the stages through which Soviet policy in respect to the wages passed during all these years. It is quite sufficient for our purpose to state that the 'capitalist' system of money wages has been restored in Soviet Russia, including those forms of the system which were always objected to by the organised Labour Movement. By that we mean that the Soviet Government reintroduced the piecework system of remuneration, and applied it to every trade where it could be adapted to the technical conditions of labour. In May 1928, according to official data, the percentage of time paid for on a piecework basis was 60·4 for the whole of the Soviet large industrial undertakings.³

The Soviets claim that they were obliged to do so in order 'to rationalise industry.' This term is understood in Soviet Russia, however, in a very primitive way. When 'rationalisation' is talked about in Western Europe they mean technical reorganisation of industry accompanied by the introduction of the more productive machinery, and more efficient methods of production. In Soviet Russia

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'rationalisation' means increasing the intensity of labour, and nothing less.

And it cannot be otherwise, because the machinery and technical equipment of Russian factories is in a dreadful state. Even before the War, comparatively speaking, few Russian factories were equipped with up-to-date machinery. During the War a great strain was put upon Russian industrial equipment. A huge amount of various goods had to be produced in the shortest possible time, which involved almost ceaseless work in factories. Many poorly-trained workers were recruited to industry who could not take proper care of the looms and machines they minded. All this led to a speedy wear and tear of machinery which could not be replaced or renewed, as the communications with Western Europe, from where many machines and engines were formerly imported, became extremely difficult.

It can be said without exaggeration that since 1914, and up to 1922, when commercial relations between Russia and Western Europe were fully restored, Russian industrial equipment and machinery had not been repaired and replaced. It is obvious that it became extremely worn out, and, in many cases, absolutely obsolete, and fit only for the scrap-iron heap.

When they began to restore Russian industry, the Soviets were faced with the urgent necessity of renewing and repairing industrial equipment. But they could do very little in this direction, as they had not the necessary cash and credits to buy the machinery abroad. Moreover, owing to corruption, negligence, ignorance, and many other born sins of the Soviet officials, a good many imported machines, looms, and engines were not utilised properly,

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or soon got broken or damaged. There were numerous cases where the imported machinery could not be installed, as no buildings were provided for it, or could not be utilised because it did not correspond technically with the rest of the equipment of a factory. As the official Soviet journal *Pravda* asserts (see No. of 16th January 1929), as much as 40 per cent. of imported industrial equipment is not being utilised in some branches of industry.

According to the latest Soviet calculations, the sum of over £500,000,000 is required during the next five years in order to replace the obsolete equipment of Russian factories, and to ensure the standard of production necessary to meet the most urgent needs of the Russian population. Where is the money to come from? All the Bolshevik propaganda, however ingenious it may be, cannot produce hard cash. It is evident that as long as the Soviet Government maintains its present attitude towards Western Europe, and pursues its present policy within the country, no great hope of the speedy technical restoration of Russian national industry can be entertained. Consequently, all the talk about 'rationalisation of industry' under Soviet conditions will lead only to the intense exploitation of labour, and Russian workmen will be obliged to overcome all the deficiencies of the technical equipment by their physical strength and skill.

The system of piecework remuneration, so widely practised in Soviet Russia, is the best conceivable method to compel workmen to 'pack' more labour into a given period of time. Besides, this system provides excellent means for the regulation of wages. As soon as the productivity of labour begins to show an upward tendency and

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wages begin to increase, this increase can easily be checked by the lowering of the rates of piecework, or by the increase of the minimum output.

Soviet authorities utilise both advantages of the system to the fullest possible extent. They periodically decrease the rates of piecework remuneration, whether for the sake of compelling the workmen to work more intensively or for checking the growth of wages, or to increase the minimum output. It is usually done when a new collective agreement – agreements are concluded for a period of twelve months – comes in force.

The Soviet Press, especially the trade-union publications, is filled with complaints about the 'tricks of piecework pay.' In almost every number of *Trud*, the daily paper of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, one can find an article, correspondence, or a paragraph in which cases of abuse are reported. It is impossible to quote all the material at our disposal. We shall limit ourselves to a few typical examples.

'If you observe a group of workers of the *Naro-Fominsk* Textile Factory talking heatedly amongst themselves, you may be sure that they are discussing the subject of new rates of piecework pay. In 1926 the monthly earnings of a spinner were 60 to 65 roubles; to-day they are 48 to 50 roubles, although a worker is minding now fifty spindles instead of thirty-eight. This is done by cutting the pay for a kilogramme of yarn. Another group of workers, who last month earned 69 roubles, are earning now only 55 roubles, although the minimum output has been increased.'⁴

In another article, under the title 'The Wage-tariff Fever,' *Trud* describes how the new rates of piecework pay were introduced in the large *Sormovo* Metal Works, near

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Nizhny-Novgorod. 'Many difficulties were encountered when the new rates of piecework were introduced. These rates are based on an increase of the minimum output. As a result, wages in thirteen departments were increased, on an average, by 11.9 per cent., but in twenty-three departments were decreased by 23.95 per cent., and in seven departments remained approximately at the former level. The introduction of the new rates produced great discontent amongst the workmen; during the first week of the new rates there were 270 disputes between the workers and the management.'⁵

The widespread practice of overtime which we mentioned in the previous chapter must be ascribed, to a large extent, to the fact that in order to maintain the attained standard of wages, the workers are obliged to work more hours.

Up to 1928 a fund was provided in the State budget for the purpose of increasing wages in those branches of industry where they were below the average. This year, however, the Commissariat of Finances and the Supreme Economic Council suggested that the practice be abandoned, and that increases of wages must be made dependent on the growth of the productivity of labour. If this measure is passed wages can increase only in those branches of industry which work, from the business point of view, more or less satisfactorily. The number of men engaged in these industries is, comparatively speaking, small; therefore, in future, the majority of Russian workers will be deprived of the benefit which they have enjoyed under the present system.

It may be thought that Russian workers, being organised in powerful trade unions, could easily check all attempts of Soviet officials to abuse the system of piecework

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remuneration. In any other country it would certainly be the case. But in Soviet Russia, as we shall see later, trade unions have a very peculiar character. Their main task is not safeguarding and defending the workers' interests, but ensuring the dictatorship of the Communist Party over the working masses.

Let us now turn to the much-discussed and controversial matter of minimum wages.

It is a well-known fact that the Labour and Socialist Parties for a long time advocated the principle of a minimum living wage to be introduced in Labour legislation, and that the State should guarantee a decent living for every worker. Bolsheviks, of course, included this provision in their Labour Code. They established the so-called 'rates of the State minimum wages,' below which no workmen could be paid, whether by private or by State undertakings. The rates were to be periodically revised by the Commissariat for Labour.

The rates were last revised in October 1925, when they were fixed at 10 roubles a month for industrial areas and 7 roubles a month for agricultural districts. Since then they have remained the same, although during these three years nominal wages and the cost of living have gone up considerably.

It is true that the general standard of life of a Russian non-skilled worker is very low, and the prices of agricultural products in comparison with other countries are not high. Nevertheless, even under Russian conditions, the rates of the State minimum wages are ridiculously low.

The Bolsheviks themselves are obliged to acknowledge this fact, and state that 'the existing rates of minimum

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wage provide no real guarantee even for the most poorly paid categories of workers.'⁶

The comedy, or, if you like, the tragedy, which has occurred in Soviet Russia over the principle of the minimum wages is very characteristic of the Soviet regime generally. The principle has been established on paper, but has never been introduced in practice. *Mons nascit ridiculum mus*, as the Romans would have put it in their terse, practical language.

The introduction of N.E.P. and of the money system of remuneration was undoubtedly very beneficial for Russian workers. Since 1924, when the currency was stabilised on the gold basis, nominal wages have begun to increase. According to official data the average monthly wages in the economic year⁷ 1925-6 were 54.04 roubles,⁸ in 1926-27, 60.38 roubles, in the first quarter of 1927-8, 64.12 roubles, and in the second quarter, 66.82 roubles.⁹ In the first six months of 1928-9 the nominal average monthly wages were 69.98 roubles.¹⁰

These are official figures. But when we deal with the Soviet statistics we must always remember that official figures are not to be relied upon. The Bolsheviks themselves very often complain about the unreliability of their statistical data. Comrade Rabinovitch, a reporter at one of the Soviet conferences held in Moscow in June 1928, stated that the methods of the calculations of indexes relating to labour are very unstable. Even within the same institution, the Supreme Economic Council, different departments cannot agree between themselves as to the existing standard of mean wages and of the productivity of labour.¹¹

In their official statistics published in the daily Press and

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in all sorts of 'Yearbooks,' which are being circulated in foreign countries, the Bolsheviks naturally give figures which most favourably reflect on their regime. We must not be deceived by this trick, and shall accept official data only after subjecting them to the most minute scrutiny and after comparing them with information which can be found on the back pages of the Soviet papers.

It is a well-known fact that the real value of the Soviet currency is steadily declining, and that the cost of living is increasing in Russia from month to month.

Therefore the standard of nominal wages expressed in chervonetz roubles cannot give an adequate idea of the real wages that the Russian workers receive for their labour. It is not important for a worker what amount of roubles, or francs, or pounds sterling he receives monthly or weekly. The all-important matter for him is what and how much he can get for the money he earns. Therefore, in order to ascertain the standard of real wages existing in Soviet Russia to-day, we must take into account the cost-of-living index.

According to official data, the cost-of-living index (including rent, municipal services, rates and taxes, and expenses of entertainment) on 1st November 1927 was 2.15 times above the 1913 standard, and on 1st April 1928, 2.23 times; for food products the corresponding figures were 2.34 and 2.38.¹³ Thus it is easy to calculate that the standard of real wages was, in March 1928, 29.96 gold roubles a month, or about 11 per cent. more than it was before the War.

During the first six months of the economic year 1928-9 the value of paper money steadily declined. It was calculated that the purchasing power of the paper rouble on

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1st April 1929 was about 33 gold kopecs. Consequently, the standard of real monthly wages on this date was only about 23.3 gold roubles, or nearly 14 per cent. below the pre-War average.

Such are the figures at which we can arrive on the basis of official material. But, as the following quotations show, their accuracy cannot be vouched for. At the Miners' Union Conference held in Moscow in April 1928 it was revealed that 'the miners' wages represented only 79.4 per cent. of the pre-War wages.'¹⁴ At the Railwaymen's Union Conference it was stated that 'the wages of railwaymen during the last few years have increased; yet in May 1928 they reached on an average 83 per cent. of the pre-War level.'¹⁵ At the Eighth Trade Union Congress held in December 1928, Mr. Bakhmutsky, the representative of the Medical Workers' Union, said that 'the wages of professors, teachers, doctors and nurses have not reached even 50 per cent. of the pre-War average.'¹⁶

These statements, the accuracy of which can hardly be doubted, as they were made at conferences of the corresponding unions and were not contradicted, give ground for thinking that the official statistics are too optimistic. In our opinion it would be quite fair to suggest that the average standard of real wages in Russia is about the same as it was before the War.

The question arises whether it was worth while for the Russian working classes to make all the sacrifices and to endure all the horrors of civil war and famine in order to find themselves in the same position as before.

It is also stated in the Soviet Press that wages are fluctuating very widely, not only in the different industrial districts, but within the same districts. As a general rule

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they are much higher in Moscow and in Leningrad than in the provinces, even out of proportion to the cost of living. This is being done on purpose by the Soviets. It is necessary to keep down the discontent of the workers living in and around the capital, as much as possible out of political considerations ; besides, Moscow and Leningrad are more accessible to foreigners than provincial towns. In the provinces, far away from strangers' eyes, where every workers' revolt can be easily crushed, wages are kept on a much lower level.

At the Metal Workers' Union Conference 'the delegates from the Urals complained that wages in their district are very low.' One delegate said that 'the Ural factories execute the fixed programme of production in full and that the intensity of labour is very high, but that this is not reflected in the standard of existing wages.' Another delegate stated that 'wages of the Ural metal workers represent only 81 per cent. of the mean union wages.'¹⁷

Mr. Mokhoff, in his article in *Trud* entitled 'Wages and Migration of Workers,' states that the main reason why workers so often migrate from one industrial district to another is 'the extreme inequality of wages in our factories and works.'¹⁸

But even if we accept the suggestion that Russian workers nominally earn as much now as they earned before the War, we must ask whether all their earnings really go into their pockets. The Soviets have at their disposal hundreds of means to cheat the workers, and to take away from them a considerable part of their money.

First of all there are the so-called 'voluntary contributions.' Every worker is expected to subscribe 'voluntarily' to various funds established by the Communist Party.

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It is difficult to enumerate all 'voluntary societies' which were organised by the Communist Party, and which are supported financially by Russian workers out of their meagre wages. 'Osoaviokhim' (the Society of Assistance to Aviation and Chemical Warfare), 'Mopr' (The International Aid to Class War Prisoners), 'Fund to Relieve Strayed Children,' and many other 'funds' and 'societies' all collect enormous sums of money annually in Soviet Russia. It is estimated roughly that a Russian workman must contribute between 10 and 15 per cent. of his wages to these societies. That this estimate is not an exaggerated one is evident from the following quotation: 'Checking and calculation of wages is greatly handicapped by the large number of deductions which have to be made from wages. The number of different deductions - insurance, industrialisation loan, 'Mopr,' membership fees, etc. - in our factory is as much as seventeen.'¹⁹

Sometimes extraordinary demands are made by the Soviet authorities on the wages of workers. Such was the case when everybody was expected to subscribe to the strike fund of the British miners. In May 1929 funds 'To Help the Bombay Strikers,' and 'To Relieve the Victims of the Berlin Rising,' were inaugurated, and the workers were 'invited to contribute to these funds.'

Being very actively engaged in fostering the revolutionary troubles, strikes, riots, etc. throughout the world the Russian Communist Party needs ample means for this sort of 'work.' The money is supplied partly from the Russian State Treasury, and partly extorted from the workers by means of 'voluntary contributions,' their meagre wages being thereby reduced.

The most serious drain on the wages bill, however, is

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provided by the so-called State loans. In 1928 the 'Industrialisation Loan,' amounting to 200,000,000 roubles, was issued, and the workers were requested to subscribe one month's wages to this loan. It was supposed, of course, that workers would invest their 'savings' in the loan. But it can well be imagined that Russian workers, who receive the same as, or, probably, less than fifteen years ago, have no savings at all, and that the subscription to the loan was a kind of extraordinary taxation on their wages.

As *Pravda* testified (5th April 1929), on 1st February 1929, out of the 200,000,000 roubles realised from the sale of the bonds of the 'Industrialisation Loan,' bonds to the amount of 100,000,000 roubles were returned to the State bank, or, as the Soviet picturesquely puts it, were 'thrown down' by the holders. The reasons for this 'throwing down' of the Soviet bonds are obvious. The cost of living in Soviet Russia is increasing and the purchasing power of paper money declining, and everybody is, naturally, striving to get rid of paper securities and convert them into ready cash in order to purchase the necessities of life, thus insuring himself against depreciation of currency.

The Soviets seem to be greatly perturbed by this phenomenon, and steps are now considered by Government institutions for 'persuading' the holders to keep the State bonds and not to sell them back to the State bank. Under Soviet conditions the 'persuasion' must be spelt 'compulsion,' and it is not to be wondered at that the Soviet loans are now considered by the population as a tax on their incomes.

In 1928-9 it is intended to issue new State loans to the amount of 800,000,000 roubles. Who is going to subscribe these loans? There are practically no capitalists in Soviet

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Russia now; even small traders are exterminated. The peasants do not buy Soviet bonds. Only the workers and the Soviet officials can be requested to subscribe to the loan, and can hardly refuse to do so!

If the return of the bonds to the State bank is forbidden, or even impeded, it will mean that the loan will become a tax on wages and salaries. The wage bill of the Russian workers for 1928-9 will, consequently, be less by 800,000,000 roubles.

Therefore, when considering the question of wages in Russia of to-day, we must take into account the extraordinary taxation on the workers' earnings, which the Soviets are pleased to call by the unassuming name of 'State loans.'

It might be said that all these contributions and subscriptions are voluntary, and that the workers have the right to make or not to make them. But in Soviet Russia the authorities have at their disposal hundreds of means to extort these contributions from workers. The most usual and the most powerful is the threat to 'chuck out' everyone who shows little enthusiasm for making a requested contribution. Once 'fired,' a worker has little hope, in the present state of unemployment, of getting a new job. There are other means by which the authorities can make everyone docile and tame: one's rate of piecework remuneration can be lowered, one can be transferred to a poorer paid job, etc. Then there is the dreadful G.P.U. - political police. How easily every one and anyone can be accused of a political plot against the Soviet regime and put under lock and key for an indefinite period!

We shall see later how skilfully the Russian workers are entangled in Communist nets. It may be said that it is

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absolutely impossible for anyone to escape the burdens the Bolsheviks may see fit to impose on the people.

Besides this indirect cheating of the workers there are many cases where workers are cheated out of their wages quite openly. We refer especially to the delays in payment of wages for a more or less considerable length of time. Two or three years ago this method of cheating was very widely practised by the managers of Soviet industrial undertakings. Workers' wages were held up for two, three, or even more months. This practice created great discontent amongst the workers and caused many troubles. Although complaints are less frequent now, nevertheless this mean trick of cheating the workers is not altogether abandoned. The following quotation from the Soviet Press, taken at random, support this allegation:

'During the last few days the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions received many complaints that payment of wages is being delayed in many undertakings. At Briansk, at the factory *Profintern*, wages due in January have not been paid yet. Similar cases are reported from the Oka region, from Nizhny-Novgorod, from the Moscow district, and from Murmansk. The Chemical Workers' Union reports that wages are regularly being held up by the Central Porcelain Trust.'²¹

The above was written in February 1928. Strict orders were issued by the Supreme Economic Council to all industrial trusts to liquidate this indebtedness to the workers, and not to delay the payment of wages any longer. But, apparently, these orders were not obeyed, and we find in the Soviet papers of most recent date many complaints that wages are still not paid when due. Out of many reports on the subject we shall reproduce only a few.

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There is a case of the Glass Works, *Stenka Rasin*, near Nizhny-Novgorod: 'Wages for September 1927 were paid on 6th November; for October on 25th December; for December 1927 in January 1928; for January on 21st February. We still have not received wages for the second half of February, although to-day is 5th April.'²²

On 3rd July 1928 it was reported from Kharkoff that 'during the last few months cases of delay in payment of wages have become more frequent.'²³ In *Trud*, No. 175, of 29th July 1928, there is a letter from the Perm district (Urals), where it is stated that 'the holding up of wages for a fortnight and more has become a system.' Another message comes from Samarkand (Central Asia), where the workers engaged in the construction of the Bargom canal have not been paid for two and three months.'²⁴

In April 1929 it was stated in *Trud* that the State bank had not got sufficient funds to advance short-term loans to the nationalised industrial undertakings, and that owing to this 'there were several cases in the Moscow industrial district where the payment of wages was held up for two or three days. 'It may happen,' adds the journal, 'that delays in payment of wages will take place in a large number of undertakings.'

Of course, the losses the workers have to suffer on account of holding up their wages are not included in the Soviet wage statistics. If they had been taken in consideration, the official 'average standard of wages' would have been much lower.

One of the chief objections to the piecework system of remuneration is that it provides numberless opportunities for cheating the workers. Although it may seem inconceivable that workers in the Soviet industrial under-

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takings, which are supposed to be controlled by the workers themselves, can be cheated and their scanty wages decreased by most dirty tricks, nevertheless these methods are very widely practised in the Soviet factories. There is no lack of evidence in the Soviet Press about this practice.

A special commission appointed to inquire into the conditions of labour in the *Rutchenko* Coal-fields (Don Basin), found that 'cases of mass cheating of workers are frequent; overtime is usually paid for at the rate of the normal working hours.'²⁵

'A case of cheating the workers has been discovered at the *Karl Liebknecht's* Works (Dniepropetrovsk, Ukraine). Workers were cheated to the amount of 2500 roubles.'²⁶

'120 workers deprived of 16,000 roubles by the *Krasnodonetsk* Pit management (Northern Caucasus), won their case in the court.'²⁷

'In the Bobruisk district (White Russia), at the *Marjino* peat workings, where over 1000 men are employed, workers were paid 1.50 roubles a day instead of 2 roubles, as was stipulated in the collective agreement.'²⁸

On 8th June 1928 *Trud* published a whole page of letters from different factories and works where numerous cases of cheating were reported. In the leading article on the subject was the following: 'For several months the Labour Press every day reports cases of the workers being cheated by foremen, clerks, and managers in our industrial undertakings. Many of the offenders are already in prisons "doing time." But our managers and trade-union officials seem to go no further than the expression of their indignation. The central Soviet bodies who ought to look after the situation, and to introduce the simplest system of wage calculations, have done nothing in the matter for

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years. Our trade unions also remain passive, and do not try to make the Soviet institutions take the matter in hand.³⁹

But the indignation the paper expresses sounds rather hollow. Evidently the whole system of the management of Soviet industry is such that cheating the workers cannot be dispensed with. Workers being deprived of their most elementary rights, being unable to gain the real control over their trade-union organisation, cannot put up a fight against the cheats and thieves who fill the managerial posts. . . .

It is often asked, what is the standard of life of a Russian worker in comparison with the standard of life of a worker in this country? Everybody who has studied social questions knows how difficult it is to answer such a question. Not only wages, but the whole complex of the social and cultural circumstances must be taken into consideration if a fair comparison is to be made. Value of money in different countries is entirely different; the needs and requirements of people in a given country differ widely from those of another country.

Therefore all the figures which could be produced in order to compare the standard of life existing in Russia with that in this country can necessarily have only an approximate and relative value.

These reservations must be made when producing official Soviet data on the subject. According to the findings of the Scientific Bureau of the Commissariat for Labour, the average real wages of Moscow workers in 1927 were equal to 53 per cent. of the wages of London workers.³⁵ Wages in Moscow are at least 50 per cent. higher than in the provinces. Thus we may draw the conclusion that the

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standard of life of English workers is from two to two and a half times higher than that of Russian workers.

As we said before, we cannot vouch for the strict accuracy of this conclusion. What, however, is absolutely clear is that wages and the standard of life of the English workers under the capitalist system are higher than that of their Russian comrades who live under the Red Banner of Communism.

It is often claimed, not only by the Bolsheviks, but even by 'independent' observers, that the exploitation of workers does not exist in Russia now. To support this allegation a theory has been invented, according to which all regulations of labour conditions in Russia are the result of an agreement between the workers and their own expert governors and managers. Of course, this theory is only a humbug invented by the Bolsheviks for the sake of their propaganda. As a matter of fact the workers in Russia are being exploited perhaps more severely than in any other country. By saying this, we mean that the difference between the value of goods the workers produce and the wages they receive is very great, and, what is worse, is on the increase.

Official Soviet data on the subject are as follows: the average value of the output of an industrial worker per day in the fourth quarter of 1925-6 was 8.82 gold roubles and the daily wages were 1.20 gold roubles. This makes a difference between two figures of 7.62 gold roubles. In the fourth quarter of 1926-7 the value of output was 9.70 roubles and the wages were 1.23 roubles, and the difference 8.47 roubles. In the second quarter of 1927-8 the figures were 10.78 and 1.21, and the difference 9.57.³¹

The figures establish the fact that, while real wages during the last two years remained practically stationary,

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the value of production increased by nearly 20 per cent. This increase is undoubtedly due, in a small proportion, to the better organisation of factories and to the introduction of modern machinery. But the larger part of the increase must be attributed to the higher rate of the exploitation of workers: they were forced to work more intensively for the same wages.

All that we said in this and in the previous chapter supplies sufficient evidence of the accuracy of this conclusion. Russian workers, anyhow, are fully conscious about it, as the following speech made by a worker at one of the Moscow conferences, and reported in the *Socialist Messenger* (No. 2-3, 6th February 1928), shows: 'In the pre-War time we did not work as hard as we are working now. We have never been exploited like that. You, the Communists, are sucking our blood.'

The tendency we have described above is suggested for the future. The five-year plan of development of Russian industry provides for the increase of output per worker by 75 per cent. more than it is at present, and for the increase of nominal wages by 25 per cent. Soviet authorities promise that real wages will increase by about 50 per cent., as the cost of living will be lower than it is now.³² But, so far, there is no sign that this promise can be kept: prices of foodstuffs and of industrial goods still show an unchecked upward tendency.

It is also highly doubtful whether the Soviets will be able to improve technical conditions in their factories and to reorganise Russian industry on modern scientific lines, as enormous sums of money will be required to accomplish this task. According to the latest calculations it will be necessary to have at least eleven milliards of roubles -

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£1,150,000,000 sterling – within the next five years in order to maintain the production at the present level and to ensure the necessary economic progress.³³

Where is the money to come from? This question is not answered by the Soviet economists.

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²⁴ *Trud*, No. 184, 10th August 1928.

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- ¹⁹ *Trud.* No. 125, 31st May 1928.
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- ²² *Trud.* No. 30, 4th February 1928.
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CHAPTER IV

UNEMPLOYMENT

Statistics and Causes of Unemployment – Unemployment Benefit – Public Works – Labour Exchanges – Permanent and Temporary Staffs.

It has been said more than once that unemployment, one of the worst evils of present times, is an ingredient of the capitalist system. As long as Capitalism exists there will always be a reserve army of unemployed, and workers will always be threatened with starvation, because competition and individualistic management of industry and trade make the waste of capital and labour inevitable. It is maintained, especially in 'Left' Socialist circles, that the only radical remedy for the evils of unemployment is the abolition of the capitalist system of society and the regulation of the national economy in accordance with carefully thought out plans for the common welfare.

How have the Bolsheviks, who claim to have introduced Socialism in Russia, and made Russian national economy follow prearranged schemes and plans, solved the problem of unemployment? This is a very important question for all who wish to gain true and accurate knowledge of the social conditions now prevailing in 'the land of proletarian dictatorship.' If the Soviet Government has succeeded in ensuring useful and productive work for everybody who wants work, then the Soviet regime can be considered

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justified, at least from the social and economic point of view. On the other hand, if unemployment is as widespread in Soviet Russia as anywhere else, then the conclusion must be drawn that the Bolsheviki have failed in their proud promises to free the Russian workers from the horrors of unemployment and to introduce a new order of Socialism and justice. Soviet tackling of the problem of unemployment is a real and effective test of the sincerity of the Bolshevist leaders, and of their avowed allegiance to the interests of the workers.

During the first years of Bolshevik dictatorship unemployment was practically unknown in Russia. Even a shortage of labour was then felt, and the Soviet Government in their endeavour to ensure a sufficient supply of labour for Soviet industry, found it necessary in 1920 to introduce a system of labour conscription. But since 1921 labour became again 'free,' and the labour market began to be regulated once more by the general economic law of supply and demand. This return to conditions prevailing in capitalist countries resulted in unemployment becoming a permanent feature of the Soviet social order. Even more, owing to the peculiar conditions which we shall describe later in detail, unemployment in Soviet Russia is growing rapidly from month to month.

The official figures in respect of unemployment are as follows: on 1st November 1927 the total number of unemployed registered at 281 labour exchanges was 1,178,100, and on 1st May 1928, 1,598,700. On 1st January 1929 the figure was 1,616,200, and on 1st April 1929, 1,755,500.¹

But these figures, large as they appear, do not represent the total number of unemployed, because official statistics refer only to those industrial centres where labour

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exchanges are established. The unemployed living in minor towns and on the countryside are not included in these calculations.

This is revealed by the statistical data collected by the trade unions, independently of the Commissariat for Labour, in respect of the unemployed trade unionists. How great the discrepancy between the two sets of statistics – official and trade union – is evident from the following comparison:

According to the official statistics the number of registered unemployed on 1st January 1928 was 1,352,800 – 925,400 being members of various trade unions. On the same date the trade-union statistics registered 2,036,800 unemployed trade unionists, or 1,111,400 more!²

If allowance is made for some overlapping in the trade-union statistics, still such an enormous discrepancy cannot be explained by statistical inaccuracy. On the contrary, the trade-union statistics are likely to be more accurate than the official ones, because trade unionists, naturally, look to their unions for every kind of assistance and, therefore, would not fail to notify them when they lose jobs. Evidently the official statistics register less than half the trade-union workers unemployed, although trade unionists are placed in a much more favourable position than non-union workers.

Taking all this into consideration it would not be an exaggeration to suggest, therefore, that the actual number of the workers unemployed in Soviet Russia by the middle of 1929 was well over three millions.

As we mentioned in the first chapter of this book, the total number of persons who obtain their living by the sale

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of their labour-power can be estimated in Russia at approximately 14,000,000. Thus the percentage of unemployed to the total number of workers in Soviet Russia is as high as 20-25.

Another very disquieting fact is that unemployment is rapidly increasing. It has already reached such enormous dimensions that it is really becoming a national disaster.

A theory advanced by the Bolshevik leaders has found wide support amongst pro-Bolshevik writers in this country, that the army of unemployed in Soviet Russia is being recruited chiefly out of the non-proletarian elements. It is asserted that these elements are either unemployable under present conditions or belong to the peasant population who migrate to towns owing to the higher wages and better welfare of town workers.³

This theory, so far as official statistics are concerned, can hardly hold water. According to these statistics, 63·6 per cent. of the unemployed registered on 1st May 1928 belonged to the categories of skilled and semi-skilled workers. Thus the influx of superfluous labour from the countryside can be made responsible only for one-third of the total number of unemployed. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that 66·6 per cent. of the registered unemployed were members of the Soviet trade unions, who are mostly industrial workers.

We also failed to find any reference in the vast official Soviet material to there being many unemployable amongst the registered unemployed. On the contrary, Mr. Ginsburg, member of the Central Council of the Trade Unions, asserts that 80 per cent. of unemployed are between eighteen and forty years of age, thus possessing full physical abilities.⁴

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What are the real causes of unemployment in Soviet Russia? It must be said at once that they differ entirely from those of unemployment in the countries of Western Europe and America. In these countries unemployment depends on the economic conjuncture. In periods of industrial depression or crisis the number of unemployed increases, and in periods of revival it decreases. In Russia unemployment depends in a lesser degree on the favourable or unfavourable economic conjuncture. Its causes are rooted in the very structure of Russian national economy.

Russia is essentially an agricultural country. Over 80 per cent. of her population is living in the country. Russian agriculture still remains at a low level of development, and the productivity of agricultural labour is still small.

Before the War the town population was increasing in Russia faster than the population in general. Proportionally, however, the towns could absorb only a small part of the ever-increasing agricultural population. According to Professor Oganovsky, during the period from 1858 to 1897 Russian towns absorbed only 9.6 per cent. of the natural increase of the agrarian population, which, during this period, was 34,600,000.⁵

Even in pre-War times the fact of relative agrarian overpopulation was firmly established in Russia by many sociologists and economists. It was evident that under the existing system of agriculture the labour of all persons who lived on the countryside could not be profitably employed there, and could not produce sufficient material wealth to ensure a decent living for the farmers. A radical agrarian reform was very urgently needed. The Tsarist

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Government tried to solve the problem by assisting peasant emigration from Western and Central Russia to the sparsely-populated parts of Eastern Russia and Siberia. But it was only a palliative – the problem of agrarian over-population remained as acute as ever.

The agrarian revolution and the division of landowners' estates amongst the peasants did not solve the problem of agrarian over-population. As a Soviet writer, Mr. Knipovitch, says: 'The large area of land taken over from the landowners, being distributed among millions of Russian peasant households, produced only a very small effect. A special inquiry undertaken by the Commissariat for Agriculture revealed the fact that the acreage of land possessed now by each peasant increased only very little, less than one-fifth of an acre per head of agricultural population.'⁶

During the first years of the Bolshevik revolution a large proportion of town population migrated to villages to escape food scarcity and recruiting for the civil war fronts, and the cultivation of land deteriorated owing to the lack of agricultural machinery, horses, and manure. Both these processes resulted in the further over-population of agrarian districts. According to the calculations of Professors Kondratieff and Oganovsky the population per hundred acres of arable area in almost all the districts of the Soviet Union was considerably larger in 1923 than in 1913.⁷

Since 1923 a new social factor has made its appearance in Russia. After the years of war and famine the natural increase of population revived most vigorously and reached a proportion never attained before. In pre-War time the rate of annual increase of population averaged a

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little over sixteen per thousand, while now it is about twenty! If the population in Russia increases at the same rate, ten years hence it will reach the figure of 170,000,000, and in fifteen years 190,000,000.⁸

Thus the old problem of over-population again arises in a more acute form, perhaps, than before. In 1925 the Commissariat for Agriculture calculated the superfluous agrarian population in four main districts of European Russia at 14.5 millions.⁹ Another authority, Professor Oganovsky, maintained that in 1924-5 the superfluous agrarian population was 7,500,000 for the whole territory of the Soviet Union.¹⁰

Of course, all the calculations quoted are mere guesses. Nevertheless, they confirm the outstanding fact that population in Russia is rapidly increasing, and the problem of absorbing the superfluous labour of this population into useful and productive occupations is becoming more and more grave each year.

The Soviet Government is fully alive to this fact, but all its efforts to tackle the problem are doomed to failure, because its conceptions of national economic policy to be pursued in Russia are most impracticable.

It is evident that the solution of the problem lies in the development of agriculture. New methods of land cultivation which will allow greater production per acre of land should be introduced; the migration of population from over-populated areas to Siberia and other thinly-populated parts of the country should be encouraged; schemes for reclaiming vast area of swamps, deserts and forests should be carried out; and the whole attitude of the Government towards the peasantry should be radically changed.

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The Bolsheviks, however, do very little in this direction. They seem to have concentrated all their efforts and energy on plans for the 'industrialisation' of Russia. But the growth of Russian industry, however rapid it might be, cannot solve the problem of relative over-population if the development of agriculture does not take place simultaneously. The industrial population must be fed, but how can it be done if agriculture does not produce more food-stuffs and raw materials than it is now doing?

The discrepancy between the state of industry and of agriculture lies at the root of the present difficulties of the Soviet Government. The dearth of grain and other food-stuffs, and of raw materials, which has become so manifest since the winter of 1927-8, is the *testimonium paupertatis* of the whole system of the Soviet economic policy.

It is obvious that the unchecked growth of the superfluous agrarian population is bound to affect the labour market in Soviet Russia most unfavourably. Peasants who cannot find productive employment for their labour on the land will necessarily migrate to towns and swell the number of unemployed there. In spite of all the efforts of the Soviets to speed up industrial progress, it can be, comparatively speaking, only very slow, as the Soviets do not possess the necessary capital. Moreover, as we have already pointed out, the industrial progress is in every way dependent on the development of agriculture and on levelling it up to a higher standard.

At its present state of development Soviet industry is unable even to absorb the annual increase of population, to say nothing of absorbing the superfluous agrarian population. According to official calculations the industrial workers within the next five years (1929-33) will increase

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by 28.5 per cent. or by 500,000 persons. As the natural increase of the population during this period will be at least 5,500,000, it is evident that the problem of unemployment cannot be solved by the Soviets. This problem will remain very grave in Russia, and will grow still more grave in the future.

Being unable to solve the problem of unemployment by radical measures, the Soviet Government is obliged to apply similar palliatives for relieving unemployment as are being used in capitalist countries. First among these palliatives comes the payment of unemployment benefit. The rates of this benefit are, however, very low, and cannot provide even primary necessities of life for the unemployed. They are fixed in accordance with the cost-of-living index in various parts of Russia and with the grades of workers, and vary between 7 and 27 roubles a month.¹¹ Soviet statisticians assert that an unemployed Russian receives from 13 to 45 per cent. of his normal wages, while in this country the rate of unemployment relief to normal wages is between 20 and 60 per cent., and in Germany 46 per cent.¹² The period during which unemployment relief is paid is limited to nine months a year.

What is still worse is that, comparatively speaking, only a small part of the unemployed is being relieved. According to the calculations of the Soviet Social Insurance Bureau of the Commissariat for Labour, the average monthly number of unemployed who receive the relief is 725,000.¹³ As the total number of unemployed equals 3,000,000, the 'dole' is only being paid to one-quarter of the total. The rest manage as best they can to keep their bodies and souls together while out of work.

Even among privileged members of the Soviet trade

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unions the percentage of those who receive no relief is very high. For instance, according to the census taken in November 1927 amongst the unemployed members of the Metal Workers' Union, only 40 per cent. of the total number received relief from the Social Insurance Bureau or the Union Unemployment Fund, while the rest, 60 per cent., got nothing at all.¹⁴

The Soviet Press is full of complaints that unemployment relief is being distributed in a most haphazard way. Numerous examples of abuses and irregularities are reported almost daily. Of course, the members of the Communist Party, if they happen to lose a job, receive unemployment relief in full, not only through the Social Insurance Bureau, but also from the trade-union unemployment fund. Very often Soviet authorities consider the unemployment relief as a kind of privilege which only the most trustworthy 'comrades' can enjoy. Non-party workers who have not relatives, friends, or acquaintances among the members of the Communist Party, or in the Soviet administration, or are not clever enough to bribe the Soviet officials in charge of the distribution of relief funds, very seldom get any 'dole.'

The same must be said about the unemployment fund which exists in every trade union. The management of these funds rests in the hands of the trade-union officials, who are, at the same time, members of the Communist Party. How they manage these funds is described by Mr. Mokhoff, who wrote in *Trud* as follows: 'We know of many cases where the funds are either not utilised at all, but are kept in the safes of the trade union to show how strictly the trade-union officials adhere to the policy of 'economising,' or are spent most irregularly. Subsidies to

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clubs are being paid out of this fund, general expenses or deficits in the trade-union budget are covered by this fund, and loans to non-members and subsidies to those who are working are given from this fund.¹⁵

Another form of unemployment relief is the so-called 'works of public utility.' In 1927-8, 17,000,000 roubles were provided for this purpose in the State budget, and also certain sums in local municipal budgets. But, as the Soviet Press admits, 'the effect of this expenditure is very small; works of public utility are not included in the general plan of the development of industry, and do not correspond to the needs and requirements of national economy.'¹⁶ Besides, only a small proportion of the registered unemployed - from 5 to 10 per cent. of the total - was expected to be employed at these works during 1927-8.¹⁷

Owing to the bureaucratism with which the Soviet system is permeated, it often happens that local authorities do not organise public works for the relief of unemployed. A typical case from Tula was reported recently in the Soviet Press: 'The scheme of public works for the relief of the local unemployed had been revised many times by the various Soviet institutions during the last nine months; the works have not yet been started.'¹⁸

Unemployment is relieved also by the organisation of so-called 'collectives of unemployed' on co-operative principles. On 1st July 1927 there were in the U.S.S.R. over 2000 of these 'collectives,' where about 112,000 persons were engaged. In 1928 it was proposed to increase the number to 125,000 persons. But, as the Soviet Press asserts, this form of relief is also producing very little effect, and must be considered as a very inefficient palliative.¹⁹

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We have enumerated the measures which the Soviet 'Workers' Government' is applying for the relief of the worst social evil of our times. Readers will thus be able to form their own opinions of the sincerity of the Bolshevik leaders, who, in spite of their feeble and inefficient handling of the unemployment problem, do not hesitate to accuse European Governments and Socialist Parties of neglecting the interests of workers. The Russian Bolsheviks are probably not aware of a good English proverb: 'Charity begins at home.' It is a pity that their British friends, who very often fail utterly to find words in the rich English vocabulary for praising the Soviet regime, do not care to translate this proverb into Russian. Perhaps its venerable wisdom would convince the Bolsheviks that it would have been much better to spend the moneys thrown away on the Communist propaganda in every corner of the world on the relief of the unemployed in Russia.

According to existing regulations, all the labour required by any State or private undertaking or institution must be engaged through the labour exchanges instituted in all the towns and industrial centres throughout Soviet Russia. Every person who seeks employment must register himself at the local labour exchange, which is obliged to send him to work as soon as his turn on the roll comes. Employers of labour must keep the labour exchanges informed of the vacancies they happen to have.

All this appears very well on paper. The interests of the unemployed are safeguarded, and they are guaranteed that all available jobs are distributed among them in the most just and equitable manner. But, as the recent revelations in the Soviet Press show, the practice prevailing at the labour exchanges is far from the prescribed ideal. In no other

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case is the true character of the Communist dictatorship over the proletariat revealed so accurately, and at the same time so pitifully, as in the treatment of the unemployed by the Soviet labour exchanges.

As a rule, Soviet officials in charge of the labour exchanges demand and receive bribes from the unemployed for sending them to jobs. Out of many examples of this corruption given daily in the Soviet Press we shall quote only a few taken at random:

'A judicial investigation into the conditions existing at the Moscow labour exchange has resulted in discovering many outrageous crimes. These crimes must not be considered as isolated cases. It is evident that the whole system established at the Moscow labour exchange is such that criminal elements among the staff can quite openly perform their criminal operations.'²⁰

In Serpoukhoff, near Moscow, the manager of the local labour exchange, a member of the Communist Party, instituted a fee of five roubles for sending the unemployed to work. 'It is much easier,' says the paper, 'for women - not for all women, but for young ones - to get jobs through the Serpoukhoff labour exchange: they have only to spend an evening with Comrade Solovieff, and their business is settled.'²¹

In Rodnikovo, near Ivanovo-Voznesensk, the manager of the labour exchange used to invite unemployed women to his lodgings, make them drunk, and then assault them.'²²

In Leningrad, a certain Zavrazhny, manager of the unskilled workers' section of the labour exchange, was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for drunkenness, extorting bribes, and assaulting unemployed women. The paper reporting the sentence says that this is not the first

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case of judicial proceedings against the officials of the Leningrad labour exchange. Quite recently the manager of the textile workers' section, Selezneff, was sentenced to a term of imprisonment for the same offences. Some time ago the manager of the metal workers' section, Timofeieff, and others, were accused of similar crimes.²³ Another official of the Leningrad labour exchange, Barsoukoff, used to find jobs only for those who paid to him bribes of from three to ten roubles.²⁴

Sometimes abuses are so outrageous that whole staffs of the labour exchanges are dismissed. Such was a case in Klinzy, Briansk Government, in May 1928,²⁵ and in Sverdlovsk, formerly Ekaterinbourg-Urals, in August 1928.²⁶

The managers of the industrial and other Soviet institutions and the local Communist 'bosses' are very often found guilty of infringements of the regulations prescribed for the labour exchanges. As we have already said, the unemployed must be sent to work in accordance with the period of time during which they were out of work. But the managers and the responsible Communists usually give to their friends, relatives, and acquaintances letters of introduction to the officials of the labour exchanges, and thus manage to introduce them to jobs out of their turns. Numerous cases of this abuse of official position are reported daily from all corners of the Soviet Union. 'A special commission appointed in Tula to investigate the work of the labour exchange discovered in the archives of the exchange five thousand letters of introduction from responsible comrades with requests to send holders of these letters to jobs without waiting till their turn comes.'²⁷

In Yaroslavl it is the usual practice to give jobs only

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to those unemployed who are able to produce letters of introduction from the managers of industrial undertakings or from Soviet officials. 'I asked the manager of the labour exchange,' says the correspondent, 'why he does not start judicial proceedings against the authors of these letters. He replied: "Try to do it yourself. The letters are signed by the chairman and vice-chairman of the local Soviet."' ²⁸

In Leningrad the monthly number of such letters and requests was so great they that were weighed instead of being counted. The monthly output weighed as much as 36 lbs. ²⁹

We have given only those quotations which describe the conditions in the capitals and in the most important industrial centres. One can imagine what amount of abuses are going on in the minor towns far away from the eyes of the central authorities.

At a special conference of the All-Union Central Council of the Trade Unions, held in Moscow on 13th June 1928, startling revelations about the conditions prevailing in the Soviet labour exchanges were made. Space will not allow these revelations in full; we can give only a short summary of them.

Melnichansky characterised the premises of the labour exchanges as 'cloacas,' so dirty, crowded, and insanitary they are. Kartasheff said that the inquiry into the conditions existing in many labour exchanges shows that 'hooliganism is reigning in the premises of the exchanges. Women who visit them are very often insulted and even assaulted there. Officials accept bribes and are too much given to drink.' Potaskueff declared that hooliganism was so widespread at the labour exchanges that many unemployed preferred not to register themselves. Schwartz-

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man, who inspected many labour exchanges, said that the responsibility for the dreadful conditions rests with the Commissariat for Labour. Kuzmenko maintained that this responsibility must be shared by trade unions. Melnichansky added that trade unions do not render any assistance to the officials of the labour exchanges, and do nothing to put an end to indecencies and irregularities which prevail in them.³⁰

The following description lends colour to the statements made at the Conference. 'Hooliganism is a characteristic feature of the Moscow Central Labour Exchange. Drunkenness, free fights, dreadful swearing, insults, spitting in faces, throwing tobacco in the eyes, assaulting women, are everyday occurrences. An unemployed man stands in a queue awaiting his turn to be heard by an official, and hooligans cut a hole in the back of his coat. A woman worker passes by. Hooligans seize her, throw her on the floor with her skirts above her head. On the premises hooligans play cards, sell and drink vodka, spit, make all sorts of nuisances and rob the unemployed. There were several cases where people were knifed on the premises of the labour exchange. Gangs of bandits are recruited there, weapons are traded or exchanged, gangsters keep their appointments and receive their instructions there. Hooligans have terrorised the unemployed to such a degree that the victims of their outrages do not even dare to report their grievances to the authorities.'³¹

The above quotation refers to the capital of the U.S.S.R. In the provinces the conditions are even worse.

It may be asked, why do workers tolerate these dreadful conditions? Why do they not protest against them? They do protest, but their protests always end in disaster.

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Anyone audacious enough to raise a protest is immediately declared to be a 'counter-revolutionary' and treated accordingly by the G.P.U. – Soviet political police. He can consider himself extremely lucky if he manages to get off with only his name erased from the unemployed roll. In most cases protesters are arrested and exiled.

Out of many examples which found their way into the pages of the Soviet Press we quote two. 'A young woman with tears in her eyes implores the manager of the Yaroslavl labour exchange to send her to work. "I am starving, comrade-manager; please send me somewhere to earn a few kopecks." What do you think the official replied? Nothing at all. He simply took the registration card of the applicant and inscribed on it: "Name to be erased from the roll because of persistency of the holder." Here is another case. An unemployed man, named Iljin, said to an official of a labour exchange: "I have got six members in my family; none of them is working. Please order an inquiry to be made into my family conditions. What shall I do? Steal?" The official replied: "Go and steal. You would be locked up then and would not come here to bother me." He took Iljin's card and made a note on it: "Name to be erased because of the holder's request to investigate into his family conditions."'³³

Being treated like this, no wonder the unemployed resort to the only course left to them: they insult and beat the officials. 'We know hardly a single responsible labour exchange official,' states Mr. Schmidt, People's Commissar for Labour, 'who has not been beaten and maltreated by the unemployed.'³³

The gloomy picture we have drawn, based on the Soviet official Press, may provoke an outburst of indignation from

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those who take their information about Russia from English Communist publications. No doubt we shall be accused of 'belying and abusing the Workers' Government of Russia.' At least we must expect that we shall be charged with choosing isolated cases and trying to represent them as the system as a whole. Against these accusations and in support of our allegations we quote an article by A. K., published in the official trade-union paper, *Trud*, on 13th June 1928. The writer says: 'Lately the Press and public opinion are paying much attention to the conditions prevailing at our labour exchanges. The main accusations are: rudeness of officials, their corruption and arbitrariness, hooliganism, and misbehaviour of many of the unemployed. All these accusations are quite correct. But it seems to us that due attention *is not being paid to the causes which produce all these abominable phenomena*. We insist that the very system of organisation in the labour exchanges, for which the Commissariat for Labour is responsible, is extremely favourable to the promotion of all these evils.'

The author proceeds to enumerate the details of the system and comes to the conclusion that, although during the last five years the Commissariat for Labour sent out numberless circular letters and instructions regulating the work of the labour exchanges, it did not do anything practical to eliminate the evils of the system.

There is little to add to this indictment, except to say that the treatment of the unemployed by the Soviet officials under the Communist dictatorship is the same as the treatment of those who work in the Soviet factories and offices. Everybody who studies earnestly and without prejudice labour and social conditions in Soviet Russia will arrive at this inevitable conclusion.

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The existence of the huge army of unemployed and its steady growth provides the Bolsheviks with one of the most formidable means for the oppression of Russian workers and for keeping them in hand. It must be borne in mind that all industry, transport, and trade is 'nationalised,' that is to say, it is being managed by the Communist Party. Nowhere else can work be found in the towns but in Government institutions. A person once dismissed from one Soviet factory can hardly hope to obtain a situation in another, because detailed references are usually required from every newcomer, and inquiries are made about him.

Suppose a worker was dismissed from a Soviet factory for a quarrel with a Communist foreman or manager, or for a too open expression of his discontent with the conditions of labour. Inquiries undertaken by the management of another factory where he has found a new job will immediately reveal it. Of course, the management will find means to get rid of this undesirable individual who is likely to cause trouble.

Even the threat of dismissal is very often enough to keep many workers quiet and to make them put up with all the abuses and insults as best as they can. As a worker cannot get any assistance and protection from the trade union he belongs to, he is practically left at the mercy of the big and minor Soviet officials, who can do with him anything they like.

The Bolsheviks try to manage these things, of course, in a most unobtrusive way, because, otherwise, they might easily provoke general indignation amongst the workers. To do this they have provided themselves with an excellent method in the so-called 'temporary jobs.' Usually all the staffs of Soviet factories and offices are divided in two

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categories, permanent and temporary. Members of the permanent staff enjoy all the privileges the Soviet Labour Code provides for workers. They get annual holidays; in case of dismissal they receive one month's wages in lieu of notice; unemployment relief is paid to them at the highest rate, etc. Temporary workers are deprived of all these privileges. The existing regulations provide that no one can be employed on a temporary job for more than four months. But this regulation is very easily evaded. A fortnight or so before the expiration of the term of employment the worker is dismissed, and if the management is satisfied with his work, he is engaged, after two or three weeks of walking the streets, on a 'temporary job' again.

Evidently Soviet officials and managers very much appreciate this loophole – if it is a loophole, and not a deliberate trick – in the Soviet Labour Code. The employment of 'temporary workers' saves a good deal of trouble for them. It makes the workers more docile, as a 'temporary' man can be thrown out without much formality. In addition, many overhead expenses are saved which are incurred in the case of permanent staff. Anyhow, as the Soviet Press asserts, the practice of engaging factory hands and employees on 'temporary jobs' is rapidly growing in Russia.

According to official data, in 1925–6 the number of industrial workers engaged on 'temporary' jobs was 60 per cent. of the total engagements. In 1926–7 the percentage rose up to 70. If the figures of engagement through the labour exchanges are to be taken into account, then the percentage of 'temporary' engagements will be as high as 85.³⁴ 'Nowhere are these "temporary jobs" practised

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so widely as in Soviet Russia' remarks the author of the article from which we have taken the above statistics.

What other evidence is needed about how badly the workers are treated in the 'land of Communist dictatorship?' They are placed in such a position that even the right to protest is denied them. They can be thrown out into the streets under the slightest pretext, and the trade unions, even if they wanted to, cannot protect the interests of their members.

We shall close this chapter with a question to the friends of the Soviets and to the admirers of the Soviet regime: Is there any capitalist country in the world where the workers are subjected to such arbitrary treatment as in Soviet Russia? Is there a country where the lot of the unemployed is more dreadful than in the 'land of Communist dictatorship?'

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CHAPTER V

SANITARY CONDITIONS AND INDUSTRIAL CASUALTIES

Insanitary Conditions of Soviet Factories – Statistics of Industrial Accidents – Causes of Accidents – With whom rests the Responsibility?

It is hardly necessary to mention here how important it is from the workers' point of view that the sanitary conditions of factories and works should be as healthy as possible, and all the safety devices for protecting workers from accidents should be adequate and in good order. Therefore it would be expected that in Soviet Russia workers perform their duties to 'the proletarian State' under most favourable conditions, and that industrial accidents are very rare, and occur only under most exceptional circumstances.

Such an assumption will be, however, absolutely wrong. It is true that the Soviet Labour Code lays special stress upon the request that the sanitary conditions in the State factories should be made almost ideal. It is also true that the Commissariat for Labour daily issues numerous regulations, circular letters, and instructions for the protection of labour, which, if followed, would protect the workers from all kinds of danger. But it is equally true that all these provisions and regulations remain only on paper. Russian industrial workers, in fact, live and toil under most unhealthy conditions, and the number of

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industrial accidents in Soviet Russia is much larger than in any other country in the world.

Only a few factories in the most important centres of the Soviet Union are maintained in fairly good sanitary condition, and equipped with all modern and adequate devices for the protection of workers from accidents. These factories are usually shown to foreign visitors and to numerous 'labour delegations' who come to Russia from time to time 'to study Soviet labour conditions' on the spot. The impressions which foreign visitors gather in these 'show' factories are usually extended to all Soviet industrial undertakings, and the students, after returning to their countries, quite honestly – some of them, anyhow – testify that nowhere under the sun are the health and safety of the workers better cared for than in Soviet Russia.

As a matter of fact, the overwhelming majority of Russian factories, especially in the provinces, are allowed to lapse into a deplorably insanitary state, and industrial accidents are so numerous that one must speak about them in the terms of *communiqués* on military operations.

In their journals, which do not usually reach foreigners, and at the private conferences, Soviet officials do not hesitate to admit these facts. Mr. J. Emdin, in his report at the conference on labour protection held in Moscow in June 1928, said: 'The state of industrial safety and sanitation in many undertakings is most unsatisfactory.'¹

We shall add to this formal statement some details, clad in the vestments of real life, based on evidence in the Soviet Press.

A special Commission appointed to inquire into the sanitary conditions of the factories of the Kieff district, found that 'the great majority of factories are kept in an

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outrageously dirty and insanitary state. Windows are covered with thick layers of dirt and soot, and do not allow sunlight to penetrate into the workrooms, which are thereby only dimly lighted. Heaps of various odds and ends block the passages. In the majority of cases factory premises are not provided with artificial ventilation. Machinery is not supplied with covering, rails, and other safety devices.’²

‘Labour protection and industrial sanitation in Siberia are in an extremely bad state. . . . In Ussolsk the windows of leather works, built only two years ago, have never been cleaned. For years windows have not been cleaned at the match and textile factories. Workrooms in almost all the factories are not ventilated. In the *Sibirmongol Works* dust is so thick in the air that the workers cannot recognise each other at a distance of two yards.’³

In the *Putiloff Works* (Leningrad) ‘windows have not been cleaned for years. Even in summer days workrooms are only dimly lighted.’ The amount of dirt and soot accumulated on the windows can be imagined when one learns that over 20,000 roubles (£2000) were spent on cleaning them once!⁴

‘The majority of industrial undertakings in Moscow are overcrowded; hence closeness of air, poor lighting, and high temperature. Ventilation appliances are not installed in all factories; where installed, supervision is either bad or absent. Very often ventilation supplies cold air, and workers stop it working, as they prefer closeness and dust to the danger of catching cold.’⁵

In the Shakhty district (Northern Caucasus) conditions of labour are absolutely unsatisfactory. ‘Fresh air is being pumped into pits in insufficient quantities. There are

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many defects of a sanitary and technical character which could be easily remedied.'⁶

Similar reports were published in the Soviet Press about the Don Basin coal mines, Ivanovo-Voznesensk textile factories, metallurgical works in Urals, etc. All the information available on the subject in the Soviet Press points to the conclusion that there is not a single factory in the vast territory of the Soviet Republic where sanitary conditions are satisfactory and comply with the requirements and regulations of the Soviet Labour Code.

What are the causes of this deplorable state of affairs? Soviet writers are inclined to put a good deal of blame on the factory buildings, which the Bolsheviks inherited from Tsarist capitalism. No doubt this is true, but only to a certain degree. The factory premises, erected years ago without due consideration to the interests of the workers, are dirty, overcrowded with looms and machinery, poorly lighted and ventilated. But surely all these defects and shortcomings could have been improved, if only partly, had the Soviet authorities really cared about the health of the workers. If they had so cared, the new factories would have been built properly and supplied with all appliances and devices to ensure 'healthy labour conditions for the workers.

This, however, is not being done. 'We cannot boast,' says one of the Bolshevik writers, Mr. Zaromsky, 'that while erecting new factories we have taken into consideration the requirements of industrial sanitation and the protection of the workers from industrial accidents. Quite recently the Council for Labour and Defence established the fact that the new paper-mills were built badly from the sanitary point of view. Things are not going better with

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many other industrial undertakings which were built without due consultation with local branches of the Commissariat for Labour.’⁷

Bad sanitary conditions prevailing in the Soviet factories are responsible to a considerable degree for the spread of various diseases amongst the industrial population, and for so-called ‘professional ailments.’ We shall give the facts in respect to these diseases later, when we describe the measures taken by the Soviet Government to supply medical help to the workers.

Heavy as is the toll the Russian workers have to pay for bad sanitary conditions in Soviet factories, the sacrifices they have to bring to the altar of the industrial Baal are much greater. We refer to industrial accidents. Official statistics give us the following figures on the subject:

During the first quarter of 1926-7, 37·1 accidents, ·086 of them fatal, for every 1000 workers were registered. In the first quarter of 1927-8 the number of registered accidents increased to 44·3, and the number of fatal accidents to ·089 for every 1000 workers. But these figures, as is admitted in the Soviet Press, do not represent the actual number of accidents. According to the statement of Mr. Zaromsky, the registration of industrial accidents in Russia is far from being accurate. It is estimated that only 87 per cent. of accidents are registered in the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (Russia proper), and about 75 per cent. in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.⁸ This means that the above figures must be increased by at least 15 per cent.

The industries most affected are mining, where the number of accidents in the first quarter of 1926-7 was 50·6 per 1000, and in the first quarter of 1927-8, 97·2; the

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metal industries, where the corresponding figures were 62.0 and 67.7; the chemical industries, with 41.0 and 47.8; and the food industries, with 37.7 and 48.8. The figures are given only for one quarter of the year. Consequently, to have statistics for the whole year we must multiply them by four, and even more than four, as we have to take into account the fact that the number of accidents is on the increase month by month.

The accuracy of these statistics are, however, disputed in the Soviet Press. We found an article in the *Trud* where much larger figures are given. 'According to the data compiled by the Commissariat for Labour,' says the author of the article, Mr. B. Marcus, 'there were in 1925-6, 1121 accidents, involving total or partial disability for every 1000 workers engaged during the whole year in the industrial undertakings of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, and in 1926-7, 1452 accidents.'¹⁰ The comparison with other countries - 'Capitalist,' not 'Communist' countries - will give an idea how ghastly are the conditions of labour in Soviet Russia. In Germany, in 1925, there were only 67 accidents for every 1000 manual workers. In Austria, in 1924, 55 accidents, and in U.S.A., 85 accidents.¹¹ In other words, the number of accidents in Soviet Russia, this blessed land of 'proletarian dictatorship,' was, in 1925, 17 times more than in Germany and 14 times more than in the U.S.A., which, in respect of labour protection, is considered to be a most backward country.

In some of the Soviet undertakings the number of industrial accidents is simply appalling. We could give the names and localities of many such factories, which, by the way, could be called more properly slaughter-houses

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than 'factories.' But we will take only a few quotations from the Soviet papers.

'In the *Vyksun* Metal Works (near Nizhny-Novgorod) the annual number of accidents per 100 (one hundred) workers is 8·85!¹³ In the Tula *Lenin* Metal Works the number of accidents in May last was as much as 10 per cent. of the personnel.'¹³ In the Moscow *Trubosodinenie* Metal Works in 1927 there were 1266 accidents for every 1000 workers.¹⁴

But not only is the number of industrial accidents enormously large; the rapid increase in this number is openly manifest. According to official data made public by Mr. Zaromsky at the conference on the labour protection in Moscow, in February 1928, 'the average number of accidents in all the industries for every 75,000 working days, or for every 1000 workers, was as follows: in October-December 1925, 24·4; in January-March 1926, 29·1; in October-December 1926, 36·0; in January-March 1927, 40·3; and in October-December 1927, 45·2.'¹⁵

During 1927-8 the number of accidents continued to increase. According to the latest data (see *Trud*, No. 27, 2nd February 1929) the rate of accidents was 213 per 1000 for the whole of the U.S.S.R., and 339 per 1000 for the Ukraine. Reports from various industrial districts give some interesting particulars about this.

'In comparison with 1926-7, the number of accidents increased in the Shakhty mining district (Northern Caucasus) by 100 per cent. Last year the average monthly number of accidents was 436, in June of this year there were 900 accidents. The monthly number of accidents per every 1000 workers in 1926-7 was 26·7; at present it is 53. For the whole of 1926-7 there were 5232 accidents, but

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for nine months of 1927-8, 6510 accidents were registered.¹⁶

In April 1928 the Leningrad Council of Trade Unions undertook an inquiry into the number of industrial accidents in its district. According to this inquiry, 'there were in 1926, 11.66 accidents per 1000 workers per month; in 1927, 13.40; and in the first months of 1928, 13.88 accidents.¹⁷ Especially rapid increases of accidents are found in the metal industries. In the *Putiloff* Works the number of accidents has increased on that of last year by 53 per cent., in the *Cabel* Works by 33 per cent., and in the *Bolshevik* Works by 50 per cent. During six months of this year the number of fatal accidents was larger than for the whole of the preceding year.'¹⁸

'In the Artemovsk district (Don Basin) the number of accidents in the first six months of 1926-7 was 11,900, and in the same period of 1927-8, 15,000.'¹⁹

'The number of industrial accidents is increasing,' writes *Trud*. 'From Nadezhdinsk (Urals), from Tula, from Pavlovsk, from Baku, from Zaporozhie (Ukraine), from everywhere, reports are arriving which tell the same grim tale.'²⁰

What are the causes of industrial accidents in Soviet Russia? Why are they increasing at such an appalling rate? Some Bolshevik authorities seem inclined to blame existing factory equipment, which during the years of the Bolshevik regime became extremely worn out and obsolete, and which the Soviets cannot repair or replace owing to lack of funds. This explanation seems to be true to some extent, because the fact of the deplorable state of the industrial equipment and machinery cannot be denied. For instance, an inquiry into the condition of boilers in the

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Moscow industrial district revealed the fact that 1999 boilers out of 3853 were 25 years old and some even older. In many factories boilers have to work under low pressure to prevent explosions.²¹ In the Urals the equipment and machinery of some of the industrial undertakings is 150 years old.²²

But, as *Pravda* quite rightly says, 'objective conditions do not possess such a broad back as to make it impossible to see behind it the faces of those who earn their glory by economising money assigned for labour protection.'²³ It seems that the main cause of the growth of the 'traumatic epidemy,' as the Soviet writers very graphically call industrial accidents, is that the Soviet authorities grant insufficient credits for expenditure on the labour protection, and that very often the industrial managements do not spend even those credits, but try to 'economise' them.

According to the calculations of the Commissariat for Labour, in 1926-7 only 42,000,000 roubles were put aside for this purpose for the entire nationalised industry, and in 1927-8, 50,000,000 roubles.²⁴ If we take into consideration the fact that factory premises in Russia are mostly rather old, that the industrial equipment and machinery is worn out or obsolete, we must agree with some of the Soviet writers who think that these sums are absolutely inadequate for ensuring effective measures of labour protection.

A few examples will prove that beyond any doubt. In 1925-6 credits required for the betterment of sanitary conditions and for the installation of safety devices in the Leningrad industry were reduced by 60 per cent. In 1926-7 the estimate was again reduced. The *Rabochiy* factory demanded 25,000 roubles, but got only 4000

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roubles; *Krasny Treougolnik Works* received only one-half of the required sum; the *Krasnaya Nit Factory* less than one-third, and so on.²⁵

'At the *Yegorievsk Works* (Leningrad) the necessary expenditure was estimated by the labour inspectors and by the local trade unions at 174,000 roubles. The works management reduced this estimate to 35,000 roubles, and the Board of Directors to 5000 roubles.'²⁶

But what is still worse is that only a small proportion of even these credits are utilised. We find it stated in *Trud* that in 1926-7 only about 70 per cent. of credits put aside for labour protection were used; the remaining 30 per cent. was returned to the Treasury as 'economy.' *Trud* says that holding up of credits, opened for the improvement of sanitary conditions and for preventing industrial accidents, will also be repeated this year.²⁷

That this prophecy is going to come true can hardly be doubted. The following quotations from the Soviet papers confirm the above statement.

On 31st July 1928 *Trud* said that 'only 33 per cent. of the funds assigned for labour protection in the factories of the Leningrad Textile Trust were utilised during the first six months of the present year. Not a single rouble was spent for the purpose in some of the factories.'²⁸ 'During the first half of the present economic year the Donougol Trust spent only 18.7 per cent. of the sums assigned for labour protection in the Don Basin, although more than 100 pits are unsafe on account of gas.'²⁹ Exactly the same complaints come from almost every corner of the Soviet Union. They are so numerous that it is impossible to quote them all.³⁰

At a special conference held on 23rd May 1928 it was

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definitely established that 'measures for labour protection provided in the financial plans of industrial undertakings in the majority of cases were not carried out, although the financial year is nearing its end.'³¹

Even when the managements spend money assigned for the protection of labour, very often they waste it. Mr. Marcus says that in 1926-7, 83 per cent. of credits were utilised for the installation of ventilation systems, and only 17 per cent. for other purposes, like covering machinery, erection of rails, installation of various safety devices, and so on.³² There are in the Soviet Press many indications that ventilation is installed in a very haphazard way, and is generally of very little use.³³

On the other hand, as Mr. Zharoff said at a conference, many local organisations are inclined to interpret the term 'labour protection' too loosely. In Stalingrad (Lower Volga), public baths were erected with credits opened for labour protection. In Tiflis, 50,000 roubles from the Labour Protection Fund were spent on purchasing bedsteads for workers.³⁴

It is very difficult to determine what Government institutions are responsible for the abominable state of labour protection at the Soviet factories, as the officials shift the responsibility from one institution to another. Nevertheless, the maximum responsibility must be put at the doors of the managements of industrial undertakings. They are responsible for working out schemes for labour protection. They carry out these schemes; they are obliged to see that everything in their factories is in proper order.

We have already seen that the managements do not pay due attention to labour protection. They do not insist on sufficient credits being granted for the installation of safety

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devices. They do not utilise these credits to their full extent. They spend money assigned for labour protection on other purposes. But the managements are guilty in many other things too. Again let the Soviet Press speak on the subject.

'The managements of industrial undertakings in Stalingrad fulfil their duties under collective agreements with workers in respect to labour protection very unsatisfactorily.'³⁵

'The managements (of the Moscow industrial undertakings) do not keep their part of the agreements in respect to labour protection.'³⁶ 'Accidents in the Leningrad factories and works are the direct consequence of negligence and insufficient attention which the Soviet officials and industrial managements pay to the safety of the workers.'³⁷

Identical reports are coming from Siberia, where 'managements ignore all the regulations in respect of labour protection'; from Kieff, where 'managements do not comply with requests of labour inspectors to take measures for labour protection, although these measures do not require large expenditure';³⁸ from Shakhty, where 'workers live just as on a volcano, and where accidents of a mass character are likely to occur at any minute.'³⁹

A special Commission which, in February 1929, inquired into the conditions of labour at fourteen large industrial undertakings in the Ural region, finds that 'the protection of labour remains unsatisfactory. The funds assigned for this purpose are absolutely insufficient, and much larger sums should be spent in order to ensure better conditions of labour. But even those funds which are assigned are spent for other purposes. At the *Nadexhdinsk* Works a Marten furnace was constructed and

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office premises were erected by money earmarked for the protection of labour. No measures were taken to dispense with the practice of overtime work. In 1928, 483,567 hours of overtime were worked at the *Lysva Works*, 606,252 hours at the *Nadezhdinsk Works*, and 203,882 hours at the *Nizhny Tagil Works*.⁴⁰

Another letter in the same paper⁴¹ gives a very vivid description of the conditions which prevailed in the Nizhny-Novgorod industrial district, where some of the largest Russian mechanical works, like the *Sormovo Works*, are situated. These conditions are typical of the whole of Soviet Russia, and, therefore, we quote from the letter at some length:

'When anyone investigates labour conditions in the district he is surprised at the number of industrial casualties. In the metal industry the number of casualties increased from 4997 in 1927 to 6654 in 1928; the proportion of serious and fatal injuries being also greater. Credits for the protection of labour in 1927 were opened up to the amount of 709,000 roubles, and in 1928 to the sum of 1,177,000 roubles. But these credits were not utilised. Up to the present moment only a little over 800,000 roubles have been spent. Collective agreements stipulating measures for protection of labour were concluded, signed, and counter-signed; the whole procedure was carried out to the letter; but no one took the trouble to see that the agreements were adhered to! The managers did not worry about it, and the trade unions – the trade unions also did not think it necessary to worry about it.'

The correspondent gives some examples of several stipulations included in the agreement. Baths should have been provided; lavatories should have been kept in good

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order; drinking water should have been supplied to the workers, etc. They were not carried out in practice. He says further: 'Besides this, abuses are going on in respect to overtime. In 1926-7 the number of overtime hours for 100 metal-workers was 12,365, and in 1927-8 it was 15,484. The Central Committees of the trade unions issue circular letters urging that credits assigned for the protection of labour be properly used, that collective agreements be fulfilled, and that overtime be curtailed, etc., etc. There are mountains of such letters, but practical results amount to nil.'

Yes, there are mountains of instructions, circulars, newspaper articles, and appeals. There is a regular flood of speeches and propaganda depicting the life of workers in Russia in the most rosy colours, but 'practical results amount to nil.' These few words summarise in a most terse and admirable manner the real labour conditions as they exist now in Soviet Russia.

It seems that the factory managements only follow the lead given them by the highest industrial institution in Soviet Russia, the Supreme Economic Council. At the conference on labour protection held in Moscow in February 1928 many speakers openly accused the Supreme Economic Council of the 'sabotage' of all reforms in respect to labour protection. These accusations were supported by exhaustive evidence, part of which we have already quoted.

But the managements undoubtedly share responsibility with the officials of the Commissariat for Labour, whose duty it is to visit the factories of their districts and to see if the rules and regulations in respect of labour protection are complied with by the managements. These officials

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perform their duties, however, very unsatisfactorily, as the following facts registered in the Soviet papers show:

'The district committee of the Leningrad Metal Workers' Union found the work of labour inspection unsatisfactory. The activities of the labour inspectors are restricted to drafting acts and protocols which are stored in the files of the factory offices. No actual work for the prevention of accidents is being carried out.'⁴³

'An investigation undertaken by the Commissariat for Labour into the conditions of labour at the mining undertakings in the Northern Caucasus revealed many irregularities. . . . All this has been the result of negligence on the part of the inspectors of labour. The Commissariat has decided upon starting proceedings against its local officials. So far no proceedings have yet been started.'⁴³

Similar complaints about the inactivity of labour inspectors are reported from Moscow ⁴⁴, from Kharkoff, ⁴⁵ and from many other industrial centres of the Soviet Union.

It would be, however, unjust to blame labour inspectors too much. What can they do to improve conditions? Lodge protests? Write letters of protest? Draft acts and protocols?

Well, they do all this, but the managements pay very little attention to what labour inspectors may say or write. The whole system of Soviet management of industry is such that all sorts of irregularities, misuse of authority, corruption, etc., are inseparable from it. There is no wonder, therefore, that honest men amongst labour inspectors, who try to perform their duties in accordance with requirements of the law, find themselves obliged to quit their posts and seek other employment, or to solve the

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controversy between their conscience and the facts of actual life in a very tragic way – by committing suicide.

A typical example of this kind was reported in *Trud*. We give the paragraph verbatim. 'A judicial investigation into the suicide of the Starobielsk (Kharkoff Government) labour inspector, Bezverkh, is nearing its end. The preliminary results of this investigation are as follows: Bezverkh was a young, energetic worker. He watched very closely and carefully after labour conditions and the prevention of industrial accidents. He insisted that the managements of industrial undertakings in his district should remedy defects in organisation, etc. But the management of *The Red Banner* factory, to which Bezverkh was attached, not only treated all his suggestions indifferently and in a bureaucratic way, but actually resisted all his attempts to improve labour conditions. The senior district inspector, Medviedeff, did not support Bezverkh, and turned down all his useful suggestions, thus discrediting him in the eyes of the factory managers. Within the last few weeks Medviedeff began to persecute Bezverkh, especially on account of his Jewish origin. In his last letter Bezverkh wrote: "I could not stand it any longer; they won't listen to the voice of an honest man." '48

The last words of the dead man, who chose to destroy himself rather than make a compromise with his conscience, characterise the conditions prevailing in the Soviet factories better than whole pages of statistics. The system of dictatorship established by the Bolsheviks, not only in industry, but in all other spheres of Russian life, is such that it excludes all possibilities for a man to perform his duties honestly and conscientiously.

But what are the trade unions doing, which should look

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after the workers' interests and prevent Soviet factories from being converted into slaughter-houses? In any other country trade unions would have raised the hue and cry if labour conditions had been so appalling as in Soviet Russia. Meetings of protest would have been held, questions would have been fired at the Government in Parliament, strikes would have been organised. But conditions prevailing in the 'land of proletarian dictatorship' are entirely different from those in 'capitalist' countries. Freedom of assembly and speech is denied to the citizens of this 'Workers' State.' Parliaments are declared to be a fraud; strikes are crushed; and the trade unions, instead of protecting their members' most vital interests, are busy organising military parades, collecting money for numberless 'funds,' making *haute politique* in the International Labour Movement, and in a thousand other things which have a very distant relation to their direct duties – to look after the well-being and welfare of the workers.

As the most competent observers – Soviet writers and officials – testify, the Bolshevist trade unions are paying very little attention to ensuring healthy conditions of labour in the Soviet factories. Let them speak on the subject themselves.

'The activities of the trade unions in the sphere of labour protection,' said Mr. Katz, at the conference held in February 1928, 'are absolutely insufficient. District trade-union councils do not trouble themselves with the matter. Factory committees are also not occupied with labour protection, and even do not discuss the subject at their meetings. Special commissions on labour protection are organised at every factory. But as these commissions are composed of men already too busy – who are, besides, in the

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majority of cases quite incompetent to deal with the technical details of labour protection – they are of no use. No investigations into the causes of accidents are being carried out by these commissions. Officials of the factory committees sign protocols about industrial accidents wholesale without reading them.’⁴⁷ After reporting further details of Mr. Katz’s statement, the paper says that discussion which followed confirmed the correctness of the facts he stated.

The Soviet criminal code provides very severe punishments for officials proved guilty of infringements of labour legislation. But however severe may be the Soviet Themis to ‘counter-revolutionists’ and political adversaries of the Bolshevist regime, she is very lenient to those who break labour laws.

As we have already seen, the number of industrial accidents is enormous, and the sanitary conditions in Soviet factories are dreadful beyond description. In the majority of cases officials in charge of the factories are directly responsible for this state of affairs. Nevertheless, the number of judicial proceedings against law-breakers is astonishingly small, and punishments, even when imposed, are ridiculously slight. ‘During 1927 the Ural law courts tried only thirty-five cases of infringement of labour legislation. Two cases were dropped altogether on account of amnesty; in eight cases the accused were acquitted; in twenty-three cases they escaped with small fines; and only in two cases were the accused sentenced to imprisonment.’⁴⁸ Exactly the same attitude is adopted by the Soviet law courts to the breakers of the Labour Code throughout the Soviet Union, as reports from Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Nizhny-Novgorod, Leningrad and other towns show.⁴⁹

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It cannot be otherwise under the system of political dictatorship. Managers of Soviet industrial undertakings, labour inspectors, trade-union officials, judges – all of them are mostly members of the Communist Party. How can a labour inspector or a trade-union official start proceedings against a factory manager when the latter holds, as it often happens, a superior position in the Party machinery? ‘Claw me and I’ll claw thee’ – this is the most usual attitude of the Russian Communists towards each other.

The impunity of the Soviet officials guilty of infringements of the Soviet labour legislation is so great that it caused a Soviet journalist to reveal himself in the following gibe: ‘If you see in a Museum of Labour Protection a manager who was sentenced to imprisonment for the infringement of the Labour Code, you must suppress your desire to touch him with your finger: he is an exhibit of the greatest rarity.’⁵¹

We learned from the preceding chapter how the Soviet Government and its local agents treat the unemployed. From this chapter we were able to gain some knowledge about the treatment of those men and women lucky enough to find employment in the Soviet factories. We must agree with one of the Soviet writers, Mr. Scheinhous, that labour conditions prevailing in the Soviet industrial undertakings represent ‘a picture of an atrocious war: burns, nasty cuts, wounds, contusions, thousands of casualties, thousands of lost working days.’⁵¹

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CHAPTER VI

HOUSING CONDITIONS

Housing Statistics – Workers' Barracks – New Workers' Dwellings – How Housing Crisis affects Health and Morals of Workers.

THE facts laid bare in the preceding chapters give some idea, though incomplete, of the conditions under which Russian workers have to toil in the 'nationalised' Soviet factories and works. Long hours, low wages, high intensity of labour, uncertainty of employment, dirty, dark, and overcrowded workrooms, constant menace of death or mutilation – none of these social evils of the capitalist order have been eliminated by the Soviets. On the contrary, labour conditions in Russia are at present in many respects even worse than under the Tsars. Anyhow, every unbiased student of present Russian social conditions must admit that the great sacrifices Russian workers were called to make during the dreadful years of civil war and famine have been made in vain, and that, under the democratic regime which the Bolsheviks overthrew, the workers most probably would not have found themselves in such a sorry plight.

But maybe what was lost by the Russian working classes in one sphere of their life has been gained in another. Perhaps conditions when workers rest from their labours are now better than those under which they are working.

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In other words, perhaps the Soviets have fulfilled their promises to make the social conditions for the labouring masses healthier, more pleasant, and more moral than under the autocratic dictatorship of the Romanoffs.

We shall deal with all these questions in detail in the chapters that will follow. In this chapter we shall examine the housing conditions under which the industrial workers live in the land of the Soviets.

During the first years of the Bolshevist dictatorship, when the population of the Russian cities and towns was greatly reduced, no shortage of housing accommodation was felt. On the contrary, in some places, there were so many empty houses that many of them, especially timber ones, were demolished and the wood was used for fuel.

But since the introduction of the N.E.P., when more or less favourable conditions for the restoration of industry were inaugurated, people again returned to the industrial centres in great numbers, and very soon a grave housing crisis developed there. Since then the crisis has not only not abated, but has even become more and more acute. According to the calculations of the Gosplan (the State Planning Commission), 'the average floor space per town dweller in 1923 was 8.33 square yards, and in 1927 6.6 square yards,'¹ that is, it decreased by 20 per cent. during four years.

The main cause of the present housing shortage rests with the housing policy which the Soviet Government pursued during the years of the so-called 'military Communism.' All the dwelling-houses in towns, except very small ones which belonged to workers, were declared to be national property and handed over to the local Soviets for management and exploitation. But the local Soviets,

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composed almost exclusively of members of the Communist Party, managed the houses very badly. Nobody was obliged to pay rent; therefore the Soviets had no funds to maintain the houses under their management in proper order or to repair them when necessary. Too often it happened that the management of the nationalised houses was entrusted to Soviet officials who, though good Communists, were incompetent and possessed no practical knowledge of housing. Inhabitants of the 'nationalised' houses, seeing that there were no landlords or competent managers over their dwellings, took very little care, or even no care whatever, about the houses. All this resulted – and it could not be otherwise – in speedy dilapidation and even destruction of the houses in Russian towns.

When the Soviet Government, in the first years of the N.E.P., discovered at last to what a dreadful state 'nationalised' houses were reduced, and began to devise means for improving the situation, it was too late. Many of the houses that escaped destruction were hardly fit for habitation.

Great efforts have been made since by the Soviets to restore what had been destroyed during the first four years of their dictatorship. But, as the Bolsheviki soon learned from their own experience, it was easier to destroy things than to create them. Lack of funds – this insurmountable obstacle in every one of the Soviet economic plans – incompetence, bureaucracy, corruption, and many other sins born of the Soviet system, give little hope that the housing crisis in Russia will be solved as long as the Soviet regime lasts. As it is, after eleven years of Bolshevik dictatorship, there is no sign that conditions are improving. On the contrary, they are growing worse from year to year.

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As the Soviet Press testifies, the erection of new houses falls short of meeting the increase of population in many industrial districts. 'In Novorossiisk and Kuznetzk (Siberia) districts population increased in 1926, compared with 1923, by 12 to 13 per cent.; the housing accommodation only by 9 to 10 per cent. For the Grozny district the corresponding figures are 11 per cent. and 8 per cent.; for Ivanovo-Voznesensk, 10 per cent. and 7 per cent.; for Artemovsk (Don Basin), 12 to 14 per cent. and 6 to 7 per cent.; for Moscow, 7 per cent. and 2 per cent.; for Kharkoff and Rostov-on-Don, 8 per cent. and 2 per cent.'³ In Leningrad 'during the last three years the population has increased by 54 per cent., and the number of houses by 6 per cent. only.'³

The acuteness of the housing crisis forced the Soviet Government to abandon many of their 'Communist' principles still so rigidly pursued in other spheres of Russian economics. The Soviets returned all houses which cost less than 10,000 roubles (£1000) to their former owners; they encouraged the organisation of housing co-operative societies; they removed all restrictions on private persons erecting new houses for their own use; and, finally, in April 1928, the Soviet of People's Commissars published a special decree under which the formation of private building companies is permitted. These companies are allowed to dispose of or to exploit the houses they build without any interference on the part of the Soviet administrative bodies, and to enjoy many other exceptional privileges. For instance, profits made out of letting the houses are made free of income-tax. For the first three years after the erection of houses no ground-rent is payable to the State, and after those three years only 50 per cent.

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of the usual ground-rent. The decree expressly stipulates that the houses built under its regulations are exempted from confiscation or sequestration. Even foreigners are permitted to form building companies and to enjoy all the privileges granted to them.⁴

Bad as are the general housing conditions, they are still worse where the working population is concerned. This fact is frankly admitted in the Soviet official Press. Mr. Schmidt, Commissar for Labour, made the following statement at the meeting of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, held in March 1928: "Industrial workers occupy proportionally less floor space per person than other classes of the population."⁵ In many industrial districts the average floor space per person is very small indeed. Thus, in the Urals it is 4.1 square yards; in the Northern Caucasus, 5.2 square yards for industrial workers and 3.6 square yards for railwaymen;⁶ in the Don Basin coal-mining district, 4.9 square yards, including kitchens, passages, etc.

These dry figures and formal statements convey only a vague and inadequate idea of the real conditions under which Russian workers and their families are obliged to live. To show what these few square yards of floor space mean for their occupiers, we shall give, as we have done before, a few extracts from the Soviet Press.

Says Mr. Schwartz, president of the Miners' Union: "Miners' settlements (in Don Basin district) are in a very bad state. There is absolutely no comfort in the workers' barracks. Workers sleep on bare boards, as no bedding is provided for them."⁷

"The housing crisis in the mining districts, owing to the increase in the number of workers, and also thanks to the

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dilapidation of the workers' dwellings, is getting more acute. Workers' barracks are equipped very poorly, sanitary conditions in the miners' settlements are simply dreadful. There is no supply of good drinking water in many miners' settlements.⁸

"Textile workers (Naro-Fominsk, Moscow Government) are living in overcrowded conditions. Rooms are narrow, with only one window; they are more like prison cells than decent dwellings. In one room of 18 square yards of floor space eleven men are usually living. In some rooms two families are living together. Chairs are suspended from the ceiling, as there is no room for them on the floor. Beds and chests are put along the walls. A passage in the middle of the room is only 1½ feet wide, and the table is put at the window. Each family has the use of one half of the table. Kitchens are crowded. There is no room on the stoves for kettles and pans of all the housewives. Hence continued quarrels between women, which not infrequently result in free fights. Children roam along the corridors. In the winter-time the corridors are the only place where children can take their exercise. Pests of different kinds are abundant in these barracks. It is possible to get a little sleep only when one is absolutely exhausted. The little bodies of the children are covered by red spots, the result of insects' stings."⁹

These abominable and ghastly conditions are by no means exceptional. Mr. Melnichansky, president of the Textile Workers' Union, who visited Naro-Fominsk in person, found that 'housing conditions there were much better than in other textile factories!'¹⁰ And we can rely upon the evidence of such a high Soviet trade-union official. The following description of a workers' barrack in the

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Krasno-Kholm'sk (Moscow Government) textile factory shows that it is possible to beat even Naro-Fominsk.

'One enters directly from the street into a kitchen – a dark, besmoked room with a big oven in the middle. As the kitchen is the most spacious room in the barrack, not only housewives, but also children, usually gather there. The kitchen serves them as a kindergarten, day nursery, etc. Directly from the kitchen begins a narrow passage, barricaded with all sorts of rubbish, boxes, pails, washing tubs. Along the walls are lines where linen is hung to dry. Kitchen smells are passing through the passage as through a chimney. On both sides of this passage there are small narrow rooms with one window each, without ventilation, overcrowded with household goods and human beings. It is impossible to imagine how they can breathe, where they can sleep. "We are living just like under a press," say the women workers; "there is no room to turn round." At the end of the passage there is a back door. On the right, the boxes for storing provisions; on the left – something absolutely indescribable – a wide open door of a lavatory. There is chaos inside it just as after an earthquake. Everything is upside down. Everywhere is filth and evil-smelling pools.' There is no need to trouble the feelings of our readers with further particulars. No wonder the article in which these facts were exposed bears the title: 'Is it possible to live like that?'

There is another description of the workers' barracks at the *Vanteevka* Textile Factory near Moscow. 'The long, narrow room has only one window, which cannot be opened. Some window panes are broken, and the holes are filled up with dirty rags. Near the entrance there is an oven, which serves not only for heating, but also for cooking.

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A chimney made of sheet-iron passes through the whole length of the room and goes outside through the window. The smell of the fumes, and of workers' clothes and socks hung to dry, fills the room. It is impossible to breathe in the closeness of the air. Along the walls there are rude beds covered with dirty hay mattresses and rags, alive with lice and bugs. The beds have almost no space between them. The floor is strewn with cigarette ends and other rubbish. About two hundred workers are housed there, men and women, married and single, old and young – all herded together. There are no partitions, and most intimate acts are performed under the very eyes of other inhabitants. Each family has only one bed. On one bed are "living" a man, his wife, and three children; the fourth child, a baby, occupies "the second floor" – a cot hanging over the bed. The same lavatory is used by men and women. It also serves as a toilet-room, where the inhabitants wash themselves.'¹²

"The housing crisis in the Ural region is perhaps more acute than anywhere else. Conditions prevailing in the workers' barracks are indescribable. From forty to fifty people, sometimes even seventy to eighty, are living in one room of 320 square feet floor space. Everywhere – on rude board beds, under them, in the passages – are human bodies. Men, women, children, all are crowded together. There are big holes in the walls, and the rain and the snow have free access into the barracks. In other houses five to nine persons are living in one small room. The air is so stuffy that persons unused to it cannot remain in these rooms for more than two or three hours. Only one cooking-stove is provided for every hundred rooms. Quarrels and free fights for room on the stove are every-

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day occurrences. There are few healthy men in this settlement (Lysva).¹³

Identical reports on housing conditions were published in the Soviet Press from Kharkoff,¹⁴ Baku,¹⁵ Vladimir,¹⁶ Nizhny-Novgorod,¹⁷ and from many other industrial centres. We cannot quote all these reports, but we reproduce some of the editorial sub-titles under which they are printed. 'The Housing Crisis amongst Miners is Growing' (Baku). 'Workers' Barracks are flooded with Dirt' (Kharkoff). 'Without Houses, without Baths, without Water' (Nizhny-Novgorod). 'The Struggle for Air' (Moscow). 'Textile Workers are Groaning' (Vladimir).

The above description of the workers' housing conditions refer mostly to the barracks and houses which the Soviets inherited from the old regime. But this can hardly be accepted as an excuse for the Soviet Government. Surely during the eleven years of Bolshevist dictatorship the Soviets should have done something to improve these beastly slums and barracks where the workers cannot even get proper rest from their labours.

At the Eighth Trade Union Congress in December 1928 many complaints were made by the delegates about bad housing conditions in their districts. It is impossible to quote all the speeches, so a few extracts only are given.

Goriacheva, a woman worker, said that 'much money is spent on the erection of new houses, but they are built so badly that it is impossible to stay in them during the rainy periods, as the roofs usually leak. It seems,' she added, 'that we don't know how to build houses.'

Shkliar, a delegate from Dniepropetrovsk (Ukraine), said that housing conditions in his district 'are so bad that many

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workers are forced to give up their jobs because they cannot find lodgings or houses to live in.'

Shelokaiev, a delegate from the Shakhty mining district, said that only about 15 per cent. of the miners in the Northern Caucasus and the Ukraine have separate houses. The rest are living in the overcrowded and dirty barracks.

Trofimov, a railwayman, stated that 'the housing conditions of the railwaymen are extremely bad. We are living in cellars, old railway carriages, and in mud-huts. We have applied to the Moscow Soviet, we have written to the Central Committee of the trade unions; now we are appealing to the Congress. Perhaps you'll be able to help us.'

Similar quotations could be given almost *ad infinitum*, but space forbids.

The Soviet authorities claim that a sum of over one milliard roubles (£100,000,000) was spent during the last five years on repairing old houses and erecting new ones.¹⁸ It was planned to spend 149,000,000 roubles in 1927-8 on the erection of workers' dwellings only.

The effect of this expenditure was rather insignificant. The new houses cannot replace the old ones, which are being destroyed or are falling into dilapidation. The new houses also turn out to be very expensive, and they are built so badly that very often they become unfit for habitation within a few months.

A special Government Commission appointed to investigate into the conditions of newly-built houses and workers' settlements presented to the Government, in April 1928, a report where the following defects in house construction and planning of settlements were enumerated. Planning of new settlements was very unsatisfactory in the majority of

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cases. Houses were sometimes erected in unhealthy localities. For instance, the settlement near the paper-mill, *Mayak Revolucii*, was built on ground which is usually flooded in spring-time and infected with malaria. Some settlements are planned so badly that they are simply deathtraps in case of fire, as, for instance, new settlements in the Yaroslavl Government. Even the most elementary requirements of sanitation were sometimes neglected by the builders of the new workers' settlements. In the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Government there are settlements without water supply and the inhabitants have to go half a mile in order to get water. In the Tver Government drinking water is supplied to the houses without being filtered. In Biezhetsk (Briansk Government) a typhoid epidemic, responsible for over five hundred cases within a few weeks, had its cause in the unsatisfactory water supply. In the Stalingrad Government water is being taken from the River Volga without being filtered. In the Kaluga Government workers' houses were built without lavatories, which were erected at a distance of eighty yards from the houses. In Siberia no lavatories were attached to the workers' dwellings at all. Air in the settlements is usually polluted with dust and smoke; no parks or open grounds are provided near the settlements. Houses are built without due consideration of the workers' comfort. Sometimes their planning is so awkward that the inhabitants cannot get the most necessary furniture into them. Very often houses are not provided with sheds to keep fuel in, and with other necessary services. There were cases in the Vladimir Government where the workers refused to move into the new houses, because these houses had not the most elementary comforts.¹⁹

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These conclusions of the official report are confirmed daily in the Soviet Press from various districts of Soviet Russia. Perusal of all these complaints leaves no doubt that, in the majority of cases, the workers' dwellings erected by the Soviet are either unfit for habitation from the very beginning or become uninhabitable within a short period of their construction.

'The erection of new workers' settlements in Stalino (Don Basin) was completed only last year, but already the barracks look shabby and dilapidated. There are no tables, benches, or chairs in the barracks, and workers are feeding on their beds. There are no mattresses on the beds; the workers sleep on the bare boards. The lavatories in the barracks are in a dreadful state; they have never been cleaned. Dirt is everywhere, even in the kitchens, which are more like horse stables. Everywhere are greasy pans and heaps of rubbish. The barracks are overcrowded. Married and single are herded together. Some of the workers sleep in the lavatories.' Another letter in the same number of *Trud*, from Niesvietaevsk (Shakhty, Northern Caucasus), says that 'in the newly erected "exemplary" barracks, windows are smashed, doors torn away, stair-cases broken. Everywhere is dirt and chaos. No baths are provided for miners.'²⁰

'Houses erected in the Narva district (Leningrad) only six months ago are already in need of capital repairs. Flooring, doors, window frames were made of unseasoned wood; they have shrunk, and admit rain and cold into houses.'²¹

At the All-Ukrainian Miners' Conference the following statement about new workers' dwellings was made: "There is not a single mine where new houses have not required

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capital repairs within twelve months of their erection. Over 50 per cent. of barracks are not equipped with washing stands, and only 7 per cent. have separate rooms for washing dirty linen. During the last two years fifty-five public baths were erected, but the number is still insufficient, and workers must wait their turn for two or three hours.²²

In one number of *Pravda* only, we found similar complaints about the state of newly erected working-class dwellings from four different towns: Tver, Rybinsk, Sergievsk (near Moscow), and Moscow.²³

Describing housing conditions in industrial centres, *Pravda* makes a very frank admission: 'We build houses without plans, of poor material, uneconomically, and stupidly. As a result we have expensive, bad, uncomfortable dwellings, which the workers cannot afford to have.'²⁴ Developing its argument the journal says that a house erected under the Soviet costs, on an average, four times more than before the War. The amount of capital required for the erection of a working-class dwelling represents the sum of seven to ten years of average wages.

Another Soviet paper, *Economicheskaya Zhizn*, characterises the new workers' houses as 'stage decorations.' The facts which the paper cites certainly justify this bitter criticism. 'When last year the erection of a railwaymen settlement in Tuapse (Caucasus) was completed, the architects were highly praised for speedily finishing the job. But less than two months have passed, and the joy has begun to vanish. It has been found that in all the houses only one room is heated - the others are dreadfully cold. When they scrub the floor in the upper storey, water drips into the room below. There is no water, electric

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light, warm lavatories, or baths and washhouses. Workers say that the new houses are more like stage decorations than real dwellings. It is impossible to live in them at present: they must be re-built. New houses erected in the *Grozny* oil-fields are not much better. Floors, door and window posts, and window frames, have already shrunk and promise no good to the inhabitants of these houses. The same might be said about the new houses in Novorossiisk.' In conclusion the paper says: 'Shall we quote other examples of how badly the new houses are being built? The above facts suffice to show that our architects are concerned in one thing only: appearances must be maintained; what comes afterwards, who cares?'²⁶

Trud complains that workers are not consulted about how new houses should be built. 'Houses were built for workers, but without consultation with them or their participation, even without the participation of the trade unions. If we trust only to the outward impression, we are bound to admit that everything goes on very well, and in some cases, for instance in Baku and Grozny, simply splendid, nice, beautifully planned settlements with pretty cottages, parks, etc. But when we look into the matter more attentively, and investigate the conditions more closely, we arrive at another conclusion.' The author proceeds to enumerate the facts as to how badly and uncomfortably these 'nice' cottages are built. We omit these descriptions, as they add nothing new to what has already been said on the subject.²⁶

By the way, these new houses in Grozny and Baku were shown many times to the various foreign labour delegations, and extracted from these delegations pæans of praise. The British Labour Delegation which visited Russia in

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1924 gave in its report photographs of these houses, and referred to them as one of the biggest achievements of the Soviet Government.

The above quotations from the Soviet papers show that it is dangerous to trust superficial evidence, and that it is necessary for anyone who wants to carry out a thorough and honest investigation into the social conditions prevailing in a foreign country to study things, not only from outside, but also from inside. The Bolsheviki are past-masters in 'staging things.' All their claims that many good and useful reforms were carried out in Russia under their dictatorship must be considered in the same light as their housing schemes. When one begins to examine existing conditions more closely, and to study them independently, one soon finds that nearly all the Bolshevist 'achievements' are just like the new workers' dwellings; they exist only on paper, or are 'stage decorations.'

It is necessary to add one more fact when describing the present housing conditions in Russia. Up to 1928 many categories of industrial workers lived in houses which belonged to the undertakings in which they were employed free of rent. From 1st June 1928 they are deprived of this privilege. It is true the most poorly-paid workers can claim an abatement, but the principle of free housing accommodation for workers, which the Bolsheviki were so proud of, is now abandoned for good.

It would be superfluous to mention here how the dreadful housing conditions cause deterioration, not only in the health, but also in the morals of the workers. Men, women, boys, girls, little children are usually herded together in small, overcrowded barracks and houses. The good and decent live in one room with hooligans and criminals; the

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sober with habitual drunkards; the healthy with those suffering from tuberculosis, syphilis and other horrible diseases; the innocent with the vicious. . . . One can imagine how many dramas and even tragedies are happening daily in these Soviet barracks, which are more like the dreadful circles of Dante's Inferno than habitations of human beings. . . . 'Every day,' says a Soviet journalist, 'we read in our papers news about murders and suicides, injuries inflicted, and horrible fights fought in these barracks and workers' houses.'²⁷

It is impossible to give here all the facts at our disposal supplying details to the gloomy picture of life the majority of Russian industrial workers are compelled to lead in the Soviet barracks. The material would fill a whole book. Space, however, allows us only a few quotations.

'Drunkenness, card-playing, hooliganism, free fights are flourishing in the barracks of the Bolshaya Ivanovo-Voznesensk textile factory. Men, women, children - all drink vodka.'²⁸ 'The housing crisis is the real cause of drunkenness, hooliganism, larceny and various sexual crimes amongst workers.'²⁹

The Bolsheviks and their satellites in foreign countries are repeating every day that workers are 'the ruling class in Russia now.' The facts we have given prove that this assertion is both a lie and a calumny. It is a lie because the facts, not 'invented' by the capitalist journalist, but reported daily in the Soviet journals, prove beyond all shadow of doubt that the Russian workers live under the most abominable and dreadful conditions, which they would not tolerate if they were really 'a ruling class.' It is a calumny because only the basest hypocrites can say that Russian workers are content with such life, do not want

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anything better, and would not have created healthy and moral surroundings for themselves and for their families, if they were a 'ruling class' indeed.

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CHAPTER VII

THE HEALTH OF THE WORKERS

Vital Statistics - Illness among Workers - State of Medical Care - Workers' Hospitals - Rest Homes, - Sanatoria - Health Resorts.

ON 21st July 1928 the Soviet Commissariat for Public Health celebrated the tenth anniversary of its existence. This celebration gave the Soviet Press occasion to take stock of the 'achievements' attained in Soviet Russia in the domain of public health.

It must be admitted that, in comparison with the years of civil war and famine, the sanitary conditions in the country have certainly considerably improved. This especially refers to contagious diseases, which in 1918-22 were responsible for over five million deaths. In 1923 the number of registered cases of typhus was 7.3 per 10,000, while in 1927 only 2.7 cases per 10,000 were registered. The same refers to recurrent typhus, typhoid fever, small-pox and cholera.

But other dangerous diseases, like scarlet fever, malaria, Spanish influenza, are still rampant, and the co-called 'social ailments' - syphilis, tuberculosis and anæmia - still gather a rich harvest among the impoverished Russian population.

The rate of mortality remains at a pretty high level - 21.2 per 1000 - although it is lower than in 1913, when it

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was 27.2 per 1000. The fall in the rate of mortality should be attributed almost exclusively to the decline in infantile mortality, which is now almost half what it was before the War. As the birth-rate has also declined – it is now 42 per 1000, while in 1913 it was 45 per 1000 – the fall of infantile mortality should be explained, not by the improvement of the sanitary and economic conditions of the country, but by the fact that peasant mothers, having less numerous families, now take greater care of their babies than in olden times.

As Dr. Semashko, Commissar for Public Health, was obliged to acknowledge at the Congress of the Medical Workers' Union in May 1928, the sanitary conditions in the villages are at present far from being satisfactory and, in some respect, are worse than before the War. To justify this statement it is enough to say that there is only one doctor for every 25,000 of the peasant population, and one hospital bed for 1600 people.

Without a thorough investigation it would be impossible to say whether the decline in the rate of infantile mortality has been due to conditions created by the Soviet regime or whether it should be explained otherwise. Unfortunately, we cannot discuss this matter in detail, because the discussion would detract from the question which we want particularly to investigate, namely, the state of health of the industrial population and the measures the Soviet are taking to ensure healthy and satisfactory labour and social conditions, and proper sanitary and medical attendance for the Russian working class.

We have already seen how bad are the sanitary conditions prevailing in the Soviet factories and works. It would be a

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miracle if the workers' health were not affected by these conditions. Although the Soviet Press is rather reticent on this subject, nevertheless facts which throw some light on the matter find their way into the pages of Soviet journals.

At the conference of the Ukrainian Miners' Union held in Kharkoff, in March 1928, it was stated that 'cases of industrial ailments in the Don Basin coal-mining district are very numerous. Within the last few months the number of complaints about eye, ear, and nervous sufferings has considerably increased. A special investigation carried out at several mines revealed the fact that surface workers lost 75 per cent. of the capacity for work, and underground workers 80 per cent., as the result of sufferings from industrial ailments.'¹

Another case from Kieff was reported in the same number of *Trud*, where 'at the *Koksobenzol* Works the number of cases of illness among workers is on the increase. It was found that these ailments were directly due to insanitary labour conditions.'²

'During last year cases of illness among workers in the Artemovsk district (Don Basin) showed a catastrophic upward tendency. In the first six months of 1927-8 the number of absentees from work through illness increased, in comparison with the same period of 1926-7, by 18.6 per cent. In some undertakings in the district the percentage of increase is far above the average; for instance, in Konstantinovsk, 33 per cent.; in Lysichansk, 51 per cent.; and in Druzhkovsk, 58 per cent.'³

General labour statistics also show that the number of working days lost through illness per worker is much larger in Soviet Russia than in any other country. Accord-

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ing to official data 14.8 days were lost per industrial worker in 1926-7 on account of illness.⁴

In the spring of 1928 a special investigation into the state of health of young workers up to eighteen years of age was carried out in Moscow. Over 16,000 persons were medically examined, and out of this number 61.5 per cent. were found ailing. Anæmia was responsible for 18.5 per cent., tuberculosis for 15.5 per cent., heart diseases for 9.5 per cent., and nervous diseases for 8.5 per cent., etc.⁵

Speaking at the Eighth Congress of the Soviet Trade Unions, Professor Giliarovsky said that absenteeism from work on account of illness is considerable in Soviet industrial undertakings. There is an especially large percentage of absenteeism among women and young persons whose constitutions are not so strong as those of the adult male workers. An investigation carried out by a scientific institution in Moscow established the fact that out of 4000 young workers medically examined, 19 per cent. were suffering from diseases which rendered them absolutely incapable of work.⁶

The bad housing conditions described in the previous chapter are, of course, as detrimental to the workers' health as the insanitary state of the Soviet factories. It is obvious that no adequate measures for preventing the spread of diseases can be applied in the dirty, stuffy, pest-infested, overcrowded workers' dwellings, and their inhabitants are bound to fall an easy prey to epidemics of every kind.

We have already given a description of the housing conditions in the Ural district. In one of the settlements, Lyswa, a special medical examination of young workers was undertaken which revealed the fact that out of three

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hundred examined persons only 90 were found to be, 'comparatively speaking, in good health; the remainder were suffering from tuberculosis and anæmia. This is not to be wondered at: bad housing and bad labour conditions are ruining the health of the workers,' adds the paper.⁷

In the Don Basin area, according to the statement of Mr. Schwartz, president of the Miners' Union, 'tuberculosis is rampant, especially amongst young workers, because of the insanitary and unhealthy labour and social conditions.'⁸

We have already set out briefly that, as a rule, the insanitary conditions in workers' settlements are very bad. Here we shall describe these conditions in some detail. There is not a single settlement in Soviet Russia where water is laid on, and the inhabitants are obliged to use water for drinking purposes from rivers, ponds and wells, which in most cases are polluted with sewage and waste water from factories. The same can be said about the removal of refuse and rubbish. There is no such thing as sewage works in any of the workers' settlements. Lavatories, cesspools, dust-holes are usually placed near the houses. Their arrangements are most primitive, and provide no guarantee against the pollution of the ground and ground waters. Air in the settlements is polluted with soot and smoke from adjacent factories and with miasmas from lavatories and cesspools.

'Lyswa, Tchusovaya, Kizil, Nadezhdinsk (Urals) - everywhere is the same picture: low, timber-besmoked huts, narrow, dirty streets. There is no grass, no trees. A person who visits the Urals in winter-time may not say that sanitary conditions in the workers' settlements are

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alarming. A member of the Tchusovaya Soviet said to me once: 'Winter is our salvation. Snow covers all our ulcers and heaps of refuse. But I am wondering what will happen in spring!' Yes, in spring all the refuse will be carried down to a pond where they bathe, to the river from which they take drinking water. Naphtha and sewage leak on to the wells, making the water unfit for use. The most widespread diseases amongst workers are tuberculosis and stomach troubles. This cannot be wondered at. What air is a Ural worker breathing? The air is polluted by smoke; lavatories in the Tchusovaya settlement are situated on the streets; cesspools are very bad; water is far from being safe for drinking; 14 per cent. of the population in the Lyswa settlement are ill on account of bad water. Typhoid cannot be got rid of. The new *October* settlement has no water supply. There is no sewage, and, therefore, refuse is being thrown into the river, from which it returns to the stomachs of the inhabitants.⁹⁹

We cannot add anything to this gloomy, dismal picture, drawn by a correspondent of the Soviet journal, except, perhaps, the statement that sanitary conditions prevailing in other workers' settlements in the 'Land of Proletarian Paradise' are in their essential features exactly the same as in the Ural region. It is hardly to be expected that these conditions are beneficial for the health of the workers.

Anyway, as the following figures cited by Mr. Lomoff, in *Pravda* (No. 144, 1928), show, such contagious diseases as typhus and dysentery affect the population of the workers' settlements in the Don Basin area in much greater proportion than the peasant population of the same region. In the Lugansk district in 1927 the rate of typhus cases was 33.0 for workers and 6.2 for peasants per 10,000.

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The corresponding figures for the Stalino district were 40·4 and 14·1. The rate of dysentery contractions was, in Lugansk district, 116·2 for workers' settlements and 4·9 for villages per 10,000; in Stalino district the figures were 160·1 and 28·6 respectively.

It should be noted that both these diseases affect only those localities where sanitary conditions are unsatisfactory and the water supplied to the population is polluted with refuse.

The Soviet Government elaborated a most perfect system of social insurance against illness, incapacity for work, etc., and introduced this system in the Soviet Labour Code. Particulars of this system have been many times described in books and newspaper articles published in this country, and many writers, who took their information from the official Soviet sources, were impressed most favourably by the benevolence of the Soviet Government and its care of the sick workers. But it seems that none of these 'independent' and 'dependent' observers and students ever tried to inquire into the question how this system of the social insurance actually works out. We shall attempt to amend this oversight, and, basing equally on the Soviet material – although not destined for the foreigners' eyes – present the situation in a true and accurate aspect.

Under the Soviet insurance system every insured worker and the members of his family are entitled, in case of illness, to receive free medical attendance and free medicaments from the State. It is highly interesting to know what kind of services the workers get, and whether the service is adequate to meet all their requirements.

'700,000 workers and State officials do not make use of

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the free medical assistance, preferring to pay for the treatment they receive in private hospitals and ambulatories,' said Mr. Tomsky, president of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, at a conference in Moscow in February 1928.¹⁰

Trud undertook a special investigation into the conditions prevailing in the State hospitals and ambulatories of Moscow. This investigation resulted in some very interesting revelations. In 1927 private ambulatories in Moscow received 351,000 out-patients, of whom 207,000 were persons entitled, under the insurance scheme, to enjoy free medical advice and attendance in the State ambulatories and dispensaries. This figure represents, according to the calculations of the paper, about 15 per cent. of the whole number of insured persons in Moscow. Several persons were asked to give reasoned statements as to why they preferred to apply for medical assistance to the private ambulatories and pay for the services, although they could receive medical advice free of charge in the State dispensaries. Their answers may be summarised as follows. Every one who applies for medical help to the State dispensaries is obliged to fulfil numberless formalities before he is allowed to see a doctor. Treatment lasts for a long time, and a second visit is usually appointed two weeks after the first visit. Patients are treated with contempt, and the quality of medical treatment is rather poor.¹¹

The paper quite rightly says: 'Thus in the capital, where the State medical service is organised much better than in the provinces, many workers and State employees refuse to avail themselves of the assistance, and prefer to go to private establishments, where they must pay fees.'

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The paper also says that 'it is hardly possible to find any other subject which interests workers so much as the state of medical treatment. Everybody who attends workers' meetings knows what amount of attention is paid by the workers to this subject.'¹²

At the Ukrainian Miners' Conference in April 1928, all the speakers spoke about the grave situation in respect to the medical assistance given by the State to insured workers. In Zaporozhie 25 per cent. of sick persons cannot be placed in hospitals owing to the lack of accommodation. In the Stalino (Don Basin) district there is only one bed for 124 patients. Hospitals are in need of the most necessary medicaments, bandages, and bed linen. Medical attendance of patients in their homes is absolutely unsatisfactory. Doctors are so overburdened with work that they cannot visit all the patients who want their help. In Berdicheff the amount of refusals to pay medical calls is over 33 per cent. of the requests.¹³

Similar complaints were made at the Miners' Conference of the Shakhty district (Northern Caucasus). Delegates complained that medical aid is insufficient; that doctors are rude and inattentive; that pits are not provided with bandages and medicines necessary for rendering first aid in cases of industrial accidents; that workers' hospitals are poorly supplied with medicaments, medical instruments, and appliances; that the number of ambulances is very small; and that they are better known under the nickname 'a speedy death' instead of 'a speedy aid.'¹⁴

Conditions prevailing in workers' hospitals are graphically described in a letter from Lugansk (Don Basin). 'Not a single hospital in our district is supplied with necessary medicaments. Boxes in which they are supposed to be

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stored are empty. Patients must purchase medicines in private chemists' shops. Hospitals possess very little linen. Half of them have only three changes of pyjamas for every two patients; the rest have hardly two changes per patient. It is a usual sight to see men wearing women's pyjamas and *vice versa*. Food is abominable. Very often the workers refuse to go to hospitals because they are afraid of being starved. It is not infrequent to meet out-patients from distant pits and factories who are obliged to beg for a piece of bread on the streets. There is a lack of doctors and nurses. Lodgings for the medical personnel are very often at distances of four to six miles from the hospitals in which they work. There are no ambulances, and persons seriously ill are transported to the hospitals in wheelbarrows. During last winter several hospitals were not heated for weeks on account of lack of fuel.¹⁵

The gloomy tales about the conditions prevailing in the workers' hospitals are repeated in another letter from Shaturky (Moscow district): 'Lavatories are so dirty that the smell from them fills the whole building. Patients are wearing unspeakably dirty linen. Mattresses are filled not with straw, but with rods and sticks, and the patients are afraid of hurting themselves while lying in bed. Patients have never heard of the existence of such things as baths. Workers' settlements are provided with practically no medical assistance. There were cases where babies were born at entrances to the hospitals because would-be mothers were refused admittance on account of lack of accommodation.'¹⁶

Identical reports were published from Artemovsk,¹⁷ from Vladimir,¹⁸ from Urals,¹⁹ from Shakhty,²⁰ and from many other places. There is no necessity to quote all these

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letters, as they add nothing essential to what has already been told in other letters. The picture is the same. Its essential features are very appropriately summarised by the title of the letter from Vladimir: 'Woe unto those who are ill!'

Much was also said about the rest homes, sanatoria and health resorts in the Caucasus, on the Black Sea littoral, and in the Crimea, which are provided for workers by the Soviet Government. These rest homes and sanatoria were proclaimed as undeniable proof of the care the Soviets were taking of the health and welfare of workers.

But in our quest for truth we have found that all these establishments are either a mere sham or are destined not for rank and file workers, but for a few privileged members of the Communist Party.

First of all, the number of rest homes and sanatoria is entirely inadequate. According to the calculations of the State Insurance Department, existing accommodation allowed a fortnight's holiday in rest homes to 450,000 workers, and sanatorium treatment to 75,000. Both these figures represent only about 6 per cent. of the whole number of the insured persons.

According to the programme laid down for the rest homes, patients must be provided not only with good food, but also with facilities for rest cure and for sports; some wholesome entertainments must also be arranged for the patients. All this could be achieved only if proper expert medical supervision could have been arranged in the rest homes. But this supervision is absent, as the funds assigned for this purpose are absolutely inadequate. This year only one kopeck (one farthing) a day per person was granted for medical assistance and supervision in the rest homes.

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Therefore these homes are more like badly-run boarding houses than institutions destined for providing rest cure.

The same must be said about cultural entertainments for the patients. The same providential sum – one farthing a day per person – is provided for this purpose in the estimate. It must be added that the food is not always good; there is no variety in the fare, and usually no attempt is made to please the individual tastes of the patients. The tendency to 'centralise' everything is responsible sometimes for unaccountable follies. For instance, in 1927 the Moscow Insurance Bureau prescribed the same fare to run for each week for all the rest homes under its authority.

Owing to the absence of medical assistance and advice, and of sound entertainments, 'rest cure' in the rest homes becomes a regime of idleness and boredom. A patient who is supposed to 'rest' from the monotony of his work does not know how to spend his time when he comes to the 'rest home.' He can only hang about the house between meals. As a result many patients kill time by playing cards or drinking intoxicating liquors. Sometimes the 'rest homes' cannot be distinguished from public houses, and cases of hooliganism are by no means infrequent. Many of the visitors leave rest homes before the terms of their sojourn expire.

The above description of the conditions prevailing in the most lauded Soviet 'rest homes' has been taken from an article by G. G., published in *Trud*.²¹

We can supplement this general description by a typical example. A special commission which inquired into the conditions at the Askhabad (Central Asia) rest house found that the patients were treated unsatisfactorily.

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There was no bath at the house, and visitors were not even medically examined upon arrival. Persons suffering from syphilis in a very contagious form were discovered amongst the patients. Bed linen was changed only once a fortnight. All the dormitories were infested with pests – fleas, bugs, and lice. The management of the house was in a chaotic state.²²

Although the sanatoria, being destined for the use of the most privileged persons, are kept and run much better than the 'rest homes,' nevertheless they are not free from defects. As an example we give the following quotation from a Soviet journal: 'A special commission which inquired into the conditions of one of the biggest sanatoria in the Vladimir Government found many disgraceful things about it. The sanatorium takes its supplies of drinking water from a river polluted with refuse from the neighbouring villages. No scientific cabinet for treatment of patients (tuberculosis) is attached to the sanatorium. Peasants buy remnants of food for feeding their cattle and thus spread disease in the district. Patients are not compelled to obey necessary discipline; they smoke, drink vodka, and arrange dances under the very eyes of the administration.'²³

As to the health resorts, they mostly serve as places where members of the Communist Party and high Soviet officials can spend their annual holidays and have a nice time at the expense of the State. That the allegation is not a 'calumny' invented by the enemies of the Soviets, but only a true representation of existing conditions, is confirmed by the following quotation from *Trud*: 'As the data of the State Insurance Department show, over 40 per cent. of those who are sent to the health resorts at the expense of the insurance fund, *do not need this expensive*

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treatment. Thus the money which is spent on them is practically wasted, while those who are really ill are unable to receive the necessary facilities for the treatment of their ailments.¹⁸⁴

Many friends and admirers of the Soviets in this country may be disappointed with all these details of the sanitary conditions under which Russian workers live, and the insufficient and poor medical and other aid they receive from the 'benevolent' Soviet Government. But *amicus Plato sed veritas est magis amicus*, and however ardently we wish that Russian workers could enjoy the benefits and privileges which the Soviet Labour Code provides for them, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the state of the protection of the workers' health in Soviet Russia is far worse than in many civilised capitalist countries, and certainly worse than it might have been if the country had not been devastated by civil war, famine, destruction, and the general upheaval which the Bolshevik Revolution had brought about.

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- ¹ *Trud*, No. 71, 24th March 1928.
- ² *Ibid.*
- ³ *Trud*, No. 179, 3rd August 1928.
- ⁴ *Trud*, No. 130, 7th June 1928.
- ⁵ *Trud*, No. 132, 9th June 1928.
- ⁶ *Trud*, No. 295, 20th December 1928.
- ⁷ *Trud*, No. 33, 8th February 1928.
- ⁸ *Trud*, No. 69, 22nd March 1928.
- ⁹ *Trud*, No. 71, 24th March 1928.
- ¹⁰ *Trud*, No. 34, 9th February 1928. Since this was written, Tomsy has quarrelled with Stalin and has been deprived of his post.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*

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- ¹² *Trud*, No. 90, 18th April 1928.
- ¹³ *Trud*, No. 92, 20th April 1928.
- ¹⁴ *Trud*, No. 36, 11th February 1928.
- ¹⁵ *Trud*, No. 142, 21st June 1928.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁷ *Trud*, No. 179, 3rd August 1928.
- ¹⁸ *Trud*, No. 64, 16th March 1928.
- ¹⁹ *Trud*, No. 157, 8th July 1928.
- ²⁰ *Trud*, No. 165, 18th July 1928.
- ²¹ *Trud*, No. 71, 24th March 1928.
- ²² *Trud*, No. 133, 10th July 1928.
- ²³ *Trud*, No. 147, 27th June 1928.
- ²⁴ *Trud*, No. 71, 24th March 1928.

CHAPTER VII

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Schools for Adults – Pre-school Education – Elementary Schools – Secondary Schools – Universities and Technical Colleges.

EVEN the most ardent friends of the Soviets sometimes admit that the Bolsheviks have failed in their attempts to introduce full-fledged Socialism into Russia. In industry there is the N.E.P. and the relics of private capitalism. On land there is still to a great extent individual production. But it is alleged that in the sphere of public education the Bolsheviks have attained a sweeping success.

Not only has there been inaugurated an entirely new system of education, based on the materialist conception of history and the class struggle, but the Russian people, who were kept illiterate and uneducated by the Tsars, have benefited by the Soviets so profoundly that illiteracy has become a thing of the past; that all children are now receiving good and sound free education in roomy and sunlit schools run on the most advanced educational principles; and that the workers have gained free access to the universities and colleges formerly denied them.

Let us examine, *sine ira et studio*, if these claims are justified by the facts of real life, especially in regard to the industrial workers, 'the ruling class' in Soviet Russia.

The Soviet system of public education can be classified

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as follows: (1) 'liquidation' of illiteracy among the adult population; (2) pre-school education for children up to seven years of age; (3) elementary education in schools of the first grade for children of seven to twelve years; (4) advanced education in schools of the second grade for youths up to eighteen or nineteen years; (5) high education in universities and technical colleges and institutes. There are also some subsidiary educational establishments like 'rabfacs'—workers' faculties — in which young workers, who have not received sufficient school training, are prepared for entrance examinations to universities and technical colleges, and also factory schools where youths are trained for certain trades.

We will examine all the links of the system in turn.

Almost immediately the Bolsheviks seized power they proclaimed their intention 'to get rid of the cursed inheritance of the old regime — illiteracy.' The Soviet of People's Commissars issued a decree in 1919 ordering the formation of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Liquidation of Illiteracy, and granting the necessary credits for the purpose. Afterwards other organisations — 'Polit-prosviet' (Political Education Society), 'Socvos' (Social Education Society), Trade Unions, League of Communist Youth and 'O.D.N.' ('Down with Illiteracy' Society) — were entrusted with the same task.

Lenin himself paid great attention to the problem of illiteracy in Russia. He used to say that 'it was impossible to build up Socialism in an illiterate country,' and, as his widow, Mme. N. Kroupskaia, testified, the last article which he wanted to write before his illness took a fatal turn was to deal with the subject of illiteracy.

It would be unjust to say that the Soviets did not make

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great efforts to teach the Russian people the two 'R's,' reading and writing. But in such things as social reforms it is not good intentions, but practical results that count. And the results attained by the Soviets during the eleven years of their dictatorship are not altogether brilliant.

According to the general census of population in 1897 the percentage of literates in the territory of the present Soviet Union was 18.6. As the annual increase in the number of literates was calculated to be 0.6, by 1926, when another general census was held, the percentage should have risen to 36.6. The census of 1926 showed that the actual figure was 39.6. Thus the efforts of the Soviets to get rid of illiteracy resulted in raising the percentage of literates only by 3.0.

In respect of the failure of the Soviets to get rid of illiteracy we have the evidence of such a competent authority as Mme. N. Kroupskaia, president of the Extraordinary Commission for the Liquidation of Illiteracy. Says she: 'The introduction of the N.E.P. resulted in a serious crisis in the domain of public education. Many schools were closed. Others stood unrepaired and unheated. Teachers did not receive their salaries. Our youth grew up illiterate. The ranks of illiterates were swelled by the influx of illiterate boys and girls of school age. . . . The Commission for the Liquidation of Illiteracy was able to stop the growth of illiteracy, but could not possibly do away with it. *Illiteracy has become stabilised.* We have taught about one million people annually to read and write, and, approximately, the number of illiterates is swelled by the same figure owing to the influx of children unable to receive education in our schools. We hope that by 1934 we shall be able to stop this influx of illiterates because of the introduction of compulsory universal

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education. But it will be in the future. Meanwhile things are going on rather badly.¹

According to Mme. Kroupskaya's calculations, by the end of 1926 the percentage of illiterates of ten years and upwards was, for the whole of the Soviet Union, 48·7. In this respect Russia is still behind not only England and other West European countries, but also Spain and Bulgaria.

Another competent authority, Mr. A. V. Lunacharsky, Commissar for Public Education, described the situation at a meeting held in Moscow in June 1928 in this graphic language: 'We find ourselves in a boat which is turned against the current. We are rowing with all our strength, but the boat remains on the same spot. All our efforts seem to be only sufficient to overcome the force of the current, which constantly drives our boat down the stream.'²

But both Mme. Kroupskaya and Mr. Lunacharsky are too optimistic: their boat is not keeping up in the struggle against the ever-increasing current of illiteracy, but is quickly being carried down the stream.

We give some facts and figures from *Pravda*, of 31st August 1928, under the common title 'The Forgotten Front.' 'In thirty-four governments and provinces of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (Russia proper) 7,500,000 roubles were spent on fighting illiteracy in 1926-7, and only 4,935,000 roubles in 1927-8. The number of pupils has correspondingly decreased. In 1928-9 further cuts will be made in the funds for fighting illiteracy, and it is not expected that the plan to teach 779,000 persons during the year will be carried out. In the Ukraine there are 5,000,000 illiterates. While in 1926-7 268,000 persons were taught, in 1927-8 the number of pupils was 180,000. It is anticipated that the number

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will decrease again in 1928-9, as the funds provided for the purpose in the draft budget have been curtailed.' The same gloomy tale is told by the journal about White Russia, where illiteracy is rather high - 60 per cent. of the whole population. The number of pupils in the schools for illiterates decreases each year. In 1925-6, 75,000 persons were taught the alphabet; in 1926-7, 70,000; and in 1927-8, 52,670. In the Lower Volga region 'we have during the last three years a systematic fall in the number of schools for adults and the number of pupils in them.'³

All the societies organised by the Soviets to combat illiteracy are working rather badly. Many complaints on the inactivity of these societies are published in the Soviet Press.⁴ There were registered cases where societies existed only on paper and in the imagination of local Soviet authorities. A typical example was reported recently to the Soviet journal, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, about Ivanovo-Voznesensk. The local branch of the 'Down with Illiteracy' Society was supposed to consist of 17,000 members and to run 400 schools. When someone undertook to investigate these figures, he found that there were neither society, members, nor schools!

The best summary of the results of Bolshevik efforts to get rid of illiteracy is given in the Soviet journal *Biednota*: 'We spend large State and public funds for fighting illiteracy. But everybody knows that we are liquidating these funds in far greater proportion than illiteracy.'⁵

The above statistics refer to the population in general. As the peasants are scattered over vast territories, and live in small villages and hamlets, it is very difficult indeed to establish a thorough system of instruction for them. Industrial workers are in a much better position in this

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respect. They live in one place and the majority of them are organised in trade unions. The fight against illiteracy among them would not have been very difficult had sufficient funds and energy been employed for this purpose. But it is not the case. Illiteracy among the members of the trade unions seems to be as great as before. Even in Moscow, among the members of the Educational Workers' Union, there are 2000 persons (2.5 per cent. of the total) who cannot read or write.⁶ 'In Minsk there are trade unions which count about 70 per cent. of illiterates among their members.'⁷ The writer adds that 'the situation in the whole district is not better.' He also complains that the trade unions make no efforts to improve this pitiable state of affairs.

'Our greatest drawback,' said Mr. Tomsky at the Eighth Trade Union Congress, 'is the badly organised struggle against illiteracy. The trade unions retain their former neglectful, careless attitude towards this very important task.'

On 6th March 1929 the trade-union journal, *Trud*, published a leading article on the subject of illiteracy among trade unionists. According to approximate calculations the percentage of illiterates among trade unionists is 10. In other words, about 1,200,000 Russian trade unionists, who are alleged to be the advanced guard of the international labour army, are unable to read or write. The journal also says that the quality of teaching in the schools for adults is poor. Over 70 per cent. of the pupils leave the schools without having acquired a standard of the most elementary knowledge.

It is alleged that in their care for children the Soviets have established kindergartens all over the Soviet Union,

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especially in connection with big factories. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find in the large amount of materials we have gone through for the purpose of this book any references to the number of kindergartens and the children in them. The scattered information on this subject contained in the Soviet Press hardly suggests that things are going more smoothly in the sphere of 'pre-school education' than in that of fighting illiteracy.

'Kindergartens are attended only by very few children. In many workers' centres, where the kindergartens are especially needed, they are almost entirely absent,' says Miss Shmukler in *Trud*. Even if these establishments exist they are usually very poorly organised and managed. Descriptions of several kindergartens attached to some big factories in Moscow confirm this conclusion.

'Let us have a look at the kindergarten "Kolobok," where the children of the workers of the factory *Serp i Molot* are cared for. There are only sixty children in the kindergarten, although the number of workers in the factory is over 6000. The reason is that the premises of the kindergarten are so crowded that it is impossible to receive more children. Another house was offered to shelter the kindergarten, but we could not accept the offer, as the house needed repairs and we had no money to do them. The sum of 4·5 roubles a month (9s.) per child is granted for their feeding. This sum is absolutely insufficient. The factory committee does not pay any attention to the needs of the kindergarten. "We must beg with tears," says the head-instructress, "when we want something from the factory committee." The local branch of the Commissariat for Public Education also does nothing to improve the conditions. An inspector

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calls, gives instructions, but conditions remain the same.¹⁸

‘There are only thirty-eight children in the kindergarten attached to the *Amo* Works. It is housed in four small rooms; children are close together like herrings in a barrel. The senior group sleeps in a room where the tables and chairs are stored during the rest hour. The junior group is even in a worse position; the cots are put so close to each other that there is no passage between them. Conditions are so bad that during the last three years five head-instructresses were changed. The sum of 10 roubles is given monthly for feeding each child. This is quite enough. But the money is provided by the parents themselves, who give 0.5 per cent. of their wages for the upkeep of the kindergarten.’¹⁹

Although the subject of wandering children and of how the Soviets care for them does not come directly within the scope of the work, nevertheless we must not omit to mention, however briefly, the conditions which prevail in the so-called ‘Children’s Homes’ provided by the Soviet Government for orphans and strayed children.

A special commission of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Control, who inspected many such institutions, published last September a report in which we find the following details: ‘Children sleep by twos and threes in one bed. There is no bed linen. Education consists mostly of physical torments: children are beaten, locked up in cells, punished by depriving them of clothes, etc. They receive no instruction. Work in the kitchen and in the kitchen garden, and cleaning the premises, occupy all their time. Work is converted into compulsory labour. Children’s education is entrusted to persons of doubtful morals.’²⁰

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There were cases reported in the Soviet papers where the chiefs of the 'Children's Homes' were convicted of the corruption of their wards. . . .

As we have said before, the Bolsheviks have not succeeded in introducing the principle of compulsory universal education in Russia. There is still a considerable number of children between eight and twelve years of age not receiving any education at all. According to Mr. Lunacharsky, Commissar for Public Education, in the European part of Russia proper only 86 per cent. of children of school age are receiving elementary instruction in the schools.¹¹ In Siberia the percentage is only 70,¹² and in Ukraine 60.¹³ But these figures are not considered by many authorities as accurate. Only in large towns like Moscow, Leningrad, Kieff, and Kharkoff is the percentage of school children to the total number of children fairly satisfactory. In the minor towns, workers' settlements, and villages over 30 per cent. of the children do not receive elementary education.¹⁴

Conditions are particularly bad in districts where the working-class population predominates. We shall give facts and figures to confirm this statement. But a few words about the conditions existing in the elementary schools generally will be useful.

The following description is from a report by the Director of the Moscow Department of Public Education, Mr. Alexinsky, on school conditions in that district. Generally speaking, the situation in Moscow is much more favourable than in the rest of the country. It gives a fair idea of the state of affairs.

'Public education is still far behind in comparison with the economic progress and the requirements of the

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cultural revolution. Especially bad are the material conditions. School education is provided for all the children of school age only in Moscow itself; in the district less than 90 per cent. of children attend school. A considerable part of children leave school after one or two years of instruction, and, therefore, remain almost illiterate. Progress of the pupils is very slow, and many are left for the second year in the same form. There is a great dearth of school buildings. In 1927 the number of school children was 134 per cent. in comparison with pre-War times, but the number of schools was only 47·2 per cent. Owing to this, two, and even three, shifts are being taught in the same school. Schools are rather poorly supplied with school-books and other appliances. Many schools are not equipped with libraries.¹⁵

In another article in *Pravda*, under the telling title of 'The Steeplechase Race,' Mr. R. Niurin describes the conditions in the Northern Caucasus, where in 1927-8 only 55·3 per cent. of children of school age were able to attend schools. In this district the number of schools has increased during the last ten years by 4·5 per cent, and the number of pupils by 30 per cent. Schools are working on the two-shift system. About 90 per cent. of the funds are spent on salaries to the school staffs, while in pre-War times the salaries called for only 50 per cent. of the whole expenditure, and over 18 per cent. was spent on books and other schoolroom appliances. The number of pupils per teacher is between fifty and sixty. Owing to this the standard of the children's success is rather low.¹⁶

Analogous conditions prevail in the Ukraine, Siberia, and Transcaucasia.¹⁷

But bad as the conditions are generally, they are still

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worse in the districts where the working population is largest. According to the statement of Mr. A. Baranoff in *Trud*, 'the situation in respect to elementary education in the workers' settlements is as follows: A considerable number of children cannot be educated at all. Thus, according to the data collected by the Vladimir District Branch of the Textile Workers' Union, more than 896 children cannot be placed in the schools because of the lack of accommodation. In the Penza district, at the *Red October* workers' settlement, over 300 children cannot be admitted to the schools for the same reason. Similar reports come from the Yaroslavl Government, where more than 950 children are outside the schools. In Slavoutsk (Ukraine) over 50 per cent. of children are doomed to illiteracy. In some mining districts in the Urals the percentage has risen to 72.5. In the Shakhty district (Northern Caucasus), in only five mines, 1950 children remain outside the schools.

Lack of school buildings leads to overcrowding in existing schools. In the Ukraine a three, and even four, shift system is practised in the same school. In the Don Basin the schools are housed in the workers' barracks. The schools are rather poorly kept and equipped; they are crowded, unheated, and badly lighted. Many schools have not been repaired for years. In the Don Basin area 28.2 per cent. of school buildings are badly in need of capital repairs. In Krivorozhie the percentage is as high as 50. In some cases there is no furniture in the school and the children are obliged to sit on the floor (Troitzk, Urals). These dreadful conditions affect the health of the children; colds, short-sightedness, anæmia, and biliousness are widespread. In the Anzhersk mining district (Siberia) over

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50 per cent. of the school children were found suffering from various diseases. In the Kama mining district the percentage was 53. There are some other causes – poor clothing and footwear, bad feeding – which affect the children's health. The children leave the schools almost illiterate. It could hardly be otherwise, if the above described conditions are taken into consideration. The classes are overcrowded. In Siberian mining districts there is only one teacher for every sixty children; in some cases the number of pupils per teacher is as high as eighty. The teachers are very badly paid. For instance, in the Kuznetzk mining district (Siberia) a teacher with three years' experience receives only 36·75 roubles (about £4) per month! Hence the rather poorly trained contingent of teachers, and the constant migration of teachers from one district to another in search of better conditions for their labour.¹⁸

Here is another description of school conditions in the Artemovsk mining district. 'Not a single new school has been erected in the last ten years. Over 50 per cent. of the school buildings are absolutely unfit for school purposes. The schools are working on a two, three, and even four, shift system. Although the schools are overcrowded, nevertheless only 77 per cent. of workers' children can be admitted to them. The situation is becoming worse each year. The managements of the industrial undertakings do not build schools, and do not even grant funds for repairing the old ones.'¹⁹

As S. Antziferov wrote in *Trud* (No. 297, 22nd December 1928), the schools attached to the textile factories in the Vladimir Government are overcrowded. The sanitary conditions are so bad that nearly 90 per cent. of the school children are suffering from tuberculosis. The number of

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children who remain in the same form for two years, on account of non-success, reaches 40 per cent. of the total.

Numerous complaints about the bad state of elementary education were also made at the Eighth Trade Union Congress. 'Our schools are bad, overcrowded, and insufficiently lighted,' said Miss Krotova, the representative of the School Teachers' Union. 'The children are very often poorly clothed and shod. No hot breakfasts are provided for them. Supplies of text-books and stationery are insufficient.'

So much about elementary education in Soviet Russia. Conditions prevailing in the secondary schools are almost identical. The number of schools is absolutely inadequate, and many children are left outside them. The school buildings are in ruins. Many schools are working on the two-shift system. The school equipment is very poor, and only very small sums are spent for school-books and schoolroom appliances. Teaching is poor and non-success amongst pupils is very great. Teachers are badly paid and overworked; the classes are overcrowded, etc., etc.

As we are mostly concerned with the question of the facilities given to the working-class children for receiving good and advanced education, we shall give a few facts bearing on the subject.

In Moscow and Leningrad the children of the workers represent only one-third of the school contingent in the secondary schools. The rest are children of traders, nepmen, and intelligentsia. The main reason seems to be, as a special investigation into this question carried out last winter in Leningrad testifies, the non-success of pupils of proletarian origin. Boys and girls are obliged to quit the schools during the first years of their studies. 'The non-

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success is due to the poverty of parents and to the housing conditions of workers. "I left school because I had no money to buy books," said one boy.. "I was absent from school for a whole month because I had not good boots and a warm overcoat," said another. The overcrowding of workers' dwellings renders preparation of lessons at home impossible. A boy cannot receive help from his parents when in difficulty over working out an example in arithmetic, or when unable to grasp the true meaning of some ambiguous explanation given in a text-book.'²⁰

A special inquiry into the secondary schools of Moscow by Mr. S. Gudkoff revealed the fact that out of the total number of boys and girls who passed their final examinations in 1928 only 10 per cent. were working-class children. The author arrives at the following conclusions: "The number of workers' and peasants' children in the secondary schools is on the decrease. Only exceptionally energetic, bold, and strong boys and girls, after years of strenuous work, are able to get into the universities and technical colleges. Our schools supply mostly non-proletarian elements. We sound the alarm: the Soviet labour schools are educating less proletarian children each year.'²¹

The author of another article in the same number of *Trud*, Mr. A. M., discussing the same subject, makes the following sweeping accusation: "We pay insignificantly little attention to questions of education and the better organisation of elementary and secondary schools. The Commissariat for Public Education is engaged in the formation of "a new Soviet superman." It collects in its museums art treasures, but pays very poor attention to practical work in those establishments which are really forming "a new Soviet superman." Yes, these establish-

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ments perform their task badly; a pupil usually leaves school mentally mutilated and morally corrupted.²²

There is hardly anything to add to this expression of utter indignation which every honest and sincere man feels when studying educational conditions prevailing in Soviet Russia.

It must not be wondered at that youths who passed their finals in the secondary schools seem to be, as a rule, rather poorly equipped with knowledge of the most elementary things. This fact is being established each autumn after the result of the entrance examinations to the universities are made known.

In the *Krasnaya Gazeta* Professor Korableff gives the following account of the examinations in 1928. "The majority of aspirants to places in the Leningrad universities and colleges are prepared very poorly. Their knowledge of history is especially bad. They mix the French Revolution of 1789 with the Paris Commune of 1871. Future students at the Soviet universities never heard of "Hamlet" or "Don-Quixote," and maintain that Chekhoff and Garshin lived before the reign of Tsar Nicolas I. Orthography and the style of literary compositions are usually dreadful. Over 40 per cent. of examination papers were absolutely unreadable. Many aspirants do not know the rules of elementary arithmetic. The papers on physics are simply deplorable; they cannot understand and formulate the most simple physical laws."²³

The standard of university education and training is also very low, much lower indeed than it used to be under the Tsars. The high schools in Soviet Russia suffer from the same defects as the secondary schools, except, perhaps, that they are not so overcrowded. The number of places

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in universities and high schools is rather limited, and the number of those who want to gain admission to them is usually five or six times the number of available places. The Bolsheviks, therefore, do everything possible to facilitate the predominance of the 'proletarian elements' among students. It is attained by 'armouring' – guaranteeing – a certain number of places for those applicants who are recommended by the Communist Party organisations, trade unions, co-operatives, and other Soviet organisations and institutions. The percentage of these 'armoured' places varies from 50 to 80. They are filled mostly by the members of the Communist Party and the League of Communist Youth. Non-party workers are very seldom included in the number of these privileged students. Very often the privileges given to the Communists are exceptional indeed. For instance, this year fourteen students were allowed to enter the Mendelieff Institute for Chemistry who failed in two, three, and even four subjects at the entrance examinations, while non-party men who passed the examinations successfully were not admitted at all.

It is impossible to imagine the scuffle going on for every place in the Soviet universities. All means are considered justified in order to get into the university or technical college. Many dramas and even tragedies are occurring every autumn amongst those who fail to realise their ambitions. . . .

The great majority of the Communist students receive not only free training in the high schools, but are also given subsidies amounting to 25 to 35 roubles a month.

All this is done by the Soviet Government in order to ensure the necessary number of trained Communist

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specialists who could take the management of industry and of national affairs generally from the hands of the non-party intelligentsia and technicians. But all these efforts seem to be rewarded poorly. Only a very small number of Communists are usually able to complete their university studies.

In May 1926 a special census was taken in fourteen universities and technical colleges to ascertain the political status of the students. This census produced very startling results. While the number of Communists and the members of the Communist League of Youth equalled 60 per cent. of the total first-year students, this percentage fell to 42·8 for the second year, to 20·2 for the third year, to 8·5 for the fourth year, and to 3·9 for the fifth year!²⁴

The main reason of this fact, deplorable from the Bolshevik point of view, is that the Communist students are either poorly prepared for university studies and cannot stand 'the strain of the mental work,' or do not want to study. Being members of the privileged governing party they consider themselves above such trivial matters as science and training for certain professions. They may have good, well-paid positions without being obliged to stuff their heads with such nonsense as mathematical formulæ or minute details of the human body.

One of the chief inconsistencies of the Soviet regime is that the Bolsheviks cannot count on the younger generation as faithful and staunch adherents for the continuation of their regime. This is the biggest tragedy with which the Soviet leaders are faced.

All the facts we have given, though but briefly and incompletely, force us to the conclusion that in the sphere of public education the Bolsheviks have failed as utterly as

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in other spheres. The industrial workers, the alleged ruling class of Russia, cannot receive the benefits of university training, and very often cannot give their children secondary or even elementary education. The education which they receive in the Soviet schools and universities is poor, and gives to those who receive it a very inefficient weapon for the Battle of Life.

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CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL WELFARE OF WORKERS

Workers' Clubs and Libraries – Failure of Communist Propaganda – Growth of Alcoholism in Russia.

SUCH great historical events as the Russian Revolution cannot pass without leaving deep and lasting traces in the minds and souls of the people. Any revolution is certainly the form of social progress, though it may be a barbaric one. It reveals not only the base, egoistic, brutal, and atavistic sides of human nature; it also raises the people to noble deeds; it awakens them to higher aspirations and greater ambitions.

This unprecedented social upheaval produced a marked and manifold effect on the psychology of the Russian nation. We cannot describe all the latent processes which were and are still going on in Russia. It is too complicated and vast a subject to be discussed in a book dealing with present Russian labour and social conditions. We shall mention only one of these processes, the awakened longing in the Russian working classes for more knowledge, for a higher level of spiritual and material culture.

It must be admitted that the Bolshevik propaganda, otherwise disruptive and destructive, in this respect has borne some remarkably constructive results. For the first time in their history, the masses of the Russian people have realised that they were made of the same stuff as the upper

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classes, and aspirations and ambitions for higher standards of material and spiritual life, formerly foreign to them, have now become deeply rooted in their minds.

All independent observers are unanimous in stating that never before has there been the longing for knowledge, cultural development, and refinement greater in Russia than there is to-day.

But the Bolsheviks, like the fishermen of the *Arabian Nights*, have let loose the genie which they can neither control nor satisfy.

We have already seen how few facilities the Soviets were able to give not only for university, but even for secondary education for Russian workers. We shall see what is being done for them by the Russian Communist Party outside the schools.

The chief organisations through which the Bolsheviks carry out their educational and social work amongst industrial workers are the so-called 'Workers' Clubs.' The principles on which, in theory, these institutions are being run in Soviet Russia have been described in the most glowing terms in books, pamphlets, and newspaper articles published in this country. The authors of 'The Official Report of the British Trades Union Delegation to Russia' said about these clubs that 'they were one of the first results of the Revolution'; that 'one of the most important functions of these clubs is teaching the worker and peasant to read and write'; that the clubs 'equip him either for enjoying his life, his trade, or for being employed on more important work'; that 'the clubs are also very influential in the campaigns of the Communists for cleanliness and clean living'; that 'lectures and discussions in the clubs deal with political, industrial, economic, and social life of

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the workers'; that the clubs furnish 'various kinds of entertainment for the workers,' etc., etc.¹

Let us see what the Bolsheviki themselves say and think about these social institutions, which are, according to Communist theory, to establish firm foundation for the edifice of 'proletarian culture.'

Official statistics about the number of workers' clubs and their members are certainly impressive. There were in 1927, on the territory of the Soviet Union, 3702 clubs with 1,224,000 members. In 1928 the number of clubs has increased by 3 per cent., thus reaching the figure of 3820. But 'the network of clubs is entirely insufficient for satisfying the cultural needs of the working masses. Many important working-class districts, with 5000 to 10,000 population, possess clubs which can hold only 300 to 500 people. The percentage of club members to the whole of the trade-union membership is rather small. According to the data for 1927, in such districts with large working-class populations as Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Nizhny-Novgorod, the Urals, and even the Moscow district, only from 7 to 10 per cent. of trade unionists were members of the workers' clubs.'²

'30 per cent. of the clubs have one to three rooms; 35 per cent. three to seven rooms; and only 28 per cent. have more than eight rooms. It must be added that the clubs are situated mostly in large towns, at considerable distance from the factories and districts where the workers live. Even such large works as *Putiloff* and *Krasny Treougolnik* (Leningrad), *Sormovo* (Nizhny - Novgorod), *Profintern* (Briansk), which employ many thousands of workers, have clubs with sitting capacities for 500 to 800 persons only. Far worse is the situation in the provinces, in Siberia, the Urals and Northern Caucasus.'³

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The author of the article quoted complains of many irregularities which accompany the erection of new clubs. Funds assigned for this purpose are wasted. Club premises are built without due regard to technical requirements, and very often do not ensure the most elementary comfort and facilities for cultural work. In many localities clubs are being erected at long distances – two or three miles – from the workers' settlements, etc.

In the Ural region the workers' clubs are housed 'in old factory storerooms and barracks; only five or six new premises were built in recent years. There are 550,000 members of trade unions in the region, and only 70,000 seats in the workers' clubs.'⁴

Mr. Tomsky himself, chairman of the Central Council of the Soviet Trade Unions, acknowledged that 'the workers' clubs can serve only 20 per cent. of the whole of the workers; the remaining 80 per cent. have nowhere to go but to the "pubs."'⁵

Not only is the number of clubs insufficient; the clubs as a rule are in a dreadful state of disorder and untidiness. We give a description of the so-called 'Palaces of Culture' erected in the Don Basin district at the cost of six million roubles, made by such a prominent trade-union official as Mr. Schwartz, president of the Miners' Union. 'In the Gorlovka Palace of Culture all the door-knobs are taken off. The "Komsomoltzy" (members of the Communist League of Youth) use halls and reading-rooms as lavatories. In Petrovsk I visited the premises of the Komsomol organisations: the rooms were untidy and dirty, cigarette ends were strewn on the floor. The conditions in all the other Palaces of Culture are no better.'⁶

Here is another description of the workers' clubs in the

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Grozny oil-fields district. "The majority of clubs are dirty, the furniture is broken, rifles in the shooting-halls are rusty, there is no order or discipline, cultural work is dull and uninteresting. Especially revolting are the conditions of the largest club of the district, occupying an excellent building which aroused the admiration of all foreign delegations who inspected it. The roof of the building is leaking and the building itself is being damaged, but no measures are being taken by the club management to repair it and put an end to these outrageous conditions."

'Much has been written,' says *Pravda*, 'about comfort in our clubs. There are many complaints that the clubs are dirty, dusty, and cold. They are often cold, not because the premises are not heated, but because the stoves are bad and left unrepaired, which results in wasting the fuel. Premises are dirty because they are not cleaned properly "on principle."'

The bad upkeep of club premises and the destruction of club furniture and equipment became so usual that *Trud* thought it necessary to publish a leading article in which the trade unions, club managements, and club members were severely rebuked. 'Many members of the workers' clubs are handling club property in a barbaric way. Dirt is everywhere; club premises, furniture, and other club property are being damaged and destroyed. It is not merely out-and-out hooligans who are destroying the club property. The majority of the club visitors are guilty of the same offence. The club managements are negligent of the property of their clubs. There were many cases of fire registered recently in the trade-union clubs. Do not these fires prove that the club premises are badly looked after? In Moscow there were cases when club premises were not

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insured against fire. This is surely the limit of negligence on the part of club managements.⁹

There is every reason to believe that the number of club members is greatly exaggerated in Soviet official statistics. Many complaints are made in the Soviet Press that it is very difficult to hold annual meetings of the club members, as the necessary quorum is obtained only very seldom.¹⁰ In a letter from Yaroslavl, published in *Trud*, it is asserted that 'the club membership is only an empty formality. The roll of members is only an "historical document." Many who are counted as members forgot long ago that they ever belonged to the club. There are six hundred on the roll of one club, but only forty-five pay their membership fees more or less regularly. The club manager wanted to erase the names of absentees from the club roll. When the District Trade Union Council learned this they ordered him to "correct the mistake." Thus we have again six hundred members on the roll of our club.'¹¹

Another very important matter is that the clubs are usually not masters of their premises. 'We have in our club at least ten different masters. District Communist Party Committee, local Communist cell, Industrial Committee, District Soviet - all these organisations are managing the premises of our club,' said the manager of the workers' club *Krasny Batalion* in the Grozny oil-fields. The same could be said by any and every club or trade-union worker, and perhaps it could be added: 'The Communist cell and the Party Commission for Propaganda and Agitation are the chief aggressors.' The following weekly time-table is fixed in the Grozny clubs. On Mondays the clubs are occupied by the local Soviets, on Tuesdays by the trade unions, on Thursdays by the

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Communist Party, on Fridays by the Communist Party school. There are many other organisations – Communist League of Youth, Women's Guild, co-operatives, various societies, etc. It happens that every evening the club belongs to some other organisation. It is impossible to conduct any cultural work, as the premises are never free. The same conditions prevail in the Shakhty district.¹² Similar complaints come from Minsk,¹³ and from many other places.

If we look through official data about the number of lectures, cinema shows, dramatic performances, etc., given annually in the workers' clubs, we shall be astounded by the enormous amount of cultural work which is being done there. Mr. Evreinoff, chief of the Cultural Department of the Central Council of the Soviet Trade Unions, gave, at a conference in Moscow, the following figures: workers' clubs have 24,000,000 visitors monthly. Out of this number 8,300,000 persons come to see the 'pictures,' 6,000,000 attend dramatic performances, 5,000,000 lectures and political debates, etc. There are 1,400,000 members of various 'circles' – political, art, sport, etc.—attached to the clubs.¹⁴

But what kind of mental food do all those millions of working men, women, boys, and girls receive who visit the meetings, lectures, cinema shows, concerts, and dramatic performances? Do the workers' clubs serve the purpose of satisfying the longing of the awakened working masses for knowledge, cultural progress, or healthy entertainments?

The material which we have at our disposal compels us to answer this question in the most emphatic negative. Instead of bread the workers receive a stone from their Communist bosses.

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In their moments of frankness the Communists themselves do not hesitate to admit the fact, although they are doing everything possible to impress upon their foreign admirers how much good, uplifting work they are carrying on amongst Russian workers and peasants. We shall quote some of these admissions.

At the All-Union Conference of the Workers' Clubs held in September 1928, the following statements were made: "The present conditions of work in the workers' clubs are far from being satisfactory. The entertainments the clubs provide are mostly cinema shows and dramatic performances. The quality of these entertainments is poor. They are mostly rubbish from the educational point of view. Even in Moscow educational films are shown in the clubs only after pressure is exercised to force the managements to show them. Lectures in the clubs, especially in the provinces, are conducted extremely badly. Lecturers are ignorant of the subjects they are lecturing about, and are very dull. The subjects of the lectures are also chosen badly; they do not interest the workers at all. No wonder that the lecturers do not have audiences. Out of one hundred lectures announced, only six or seven are actually given."¹⁵

At another conference the reporter, Mr. Mandelscham, admitted very frankly that "we have many organisations competing in their endeavours to serve the workers, but the workers are not served at all; "too many cooks spoil the broth." The workers are longing for knowledge; they are interested in hygiene, natural science, technical knowledge, literature, art, etc., but our clubs are absolutely unable to satisfy these demands. Therefore adult workers visit the clubs only on rare occasions. We accompany every

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dramatic performance with a lecture or a paper. We imagine that the performance is a gratis supplement to a lecture. But, as a matter of fact, everybody considers the lectures to be boring and dreary supplements to the performances. The political campaigns which we carry out in our clubs are all alike. The workers are bored with them. The speeches made at the meetings are dull and full of platitudes, and usually do not contain plain and concrete suggestions for remedying immediate evils and defects.¹⁶

All these lamentations refer to the conditions prevailing in the workers' clubs in Moscow. One can imagine what is the position with regard to the cultural and educational work in the provinces, where there are few educated and cultured people capable of conducting such work.

Communist propaganda among Russian workers seems to fall entirely flat. In the Soviet factories there are so-called 'Red Corners,' special rooms where, during lunch intervals, Communist agitators lecture to the workers. *Trud* says that the workers are grumbling: 'Leave us alone during the lunch interval. Do not force us to swallow Communist propaganda. Let us have a rest.' The paper complains that Communist speakers do not discuss matters in which workers are interested, but prefer to make speeches about foreign politics and the successes of the World Socialist Revolution in China and Guatemala. 'It is no wonder,' adds the paper, 'that workers do not attend the meetings.'¹⁷

There is a vivid description of the kind of dramatic performances given in the workers' clubs in the Urals. 'Announcements invite workers to see the drama *A Woman under the Mask* - a most rotten piece. Usually the

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repertoire is very bad. Actors are equally bad. They do not know their parts, and play with the help of the prompter. Women are frequently playing men's parts and *vice versa*. Whole acts are omitted at performances. Erotic songs and frivolous ballets and other very doubtful entertainments are the most common items in the programmes.¹⁸

Young workers, as *Trud* asserts, are mad about dancing. When asked why they prefer dancing to other kinds of entertainment, they reply: 'What can replace dancing? The performances and entertainments the clubs provide are boredom.'¹⁹ Similar complaints come from other places. They are so numerous that it is impossible to recount them.

Pravda says that 'cultural work in many clubs is being run according to the most wearisome routine. No initiative, no desire to give the members something new and unusual, is shown by the club managements. They seem somehow to be afraid to infringe the usual routine.'²⁰

These complaints sound rather ridiculous. How can the welfare workers show any initiative when anything new which does not come within the category of the approved Communist standard of cultural work may easily result in trouble for them? Any dictatorship, and the Communist dictatorship is no exception, is detrimental to the free cultural development of the people.

There were many cases registered in the Soviet Press where workers' clubs, instead of being centres of cultural progress, are converted into public bars where drinking bouts take place. A typical example was given in *Pravda*. 'On the occasion of the First of May celebrations the workers' club, *Sibir*, bought eight hundred bottles of beer. Many workers got drunk and fell asleep in the club, or near

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it in the street. Workers, and Communist Party members among them, sat at the tables and competed in drinking matches.’²¹

Funds assigned for the cultural work in the workers’ clubs are spent on everything but welfare work. ‘There are no other institutions in the Soviet Union where funds are so wantonly wasted. Everybody seems to think himself entitled to administer the club funds. Clubs are made to pay the expenses of sending the “pioneers” (Soviet boy scouts) to the summer camps, for the entertainment of children in the crèches, salaries of Communist Party officials, buying books for the Communist Party libraries, taking photographs of the Communist Party cells, making aero-sledges, excursions of members of the Communist League of Youth, etc., and so on.’²²

The paper from which we take the above quotation gives four columns to an exposure of numerous facts about the misuse of the funds belonging to the workers’ clubs. These facts point to the conclusion that the local Communist organisations extort the money most recklessly. ‘If managers oppose the wasteful and irregular spending of the funds they are accused of stupid economy, avarice, infringement of the Party instructions, negligence of the aims of the Party, or whatever you like. They are reprimanded, rebuked, and even deprived of their jobs.’²³

Another form of cultural work is the public libraries. Almost every workers’ club and local trade-union branch possesses books which are lent to workers free of charge. All observers testify that the number of subscribers to these libraries is rapidly growing, and the demand for books is increasing. Thus in 1926 there were 8085 workers’ libraries with 2,206,000 subscribers. The number of books

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issued was 15,621,000. In 1927 the number of libraries was 8112 with 2,889,000 subscribers, and the number of books issued was 18,475,000.

The Bolsheviks, however, seem unable to cope with the situation. Funds assigned for the purchases of new books are insufficient; the number of books in the libraries is small; the stock of books is such that subscribers are unable to get the books they want to read. Many quotations from the Soviet Press confirming these statements could be produced. We will limit them to a few taken at random.

'In the *Leninsk* workers' club (Moscow) there are few books dealing with technical matters. Popular political literature is also lacking; no new books can be got. Funds provided for buying new books are small and, besides, are utilised most irregularly.'²⁴

'In the Crimean workers' clubs funds assigned for the purchase of new library books are absolutely insufficient. If a club wants to cut its expenditure, the library fund is the first sufferer. In a Simferopol club there are 3337 books, and the number of subscribers is 717; thus for each subscriber there are only 5 books.'²⁵

What sort of books are the workers reading? We could not find in the Soviet Press enough material to answer this question in respect of all the subscribers to the workers' libraries. But the example quoted by Mr. I. Dorosheff can be taken as a typical one. At the State Electrical Works in Kharkoff, 64,000 books were issued to subscribers in 1927. Out of this number 15.9 per cent. were books dealing with scientific and technical matters. The majority of these books were not cheap popular booklets, but bulky volumes used as manuals by students at technical colleges. Political economy is another subject which interests the

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workers. Again the subscribers demand only those books which deal with the subject exhaustively. Popular Communist literature is not in demand; books of this kind represent only 3·4 per cent. of the total borrowed. The author of the article says that Communist political pamphlets are dull and very badly written. But the more likely explanation why workers do not want to read the Communist stuff is that they are tired of Communist propaganda, which repeats the same things over and over again. Not a single promise the Communists have made to the workers during the last eleven years has been kept. What is the use of reading books in which nothing but the glorification of these promises can be found?

Of the books of a lighter kind, old Russian classics – Tolstoy, Goncharoff, Gogol, Pushkin – are most eagerly read. Next come Gorky, Serafimovitch, Gladkoff, Fadieef (the two latter are young novelists). Of foreign writers, Jack London and Victor Hugo are preferred.²⁶

Undoubtedly some very remarkable results have been achieved in Russia during the last twelve years in the sphere of cultural progress. But these results have been obtained, not by Bolshevist efforts to promote them, but largely in spite of these efforts. Mass social education proceeds now along the path pointed out by recognised Russian philosophers and thinkers, but not by the Bolshevist leaders. The books most eagerly read by the workers prove the fact that the Bolsheviks have failed in introducing into the social life of the Russian people what they were pleased to call 'proletarian culture.'

This failure, which is, perhaps, more dangerous to the final fate of the Bolshevist regime than their other failures, shows that there is no such thing as class culture. The

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cultural progress of humanity has nothing to do with class differences. A picture by Raphael, an opera by Tchaikovsky, a tragedy by Shakespeare, a poem by Goethe, a novel by Anatole France – all appeal equally to proletarian and bourgeois, provided both can understand and enjoy them. The great cultural task which lies before any conscious Socialist is to lift the masses up to the understanding of the works of human geniuses, and not to indulge in attempts to create something new and freakish, and to call it 'proletarian' or anybody else's culture.

Notwithstanding the great strides made by the Russian working masses on the path of cultural progress, there are still many social evils in Russia which affect most unfavourably the morals and the social welfare of the people. Two of these evils – alcoholism and hooliganism – still remain outstanding features of the present social conditions in Russia.

During the first years of the Bolshevist dictatorship, the distillation and sale of vodka and other intoxicating drinks were prohibited. But as the peasants managed to make 'samogon' – illicitly distilled vodka – and supplied it to the town population, alcoholism has never really been extinguished. In 1924 the Soviet Government, chiefly for financial considerations, decided to return to the practice of the Tsarist Government and reintroduced the State vodka monopoly. Vodka, under the new name of 'Rykovka,' nicknamed after the president of the Soviet of People's Commissars, Mr. A. Rykoff, again appeared in the shops run and maintained by the State. This 'reform' resulted in the speedy growth of alcoholism amongst the industrial population. According to recent calculations the annual 'drink bill' of the Russian people is at present

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1,200,000,000 roubles ; that is larger than it used to be under the Tsars.

A special inquiry into the family budgets of the Lenin-grad workers revealed the fact that, during 1927, the expenditure of a working-class family on alcohol had increased by 30 per cent.²⁷ 'It is enough,' adds the paper, 'to walk along the main thoroughfares in our capitals to see unmistakable signs of growing drunkenness. In the workers' quarters it is impossible for a sober man to have a walk on Sundays.'

The spread of alcoholism among the industrial workers has reached such great proportions that it threatens to disorganise Soviet industry. That is what a Soviet publicist says on the subject in an article entitled 'Alcoholism and Industry,' published in the trade-union paper *Trud*.

'"On Saturday, when the weekly toil is finished, a working man is entitled to a drink." Such is a sacred custom of many a worker. But after a "wet" Saturday usually follows a "wet" Sunday. On Mondays there are many absentees from our factories and works. The productivity of labour goes down and the number of industrial accidents increases. During the last few months we hear more and more of the workers drinking vodka at the factories during working time. Alcoholism is beginning to disorganise work at many of our factories and works.'²⁸ As a typical example of the harm being done to the public economy by alcoholism, the author cites the protocol of a Special Commission who investigated the causes of accidents at the Azarbeidzhan Railway (Transcaucasia). 'Between 1st and 12th January 1928 there were nineteen accidents, causing over 500,000 roubles direct loss to the State. The Commission came to the conclusion that 80 per cent.

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of the accidents on the Transcaucasian Railways were caused by the decline in labour discipline and by drunkenness amongst railway workers and employees.'

'We must sound the alarm,' says the author of an article in *Trud* (No. 53, 5th March 1929) bearing the telling title 'Disgraceful Figures.' 'The most careful study of the budgets of working-class families in Moscow shows that the consumption of alcohol, and especially of vodka, is constantly and rapidly increasing. For the three years 1925 to 1927 the consumption of vodka per working family has increased from 8·8 to 29·1 bottles a year, and the consumption of beer from 24·4 to 46·3 bottles. Alcohol is consumed in 99 out of every 100 families. Even the Communist working-class families spend considerable sums on alcohol – certainly more than on cultural requirements. While the annual expenditure on alcohol amounts to the sum of 46·70 roubles a year, the expenditure on educational needs – papers, books, entertainments, etc. – is only 36·60 roubles.'

It is impossible to give more quotations from the Soviet Press about the spread of alcoholism among the Russian workers. The material at our disposal would fill the whole book.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized how detrimental is this social evil to the morals of the working masses. Alcoholism, besides undermining the health of the workers, is also responsible for the growth of hooliganism among them. We shall illustrate this social phenomenon by one example only, although there are hundreds of similar cases reported almost daily in the Soviet Press. In order to reproduce the atmosphere we give the literal translation of the article.

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It is entitled, 'Three Thousand Broken Window-panes.' The sub-title is: 'Workers are afraid to come out of their homes.' The text is as follows: 'Vladimir, 20th September. Hooliganism is growing in the workers' districts of the Vladimir Government. Hooligans are impeding cultural work in the factories and causing material damage. Thus, in the barracks of the factory *Kommunistichesky Avangard*, 3000 window-panes were recently broken. The hooligans are recruited mostly from young workers. In Sobkino hooliganism is taking the form of criminal offences. Cases of attempts to assault women have become very frequent. Adult workers and their wives and daughters are afraid to come out at night. Meetings are, therefore, closed before the business is finished. Groups of hooligans armed with knives rob belated passers-by. Hooligans are gaining influence over young workers. In the factory *Kommunistichesky Avangard* hooligans organised a large band of young workers. When this band comes to the local park, the public, and especially the girls, are obliged to clear out, as the hooligans utter wild oaths and insult the girls. The local organisations are not combating hooliganism. At the glass-works *Vorovsky* a notorious hooligan, Smirnoff, made an attempt to assault a girl, Tulaikoff. She escaped with the help of her girl friends and occasional passers-by. At the glass-works *Sverdloff* hooligans are impeding the work of club circles, and once broke up a women's delegate meeting.'²⁰

Another and more recent quotation from the same paper shows what dangerous forms hooliganism is taking. Incidentally it also gives some interesting particulars about the morals of the Russian Communists. 'Hooliganism at the *Drezna* textile factory (near Moscow) is rife. A special

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inspector sent to the factory by the Central Committee of the Textile Workers' Union discovered the following cases of hooliganism, which had occurred within the previous two or three days : (1) A drunken workman came at night to the factory and looked for a foreman whom he wanted "to do in"; the hooligan was armed with a knife ; (2) A workman whom the management wanted to dismiss came to the office armed with a chisel and threatened to murder the managing director ; (3) The drunken treasurer of the factory committee beat a night-watchman and lost the key of the safe where the trade-union money was kept ; (4) The secretary of the factory committee, being dead drunk, fired several shots in the street from his revolver ; (5) The chairman of the local workers' dramatic society, together with two members of the society, stole some hens from the workers' gardens and went to the club, where they got drunk and roasted the hens on a petrol lamp.

It is a most usual occurrence for some workers to come to work drunk. Drunkards and hooligans become so daring that women workers are afraid to come to the factory at night. There were several cases where they were assaulted and robbed of their clothes by the hooligans.

'During last year four attempts were made on the lives of members of the technical personnel by the hooligans. The factory committee was actually at their head. The committee was always very lenient to them, and often took their side if the management wanted to punish them. The District Branch of the Textile Workers' Union was deaf and blind in regard to all the outrages which took place at the factory. Reports presented by the local branch to the higher trade-union organisations were of the usual "all well" character. Only when cases of assault on women

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workers and attempts on the lives of managers took place, and the judicial authorities had conducted official investigations, did the Union send their inspector.³⁰

The Soviets are greatly alarmed at the growth of hooliganism and alcoholism among Russian workers. They are now busy devising methods for preventing the spread of these social evils. They intend to prohibit the sale of vodka in the industrial centres, and are conducting vigorous agitation and propaganda against alcoholism. But it is evident that all the measures the Bolsheviks are taking will not prevent the spread of alcoholism, as the labour and social conditions of workers are not improving.

A Russian worker works in an insanitary and dirty factory. He lives in crowded, untidy barracks. His life is generally so dull and miserable that he will always try to escape from it. But educational facilities are denied to the majority of the workers. Cultural entertainments, lectures, and meetings are either of a very inferior quality or nothing else but Communist propaganda, of which the workers are utterly sick. Any attempt to look for enlightenment outside the limits prescribed by the Communist doctrine is forbidden, and may ultimately result in close acquaintance with the dreaded G.P.U.

What other escape from the dreary surroundings is open to a Russian working man but alcohol? Only by drinking himself out of his senses can he forget his slavery, his miserable existence. . . .

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CHAPTER X

WORKERS AND THE CONTROL OF INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS.

Nationalisation of Industry: Effects of – Workers' Control – Collective Agreements – Morals of the Soviet Industrial Managers.

SINCE the War an animated discussion has been going on, not only in Socialist and Labour circles, but also amongst the capitalist captains of industry, on subjects concerning 'industrial democracy.'

The conviction is growing that something must be done to restrict the arbitrary and monopolist tendencies of private capitalists, who, in their endeavour to secure larger profits, very often trespass on the most vital interests of the State as a whole. It was thought at first that the evil could be remedied by political action, and that necessary legislation passed by democratic parliaments would suffice to counteract the selfish tendencies of private capitalists. But, as the Anti-Trust legislation in the U.S.A. has proved, political action has its limits, and other and more effective methods for promoting necessary economic reforms are needed. The sum of these reforms is usually defined by the term 'industrial democracy.'

The term has not yet a clearly established meaning, and its advocates very seldom agree amongst themselves on the

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essential points of the reform, the introduction of which they urge.

It seems, however, that the most important features of 'industrial democracy' can be summarised as follows: (1) General control of the basic industries by the democratic State; (2) State regulation of the most essential national economic processes; (3) Extension of the public ownership in respect of the most important public services; (4) Participation of the workers in the management of industry.

The Bolsheviks claim that they have solved all these problems, and that Russia is now the only country in the world where the principles of 'industrial democracy' are firmly established, and where national economic life is run in strict conformity with the ideals of the industrial proletariat.

We shall see if this claim is justified by the hard facts of reality.

It is undoubtedly true that almost all the essential elements of Russian national economy – industry, trade, finances, transport – are now owned and controlled by the State. But was the wholesale 'nationalisation' carried out with great energy and determination by the Soviet Government beneficial to Russian national economy and the interests of the Russian workers and peasants? 'That is the question.'

Nationalisation of industrial and other undertakings can be considered economically justified if it brings relief to the masses of the people and ensures the speedy and healthy economic social progress of the country. By acquiring profits which, under the capitalist system, go into the pockets of individuals, the State must be able to produce

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goods more cheaply; to eliminate the waste of capital and labour unavoidable under private ownership, which is regulated, not by scientifically and carefully laid plans, but by the blind forces of competition; and to make labour and social conditions better for the working classes.

It must be said at once that the Soviets have failed to achieve any of these results. The Soviet nationalisation of industry eliminated, and even physically exterminated, the private owners of the means of production and distribution. But in their stead numerous State officials and intermediaries were created, who consume not only profits which formerly went to private capitalists, but who, owing to their incompetency, ignorance, corruption, 'red tapeism,' etc., contribute to the rise in the cost of production, and, consequently, to increases in the prices for commodities.

The fact that the cost of living in Russia at present is extremely high cannot be denied. According to official Soviet statistics the index number of prices of manufactured goods on 1st August 1928 was two and a half times higher than in 1913.¹ On 1st March 1929 the index number has risen further by fifteen points. The cost of production in Soviet Russia is at present twice as high as in the leading capitalist countries. A typical example is quoted by *Trud*, where it is asserted that cost of production of one pood (36 lbs.) of cotton yarn in Russia is ·613 gold roubles, while in England it equals only ·293 gold roubles.²

As we have already seen, the Soviets have been unable to provide better labour and social conditions for the Russian industrial workers. As a matter of fact, the

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Russian worker is now in many ways worse off, not only in comparison with his European colleagues, but also in comparison with the pre-War standard.

It remains only to be seen if the Bolsheviks have succeeded in regulating Russian economic life according to their plans, and in eliminating the waste of capital and labour. In this respect they have also failed ignominiously. Russian economic life is at present in a state of permanent economic crisis. Even the most elementary needs of the population – bread supplies – cannot be satisfied by the Soviet Government. Lack of all sorts of manufactured goods always was, and still is, the chief feature of the Russian economic situation.

The same can be said about the elimination of the waste of capital and labour. The following figures, taken from Soviet official sources, show that the Bolsheviks are so wantonly and ruthlessly throwing away public funds that their conduct of public affairs is really a scandal, and if the Bolshevik regime had not been supported by terrorism, the Soviet Government would have fallen long ago under the pressure of public anger and indignation.

During the last five years the Soviets have invested in industry and railway transport the huge sum of 6,336,000,000 roubles (nominally about £600,000,000). How has this money been spent? The official Soviet paper, *Trud*, discussing this subject, says: "The chief defect of our capital investment is the high cost of construction. According to approximate estimates overhead construction expenses are at present *twenty* times higher than before the War. Salaries of administrative staffs, overhead charges, etc. eat up large sums. Much money is spent in the most uneconomical manner because we erect new

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factories without any carefully prepared plans. Very often the county Soviets begin the erection of a factory, though this factory is absolutely unnecessary. There were cases when large sums were assigned for the construction of factories, although estimates and plans were not confirmed by the corresponding Government institutions.³

The above article was published in February 1928. It was promised at that time that the Government, being alive to this high cost of construction, would order the cost to be decreased by 15 per cent. But when, on 6th October 1928, the State Planning Commission (Gosplan), discussed how the building programme had been carried out, the official reporter, Mr. L. N. Bernatzky, was obliged to state: "The cost of the erection of new buildings remains extremely high. There has been no change in 1927-8 in this respect in comparison with previous years. The Government instructions to lower the cost by 15 per cent. have not been carried out."⁴

The Soviet Press abounds in reports about how wastefully and ruthlessly public funds are spent by Bolshevik officials in charge of national industry and trade. We will give only a few facts bearing on the matter, stated by no less an authority than Mr. Kuibysheff, chairman of the Supreme Economic Council. "The construction of coke furnaces in Gorlovka and Rutchenko (Don Basin district), estimated at 6,500,000 roubles, cost 20,000,000. The erection of new metal works in Kertch (Black Sea), cost 32,500,000 roubles instead of the estimated 18,000,000 roubles."⁵

Russia's present economic state is such that we are justified in saying that Bolshevik nationalisation has only brought a calamity upon the Russian people. It remains

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the greatest obstacle to the economic and social progress of the Russian nation.

The most ardent friends of the Soviet regime are sometimes ready to admit that Soviet nationalisation of industry puts a very heavy burden on the shoulders of the Russian working classes. But they try to justify the fact by the assertion that the Russian workers are quite willing to make great sacrifices because they realise that they are contributing to the wealth of the whole nation and not to that of private capitalists.

It sounds very well in theory, and it might have been true if the Soviets had not wasted the funds collected from the people by hook or by crook. But ignorant as the Russian workers may be, they are surely not altogether deaf and blind idiots. The facts which occur every day in their very presence convince them that the Bolsheviki are most inefficient managers of Russian industry. What is the use of sacrifice if it bears no fruits? For a long time the Bolsheviki lived on credit and promises. But the moment arrives when promises must be fulfilled and the debt must be paid. There are many signs that the workers have lost faith in the Bolshevist regime. The famous saying of Abraham Lincoln: 'You can't fool all the people all the time,' comes true in present-day Russia. . . .

Another claim is very often made by the Bolsheviki and their friends and adherents, that the control of Russian national industry rests with the workers.

Let us see what the Bolsheviki themselves say on the subject in those of their publications not likely to reach foreigners.

'Do the workers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics participate in the management of industry?'

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asks Mr. A. Goltzman, in an article published in *Trud*.⁶ He answers: 'This question must be answered thus: very insignificantly; if you like, they do not participate at all.'

During the first years of the Revolution, when the Bolsheviks seized power, many rank and file workers were pushed into responsible posts in the Soviet general and industrial administration. At that time promotion from the rank and file had a mass character, and the activities of those promoted to high positions were accepted as identical with the activities of the masses themselves. There was no differentiation between governors and the governed. Leaders and those led were one. But as time went on the apparatus of power became consolidated. Persons who formerly were rank and file workers specialised in the art of government and management. They learned to issue orders and not to accept them. They ceased to be members of the working class and moved to higher social positions.

Promotion of workers to the responsible posts cannot now have such general and widespread character as in the first years of the Revolution. Then the problem was to find energetic and trustworthy men, and to place them in positions of responsibility. At present very high business and technical qualifications are required from any aspirant for a managerial post. Besides, the posts are already occupied by those who came first.

In 1918-20 the management of industrial undertakings was greatly decentralised. Each factory was left to find for itself the necessary fuel and raw material. It 'bartered' for grain its production to the peasants directly. Much depended then on the energy and resourcefulness of the manager. At present, industry is centralised. The

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management of a separate factory rests in the hands of a corresponding trust or syndicate which finances the factory and disposes of its production. Naturally, the trust, and not the workers, now appoints factory managers.

Thus between workers and managers of Soviet factories has grown an abyss. Being responsible to the Board of Directors of the Trust, managers do not consult the workers as to how the factory is to be run; the workers no longer control the industry.

Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks have not, in theory, abandoned the principle of 'workers' control.' They are still trying to create the impression that the workers are entitled to participate in the management of industry. Therefore they have organised so-called 'industrial conferences' attached to every industrial undertaking. The members of these conferences, however, are not *elected* by the workers, but *appointed* by the factory committees. The conferences are supposed to discuss all questions relating to the management of their factories, and to suggest measures for improving existing conditions. But managements are not bound to accept the decisions of these industrial conferences. The conferences are consultative, not executive bodies. This makes all the difference. And the usual practice is that the managements pay not the smallest attention to what the industrial conferences suggest or recommend; they run the factories as they think fit and proper.

The Soviet trade union Press is full of complaints that industrial conferences are mere shams, and that their decisions and suggestions are ignored by managements. Out of the mass of material at our disposal we shall give only two instances:

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'A special commission appointed by the Leningrad District Trade Union Council to investigate into how the industrial conferences are working, established the fact that the workers' proposals are rarely carried out by the managements. At the *Krasny Khimik* Chemical Works, out of ninety-nine proposals suggested by the industrial conference in 1927 only six were carried out. At the Baltic Metal Works, out of thirty-five suggestions only five were carried out.' The paper adds that similar conditions prevail in all other Leningrad factories and works.⁷

The trial of the Don Basin engineers, which was staged in Moscow in the summer of 1928, and which ended in six death sentences, attracted much public attention outside Russia. This trial, or, more correctly speaking, the impression created in Russia by the arrest of many well-known technicians and specialists, caused the Soviets to raise a curtain which hid from the public eyes what was going on in the Don Basin coal industry. Many articles appeared in the Soviet Press on the subject. The general impression which could be gathered from these reports was that the workers had been absolutely unable to control the industry or to do anything to improve the situation.

We reproduce one of the reports – the paper read by Mr. Grankin at the conference of the Ukrainian Miners' Union, held in Kharkoff on 17th April 1928:

'During the last five years over 240,000,000 roubles (£24,000,000) were spent on capital development in the Don Basin coal mines. But the work has been done in a most outrageously uneconomic way. The programme of capital development has not been carried out. Over 2,000,000 roubles were spent on sinking sixty-two small shafts which soon became flooded. It often happens that

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after many months of work, when large sums are already spent, it is found that the shafts are sunk in places from which all the coal has been already extracted. The equipment imported from abroad is utilised most irregularly.'

The delegates of the local trade union branches supplied additional information about how badly the industry has been managed. One shaft was sunk six times, and six times it was flooded. Another shaft was sunk and then flooded three times. 1,500,000 roubles were spent on the sinking of the third shaft, but it still remains idle because an engine, which would cost only a few thousand roubles, has not yet been installed. The management of the Donougol Trust paid no attention to the complaints and suggestions of the trade unions and the workers. When the workers protested against the waste of public money they were told to mind their own business, as 'being ignorant in technical matters they could not give any advice.'⁸

Much was said on the subject of 'workers' control' at the Eighth Trade Union Congress. Mr. Tomsy complained that industrial conferences meet on an average only three times a year; that the proposals made at these conferences by the workers are not heeded by the managers of the Soviet industrial undertakings; and that the managers are inclined to consider the conferences a nuisance, and absolutely useless for the smooth working of factories, etc. The delegates supplied facts which gave colour to these statements.

Kostin, a delegate from Oka mining district, said that all the resolutions passed by the industrial conferences are applied by managements only after strong pressure is exercised upon them.

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Savinov, the railwayman from the Crimea, stated that the industrial conferences many times pointed out shortcomings and defects to the railway administration, but without avail. The administration seems to know one only remedy – it changes the managers. During the last four years the post of the General Manager of the Crimean Railways has been occupied by eight or nine persons consecutively.

All these facts, and thousands of others reported daily in the pages of the Soviet Press, prove in the most conclusive manner that workers' control over industry does not exist in Soviet Russia. Factory managers are absolute masters. They can do anything they like, and the workers cannot even protest against the ignorance and corruption of Soviet officials, or attempt to improve the conditions of their labour.

Can the workers exercise some influence, through their trade unions, on the general direction of the industrial policy of the Soviet Government? Can the general plans of industrial development prepared by the corresponding departments of the Supreme Economic Council and the State Planning Commission be discussed by the Soviet Trade Unions?

Although the trade unions in Soviet Russia are managed by the Communist Party and, therefore, can be absolutely trusted, nevertheless the whole system of the Soviet Government is such that the trade unions are denied the right to take part in planning Soviet industrial policy. The trade union Press is most emphatic on this point. *Trud* says that 'the existing procedure of passing industrial plans through Government institutions excludes trade unions from taking part in working out these plans.'⁹

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In another article published in *Trud* the situation is thus described: 'Government instructions that trade unions should be consulted when industrial projects are prepared remain on paper. All work is being carried out by managements of industrial trusts behind closed doors, without the slightest participation of the workers. The trade unions are deprived of any possibility of taking part in the regulation of industry.'¹⁰

In previous chapters we have pointed out that the managements of the Soviet industrial undertakings were guilty of infringing the Soviet Labour Legislation. They force the workers to work extra hours; they cheat them of their wages; they do not take the necessary measures for protecting them against industrial accidents, etc., etc. Even the agreements which managements conclude annually with the respective trade unions are usually not fulfilled.

A special trade union inquiry, carried out in the summer of 1928, produced an enormous mass of evidence that collective agreements with the workers are considered mere formalities by the industrial managements, and are never complied with.

'Cases of infringement of collective agreements in the Don Basin and Krivorozhie mines are extremely numerous. Even the most elementary stipulations of the Labour Code are violated at every step.'¹¹

The paper asserts that the like conditions prevail in Moscow, Kharkoff, Tula, Briansk, Leningrad and Siberia.¹² 'In all the industrial undertakings of the Ural region cases of infringement of collective agreements are very frequent. Many stipulations provided in the agreements are not complied with at all.'¹³

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Cases are numerous where managements keep 'black lists' of those workers considered as 'undesirables.' The manager of the Odessa Tramways, Egoroff, used to mark the personal papers of dismissed workers: 'Never to be employed again.'¹⁴ The management of the Volga Steamship Trust sent out this summer a confidential letter to all its agencies ordering the registration of the names of all workers dismissed from the services of the Trust in order to prevent their re-employment.¹⁵ These are not isolated cases. 'Black lists' of undesirables can be found in the files of many a Soviet factory.

Complaints that workers with critical turns of mind are usually subjected to severe persecutions and prosecutions are so many that their mere enumeration would fill page after page. Out of many articles and letters published by Soviet journals on the subject, we will give only one as a typical example of the conditions existing in the great majority of Soviet industrial undertakings. The article is signed by a special correspondent of *Trud*, Mr. I. Potemkin.

"The workers of the *Solidarnost* textile factory in the Vladimir Government are terrorised. The very idea of democracy is exterminated in the minds of workers by means of reprisals and persecutions. Even the slightest protest against the "bosses," an attempt to disclose the crimes of the insolent scoundrels who are in charge of the factory, results in the dismissal of the protesters or in moving them to poorly-paid jobs. Factory funds are being spent by managers in arranging drinking bouts. The sums thus spent are shown in the factory books as paid for raw materials or other things purchased for factory needs. The managing director, Vassilieff, and his assistant, Malysheff,

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effected frauds up to 562 roubles, and also received from the cashier considerable sums as "advances against their salaries." Vassilieff bought a bicycle for his personal use out of factory funds. The cashier, Bogatoff, embezzled 600 roubles. Another official, Semenoff, received 615 roubles for spying on the workers. Not only was money embezzled, but they took away goods produced at the factory. Malysheff took 43 metres of materials without paying for them; a foreman, Kolesnikoff, 186 metres, and another foreman, Netchaieff, 96 metres. The chairman of the factory committee, Bezpaloff, the secretary of the factory Communist cell, Koroleff, the chief of the local police, Trifonoff, member of the factory committee, Vorobieff, owe the sum of 650 roubles to the factory. If a worker tries to protest against these irregularities, Bezpaloff and Koroleff immediately declare him to be a rioter and trouble-monger, and cause him to be dismissed. Under these conditions workers do not attend meetings, and take no part in the deliberations of industrial conferences.¹⁸

'All these persons,' concludes the article, 'still retain their posts and persecute the workers as before.'

We could give similar reports by the hundred. All of them tell the same grim tale. Soviet industrial managers are absolute arbitrary bosses in the factories, and do what they like with the workers. The workers cannot even protest against the outrages to which they are subjected. Their position cannot be defined by any other word than 'slavery,' as only slaves are treated by their masters in such a manner. . . .

It must be noted that almost all the managers of the Soviet industrial undertakings belong to the Communist

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Party. According to the census taken by the Supreme Economic Council on 1st January 1928, the percentage of Communists among directors of the industrial trusts was 71·4, and among factory managers, 89·3.¹⁷

The Russian Communist Party must, therefore, be considered as directly responsible for all the irregularities, frauds, infringements of labour legislation, ruthless waste of public funds, persecutions of the workers, and the general conditions of slavery prevailing in the Soviet industrial undertakings.

The Soviet Labour Code does not prohibit strikes. Comparatively speaking, however, they happen very seldom in Soviet Russia. Some naïve persons accept this fact as proof that labour and social conditions in Soviet Russia are so good that the workers are absolutely contented with them. This erroneous notion is, of course, prompted by Bolshevik propagandists.

The Communist theory is that the workers, being the owners and masters of the national industry, cannot strike against themselves. But we have seen how hypocritical this theory is. The Russian workers are not masters of their industries. They do not control them. They do not exercise any influence over conditions existing in the Soviet factories. Strikes do not happen in Russia because the workers are disorganised and terrorised, and because every possibility of protest is taken from them.

But there is no doubt that indignation and discontent are growing amongst Russian industrial workers, and maybe the time is not far off when the Bolsheviks will learn by experience the wisdom of the old saying: 'He who sows the wind will reap the tempest!'

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CHAPTER XI

WORKERS AND SOVIET TRADE UNIONS

Trade Union Statistics – Communist Predominance in Trade Union Administration – How are the Soviet Trade Unions run? – Embezzlements of Trade Union Funds.

TRADE UNIONS in the European sense of the term are working-class organisations, the aims of which are to promote and safeguard the economic welfare and cultural progress of their members. These bodies are voluntary, self-governed, and independent of employers and the State.

The Soviet trade unions, however, can hardly come under the above definition. As a matter of fact, they are institutions of a peculiar kind, and may be called 'trade unions' only for lack of some other term which could describe their real character more accurately.

The Soviet trade unions are not working-class organisations in the strict sense of the word, as they take in many non-proletarian elements. According to official data, the membership of the Soviet trade unions on 1st April 1928 was 10,584,400,¹ while the total of the town population according to the 1926 census was 26,309,900.² Statistical science asserts that the adult, able-bodied, self-dependent part of the population represents about 40 per cent. of the total. Thus the Soviet statisticians want us to believe that every man and woman who lives in Russian towns and

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cities is a pure proletarian, and, as such, is a trade unionist!

Of course, this is too good to be true, especially when we learn from the same Soviet statistics that the number of industrial workers on 1st April 1928 was only 2,143,000.³ If we be liberal and add another 2,000,000 workers engaged in transport, trade, and other auxiliary branches of labour, we shall come to the conclusion that the official membership of the Soviet trade unions is at least twice as large as the entire number of workers who form trade unions in other countries.

Why, then, is the number of 'trade unionists' in Soviet Russia so enormously large? The answer is very simple. Political and social conditions in that country are such that everybody is striving to 'join' a trade union in order to secure for himself and the members of his family the most elementary rights of citizenship.

It must be remembered that only the 'workers' are considered full citizens of the Soviet Union. An individual, as such, has no legal status and no rights whatever. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a 'class state,' and all social elements other than 'workers' are considered either a necessary evil (peasants) or sworn enemies of the State (small traders and capitalists), and are to be treated accordingly.

No wonder that everybody in Russia now does his or her best to get a trade union card and to pass as a member of the privileged class. A trade unionist is entitled to vote in all Soviet elections; he is sent to work in preference to a non-trade unionist; his children are given free education; he enjoys many other privileges denied to 'non-proletarian elements.' Thus trade union membership in Soviet Russia has become a kind of social camouflage. Many persons

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who have nothing to do with the labour movement, and who in no case can be included in the category of 'workers,' are obliged to wear the false colours of trade unionism to ensure a more or less peaceful existence and escape molestation from the Soviet authorities.

Trade union cards are stolen, forged, and traded in in Soviet Russia because these cards guarantee the most precious right for their holders – the right to labour. An individual does not possess this right in present-day Russia. It belongs to the Soviet trade unions, who do not allow any non-union labour in the Soviet factories and offices. We shall see later how they abuse this enormous power, and what sufferings the Russian workers are obliged to endure on account of the arbitrariness of trade union officials. It must be remembered that the principle of the voluntary trade union membership does not exist in Russia, though the compulsory membership practised in the years of military Communism was formally abolished in 1922.

Why, then, are the Bolsheviks creating such conditions that everybody is forced to join trade unions? It seems inconsistent with the idea of proletarian dictatorship that the ranks of the 'ruling class' should be artificially swollen with alien elements. The idea of dictatorship is the idea of exclusiveness; only the true and faithful can be allowed to enjoy the privileges of the dictator class.

There is only one explanation of this fact. The workers are not the ruling class in Soviet Russia at all. It is true they enjoy some trivial privileges denied to other classes of the Russian population. But the real political and every other power belongs to the Communist Party, or, rather, to the small clique of Party bosses. It would be impossible for any dictator to exercise control over masses of scattered,

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unorganised people. Trade unions provide just what the Communist bosses want. Through them their influence and control can be exercised, not only over the workers, but over the town populations in general, and, indirectly, even over the peasantry.

This statement must not be taken as our own conclusion. No less an authority than the Fourteenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, in 1926, expressed the same views in the plainest possible language. 'Trade unions are created and built up by our Party. . . . The Party possess in the trade unions a very powerful apparatus through which Communist influence can be exercised over, and the Communist policy enforced upon, the mass of non-partisan workers, and through the latter over and upon the many millions of peasants. . . . Trade unions may carry on their work only under the leadership of the Russian Communist Party. The Party as a whole, and the separate Party organisations, must strive to safeguard correct and systematic guidance over the trade unions.'⁴

And the Bolsheviks, with their usual energy and determination, do not fail to put their theories in practice. The whole machinery of the Soviet trade unions is absolutely and completely in the hands of the Communist Party. The following table, showing the percentage of Communists in various trade union organisations on 1st January 1927 and 1st May 1928, gives an idea how Communist 'guidance' is ensured.

	1st January 1927.	1st May 1928.
Bureaux of local branches . . .	52·0	56·4
Their chairmen and secretaries . . .	71·0	81·6
Bureaux of district branches . . .	64·8	65·0

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	1st January 1927.	1st May 1928.
Their chairmen and secretaries	89.1	91.6
Central Executive Committees of the trade unions	86.6	78.0
Their presidiums	96.4	93.8
Their chairmen and secretaries	100.0	100.0
The All-Russian Central Council of the trade unions	99.3	95.2
Its presidium	100.0	100.0

Thus the members of the Communist Party represent in the bureaux of the local branches a little more than one-half of their membership, while in the upper ranks of the system the percentage never falls below 78, and in the uppermost bodies it reaches the total of 100!

As already mentioned, the members of the Communist Party represent only a small portion of the Russian proletariat. They are also in a minority in the trade unions. On 1st April 1927 there were 9,827,800 registered trade unionists, and the whole membership of the Communist Party, including candidates, was about 1,200,000 on that date. As all the Party members are at the same time members of trade unions, the maximum Communist portion of the trade union membership could not exceed 12 per cent.

Though in a minority, the Communists have managed to seize all the leading positions in the Russian Trade Union Movement. How did they succeed in this wonderful *coup*? It is one of the secrets of the system of dictatorship, and the Bolsheviks do not like to disclose their secrets. They prefer to say that non-partisan workers so trust the Communist Party that they always elect its members to

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the responsible positions. Do the facts confirm this assertion?

It must be borne in mind that the principles on which the whole machinery of Soviet trade unionism is built are those of strict and severe centralisation. The primary trade union organisations are subjected to the most thorough and fastidious tutelage by the upper ranks of the system. If a factory committee or a local trade union branch fails to comply with the instructions of the body set above them in the trade union hierarchy, all sorts of reprisals are sure to follow. Factory committees and local branches are dissolved, their members are persecuted, dismissed, and even arrested. Thus the system of centralisation provides a sure and effective safeguard for the Communist managers against any and every untoward incident.

Mr. Tomsky, whose real name is, by the way, Michael Efremoff, president of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, made the situation absolutely clear in his speech at the Seventh Soviet Trade Union Congress. 'We maintain that our trade unions are not sufficiently enlightened to be freed from rigid management. We shall not play the game of "Hide and Seek": our trade union movement is centralised. We shall not hide from anyone the fact that the trade union movement has been guided, is guided, and will be guided by the Russian Communist Party. Is it right? Yes, it is. How is this guidance being carried out? It is being carried out by means of centralisation.'⁵

Thus the Soviet trade unions are absolutely and entirely dependent on the Communist Party. There can be no doubt about it. But the Communist Party, being the

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Party which governs Russia, is identical not only with the Soviet Government and the Soviet State institutions, but also with the organisations which manage Russian national industry, trade, and finance. Consequently, dependence on the Communist Party means for Russian workers dependence on the State and on the employers of their labour.

All this creates peculiar conditions in the Soviet trade union movement. The unions are not organisations the aims of which are the promotion and safeguarding of the vital interests of their members, but bodies to watch, first and foremost, the interests of the Communist State as these interests are interpreted by the leaders of the Communist Party. It is very essential that this peculiar position which the trade unions occupy in the system of Communist dictatorship should be fully appreciated, because otherwise it will be difficult to understand the processes now going on in the modern Russian Labour Movement.

We showed in previous chapters how terrible are the labour and social conditions in Soviet Russia to-day, and how little the Soviet trade unions do to mend and improve these conditions. The explanation of this fact must be sought in the part which the Soviet trade unions are called upon to play in the system of Bolshevist dictatorship. Mr. Tomsky, in his blunt, plain way, crossed all the 't's' and dotted all the 'i's' in his speech at the Seventh Soviet Trades Union Congress, already quoted. He said: 'In foreign countries Communists must always support any demands made by workers for the betterment of their economic conditions. Communists in foreign countries must always be the instigators in matters of raising wages, quite irrespective of the conditions which prevail in a given industrial undertaking or in a given branch of industry.

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But under Communist dictatorship Communists must not maintain these views. . . . That is why when last May the demand was made that the standard of real wages attained must not be allowed to go down, none of the members of the All-Russian Council of Trade Unions supported the suggestion, or might even have supported it.⁶

The part the trade unions are playing in the 'land of proletarian dictatorship' is peculiar indeed. We found in one highly authoritative document the following statements: 'Recent facts establish without any shadow of doubt that in many cases trade unions are inattentive to and even sometimes neglectful of safeguarding the just and lawful demands and the realisation of the most elementary needs of the workers. The All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions are aware of cases where trade unions directly supported the actions of industrial managements which tended to worsen labour and social conditions.'⁷ The document from which the above quotation has been taken was also signed by Mr. Tomsy.

Is any other evidence needed that the Soviet trade unions differ in their character from those working class organisations which in other countries are usually called 'trade unions?' The very Pope of the Soviet trade union movement tells us in the plainest language that trade unions in Soviet Russia are nothing but part of the machinery created and maintained by the Communist Party in order to keep down the workers, and to make them tame and docile, and ready to undergo any experiment which their masters please to perform on them.

So much for the theory of the Soviet trade union movement. Let us see how this system of oppression functions in practice.

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We have already mentioned that no one in Russia who is not a trade unionist is able to get a job. The Soviet trade unions thus possess literally the right of life and death over every Russian working man and woman. They may or may not allow a workman to join the union, and they can expel him from the union at any moment. And the Communist Party, the real masters of the trade unions, take full advantage of this power to make life a hell for their political adversaries.

We read the following official notice in the trade union paper *Trud*: 'The All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions sent out a circular letter explaining that persons exiled by the judicial or *administrative authorities* (that is, by the State Political Police, the dreaded G.P.U.) from the places where they usually lived, and whose movements are restricted, cannot be members of trade unions, as they are deprived of the rights of Soviet citizenship. These persons are not to be allowed to join the unions, and those who have already joined must be expelled.'⁸

What expulsion means is told by another Soviet trade union leader, Mr. Melnichansky. 'Expulsion from a trade union usually deprives the worker of the rights of citizenship: therefore this method of supporting discipline must be used only very, very carefully. There are, however, cases where unions expel members under such unsatisfactory pretexts as "unreliability." . . . We know of cases where workers were expelled only because they criticised trade union policy, or because they demanded increases of wages, etc. If anyone criticises a member of a factory committee, or the activities of a District Trade Union Council, in a month or in a fortnight he gets expelled from his union for discrediting the trade union

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movement. Expulsions for these "offences" are very frequent.⁹

But expulsion means not only 'deprivation of rights of citizenship' for the one expelled; it very often also means for him bodily suffering and privation, because the expelled man loses his job as well.

Very little imagination is needed to realise what enormous power over the workers the right of expulsion gives to Soviet trade union officials, and what dreadful instruments of oppression Soviet trade unions often are. An infinite variety of reasons can be applied for the expulsion of workers from the trade union ranks, and, consequently, for condemning them to all the horrors of unemployment. We found in the Soviet Press the following information on the subject. Workers are expelled 'for leaving work by their own desire,' 'for criticising trade union officials,' 'for uncomradely behaviour,' 'for keeping religious holidays,' 'for making nuisances near the factory premises,' 'for not visiting the union offices,' 'for drunkenness,' 'for fighting,' for hooliganism,' 'because the wife is a street trader,' 'for being the conductor of the church choir,' etc. In other words, a worker can be expelled from his trade union for any reason which trade union officials may please to think an 'offence.'

No wonder the Russian workers do not consider trade unions as their own organisations, to which they can apply for help. Long experience has taught them that they can hardly expect any good from these organisations. We have at our disposal an enormous number of facts which prove that Soviet trade unions are a mere sham; that they do not represent the workers; that they do not defend the most vital interests of their members; that they are only

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instruments in the hands of the Communist Party for the oppression of the workers. Of these facts we can quote only a few.

In May 1928, under the striking title 'There are no Trade Unions in Smolensk,' *Trud* published an official report of a Government Commission which investigated the conditions existing in the Smolensk Government. 'There is a huge apparatus of factory committees, departments, branches, bureaux. There are numerous "trade union officials" who are working like automatons, without showing any interest in the needs of the masses whom they are supposed to serve, without knowing the needs and wishes of these masses. Working men and women are dismissed and insulted for refusing to stand a drink to a foreman or to accept his courtship. Jobs are given to those who succeed in bribing a foreman or in pleasing him. . . . Trade unions take active part in all these outrages, or allow them to go by unheeded owing to their inertia, sluggishness, and bureaucracy.'¹⁰ The report proceeds to enumerate actual facts, giving names and places. We give the final conclusion of the report: 'The same conditions prevail in Smolensk, Roslavl, Viazma, Eletz, etc. - in fact, in the whole of the Smolensk Government. There is not a single industrial undertaking, not a single trade union organisation, in which the most outrageous facts have not been discovered.'

Here is another quotation: 'The Tamboff District Committee of the Miners' Union existed for only ten months, and during this time such havoc was wrought in the affairs of the Union that the Central Executive Committee found themselves obliged to order the dissolution of the District Committee and to convoke a district

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conference for the election of a new committee. . . . There has been no trade union work done. All the suggestions of the workers when collective agreements were discussed have been ignored. Factory committees were left without guidance. No cultural work has been carried on. No connexions with masses existed, and where the officials of the District Committee happened to get in touch with the workers, it was evident that the Committee did not care about the interests of the workers.¹¹

In the *Enakievo* mines (Ukraine), where over twelve thousand men are employed, 'the Pit Committees did not support the workers, and allowed the management to insult them.'¹² The state of trade union work in Siberia is such 'that workers say: "It is impossible to know whom our factory committee serves - us or the management."¹³ In Stalino (Don Basin) 'the local department of the Workers' and Peasants' Control Commission is flooded with complaints of workers about irregular dismissals, cheatings, etc. There are also many complaints against factory committees.'¹⁴ In the Artemovsk district 'trade union organisations do not support the interests of the workers.'¹⁵ In the Shakhty district 'the work of local trade union organisations is absolutely unsatisfactory. The chairman of one of the pit committees said: "Sometimes we, ourselves, do not know who we are - managers or trade unionists."¹⁶

We could increase the number of such quotations indefinitely. They all tell the same story. Trade unions take no care of the interests of their members. Not only do they allow every kind of injustice to be done to the workers, but very often are themselves guilty of such offences. It is often impossible to distinguish Soviet trade union officials

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from industrial managers, or officials of the Soviet administration. During only the month of June 1928 *Trud* published letters about all sorts of irregularities existing in trade unions from the following places: Moscow, Odessa, Kuznetzk, Nikolaieff, Kursk, Gus, Vladimir, Smolensk, Artemovsk and Tamboff.¹⁷

Bolshevist leaders try to impress on European Socialist circles that Soviet trade unions are being run in strict conformity with the rules of democracy, that the workers are absolutely free to elect the managing bodies, and that they are allowed to criticise the activities of trade union officials.

This, of course, is sheer nonsense, if nothing worse. A typical example of how 'trade union democracy' is interpreted in Soviet Russia is given in *Trud*, in a letter from Odessa:

"The elections of the primary trade union management bodies held recently in Odessa abound in the most outrageous infringements of the rules of democracy. . . . At a clothing factory, Comrade Semenov, member of the District Trade Union Council, was elected chairman of the election meeting. Candidates who received a majority of votes have not been included in the list of the new works committee. On the other hand, candidates who obtained a minority of votes were declared to be members of the committee. Out of seven new committee members only two received over 50 per cent. of the votes. Semenov erased the results of the voting from the election protocol, and ordered the document to be filed without publishing it. Much space would be needed to enumerate only the most outrageous infringements of regulations, the "cooking" of results, the violations of democracy which took place during the last

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election campaign in Odessa. The results of these infringements of democracy are apparent. Factory committees do not enjoy any authority among workers. The workers are discontented. They do not trust the committees and trade union officials.¹⁸

According to the Soviet official journal the conditions which prevail in Odessa are exactly the same in every corner of the Soviet Union. Workers are so disappointed with the work of their trade unions that they usually attend trade union meetings only because they are forced to do so. A typical scene at a factory trade union meeting was described by the Bolshevist journal *The Communist*:

'Saturday. Wages are being paid. Workers are in a hurry to go home. The secretary of the factory committee comes and invites the workers to attend the meeting. Nobody stirs. Then comes the chairman of the committee, who orders the payment of wages to be stopped, and begins to shout and to drive the workers to the meeting-hall. Unwillingly the workers go. They curse the factory committee and the factory management. Indignant and ill-tempered they sit in the hall till late in the night. None of them says a word. *The factory gates are, of course, locked up.*¹⁹ Of course? Yes, of course. That is the usual practice; otherwise nobody would stay at the meeting to listen to Communist harangues, of which everybody is tired.

In April 1928 the Central Committee of the Communist Party opened a campaign of so-called 'self-criticism.' Everybody was invited to come forward and tell openly what defects he found in the work of the Soviet factories and who of the officials was guilty of offences and crimes against the interests of the 'proletarian State.' The cam-

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paign, however, as the Soviet Press asserts, proved a complete fiasco. Workers were afraid to expose the outrages of the Soviet officials and make their grievances public. And undoubtedly they had good reasons for not trusting the Communist invitations to be frank. Without knowing Latin they appreciated the wisdom of the Virgil's saying: *Quidquid id est timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*.

Trud says that during the last few months various cases of irregularities were discovered by the Soviet authorities in ninety-one Ukrainian trade union organisations. Fifty-eight of these organisations were dissolved altogether, and thirty-three were ordered to be re-elected. Not a single case has been registered where these reprisals were carried out at the request of the rank and file workers, because 'they did not care what was going on in their trade unions.'²⁰

It has been stated in a letter from Sverdlovsk (Urals) that 'the Ural trade unions have taken practical steps for carrying out the instructions of the Party Central Committee in respect of the "self-criticism" campaign. At one undertaking eleven workers were dismissed for criticising the administration. At the *Sverdlovsk* Brewery, when the workers began to criticise the management, or make useful suggestions, they were curtly told to "shut up!"²¹ In the Viazma (Smolensk Government) Union of Communal workers, 'every speech made by a rank and file member was considered as a counter-revolutionary utterance.'²²

In Taganrog two workers were dismissed for criticising the factory administration. When the labour exchange sent them again to the same factory they were told by the manager: 'You talk too much. We don't want such men.'²³

How 'trade union democracy' is interpreted in Soviet

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Russia is illustrated by the following telegram, published in *Trud* as recently as 25th May 1929. We give a literal translation of this telegram: 'Some days ago a district conference of the Woodworkers' Union was held in Korosten (Ukraine). After the reports of the Province and District Committees had been heard, and the discussion on these reports had been started, it was found, quite incidentally, that many delegates did not have mandates direct from the rank and file members. A commission was set up to scrutinise the mandates. The scrutiny made it clear that more than one-half the delegates were appointed by district committees and bureaux of the factory committees, but were not elected by the rank and file members of the trade union. The Province Committee ordered the conference to be dissolved. The district committee and the factory committees, which allowed this outrageous infringement of the trade union democracy, were reprimanded.'

Thus the infringement of the rules regulating the manner of election of the delegates was detected only 'incidentally.' Is it not obvious that, in many cases, such happy 'incidents' do not happen, and the 'outrageous infringements of trade union democracy' remain unchecked?

In another article, published in *Trud* on 28th May 1929, it is stated that self-criticism is not used as it should be in Soviet trade unions. In Moscow, in 1928, four hundred office committees were re-elected in the Soviet administrative institutions, and there were only eight resolutions in which the work of these committees was described as 'unsatisfactory.' The number of office committees dissolved on the initiative of the rank and file members was very small, while that dissolved by the order of the higher

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bodies was over 1000. The author rightly remarks: 'Consequently, although there are many and grave shortcomings in the work of office committees, the masses cannot improve the conditions.'

He continues: 'All trade unions conduct campaigns of self-criticism, but these are only vain words. The reports which the bureau give to the rank and file, as a rule, begin by pointing out shortcomings and mistakes. But it is done only in order to speak later about what has been achieved, and if a rank and file member criticises the work of the bureau he is usually called "a demagogue."' The author concludes: 'Rank and file members do not exercise the right to control the elected officials, although on paper they possess these rights.'

Analysing the causes which lead to such a state of affairs, the author says that the trade union machinery is clumsy, and its officials are inclined to consider their work as well-paid jobs. The army of the trade union officials, who are paid for their work, is enormous. It amounts to at least 100,000 persons! This contingent of paid trade union officials is changed only very slowly. A long period of 'trade union work' is very often put above all personal inabilities in a trade union official. He is moved from one post to another, though very often incapable, corrupt or inclined to 'red-tapeism.' He reserves the right to demand that 'another post in the system of trade unions should be given to him,' and usually his demand is granted. 'Thus,' says the author of the article, 'a system of mutual aid, of mutual amnesty for crimes and mistakes, is being created among trade union officials.'

No avowed enemy of the Communist dictatorship could launch a more bitter and sweeping criticism against the

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system of Soviet trade unions than the author of the above article has made!

All these facts – and we could give thousands more – prove that the workers, ‘the rulers of Russia,’ are denied the most elementary rights of criticising managers of the Soviet industrial undertakings and trade union officials. They are, indeed, ‘rulers’ of a very peculiar sort!

In these circumstances ‘red-tapeism,’ bureaucracy, and corruption are flourishing in the routine work of the Soviet trade unions. Let us again quote from *Trud*:

‘What are the trade union officials doing?’ asks the Leningrad correspondent of the paper. ‘First of all, they attend meetings and conferences. During the last six months there were 270 meetings of the Presidium of the Leningrad District Metal Workers’ Union. Each meeting lasted for several hours; meetings of from five to seven hours’ duration are not by any means exceptional. Then comes correspondence, very often absolutely useless, as it repeats only those instructions which everybody can read in the papers. It is evident that the officials have no time for actual work among members of their unions; they cannot visit factories and establish direct touch with the rank and file of the members.’²⁴

No wonder that trade union members complain that they cannot get hold of the officials when they have business to transact on the union premises. In only one number of *Trud* we found four letters from such different places as Poltava, Kieff, Perm, and Tamboff, where identical complaints were made that a trade union official is a kind of ‘blue bird,’ of whom everybody has heard, but nobody has ever seen.²⁵ ‘You can never see the chairman or the secretary of the factory committee on the

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factory premises. We never see our responsible comrades talking to the rank and file members,' complain the workers at the *Bolshevik* factory in Kieff.²⁶

The trade union journal *Metallist* undertook a special inquiry among its readers on the question whether their applications to their trade unions were successful. The majority replied in the negative: their grievances were not attended to by the trade union officials.

Trade union officials must not be blamed too much for neglect of their duties. They are a kind of *Mädchen für Alles* in a German household, because the Communist Party makes them do a lot of work which has no direct relation to trade union activities.

At the Eighth Conference of the Textile Workers' Union, held in April 1928, Mr. Vorobieff, a delegate from Lenin-grad, said: 'During the last three months we have been obliged to conduct the following campaigns: an agitation for agricultural and industrial State loans, re-election of social insurance bureaux and co-operative managements, collective agreement, and wage tariff reform campaign, the "Red Army Day," the "Woman-Worker Day," . . .' 'He was not allowed to proceed,' remarks the reporter, 'because the auditorium burst into laughter and thunderous applause. All knew about it, for all had been through the same experience.'

The state of the morals of trade union officials is shown best by the numerous cases of embezzlement of trade union funds. These cases are so frequent that they became the subject of statistical treatises. One of the treatises is given below. In the Moscow Government, in 1926, there were 281 cases of embezzlement, and in 1927, 245 cases. The sum of 116,010 roubles was lost through embezzlements in

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1926, and 105,656 roubles in 1927. 71 chairmen of the factory committees, 29 secretaries, 30 treasurers and 22 other employees were found guilty of embezzlements.²⁸

'Embezzlers are getting more ingenious,' writes a correspondent of *Trud* from Siberia.²⁹ 'Embezzlers are honoured,' says a letter from Perm. During 1927, 35 embezzlements were discovered, and the sum involved was 5383 roubles. For the two months of 1928, 38 cases of embezzlement were found out, and the sum of money lost was 7600 roubles.³⁰ In Baku the bookkeeper of the local branch of the Transport Union embezzled 16,600 roubles.³¹ During last year 5 per cent. of the total annual budget of the Transport Workers' Union went into the pockets of embezzlers. There were 163 cases, and the sum lost amounted to 100,000 roubles.³² At the conference of the North Caucasian Trade Unions, Mr. Tomsky himself stated that 'cases of embezzlement show an upward tendency. Embezzlements are doing great harm to trade union work; they undermine the confidence of workers in trade union officials.'³³

In his address at the Eighth Trade Union Congress, Tomsky was very bitter about the embezzlements of trade union funds. He said: 'During the first six months of 1928 the sum of 442,766 roubles (£44,000) was embezzled. This sum represents the amount of embezzlements we were able to ascertain. Of course, in comparison with the total fees collected by all the trade unions the sum is not very large. But we cannot consider these embezzlements as business men consider their "overhead expenses." . . . Where do they steal? Everywhere - in factory committees, mutual aid societies, workers' clubs, county branches, district branches, provincial branches - everywhere. "No informa-

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tion" is marked in our statistical data. What does it mean? It means that they steal, but we don't know where. Who steals? I am ashamed to say that the chief offenders are my colleagues - chairmen and presidents of the trade union organisations. How are the embezzlers distributed according to their political views and allegiance? I am bound to say that the guilt is spread more or less equally between the Communists, members of the Communist League of Youth, and non-party men. There are some embezzlers about whom our statistics mark "no information."

And Mr. Tomsky also told us why cases of embezzlement of trade union funds are so numerous in Soviet Russia.

'Many Communist Party organisations taught trade union officials negligence in money matters, because these organisations, interfering with expenditure of trade union funds, accustom trade union officials to spend money irregularly. We get information frequently that now here, now there, Party committees exercise pressure upon trade unionists to extract from them money necessary for the needs of the Party. As trade union estimates do not provide for such expenditure, the officials must somehow conceal this from non-party members. Then they get used to being negligent; they keep their books in such a way that an inexperienced man cannot make out where the money has gone to. Consequently, trade union officials become accustomed to conceal all other unlawful expenditure, and to be neglectful of money which non-party workers pay for definite purposes.'⁸⁴

It is easy to understand what Tomsky is driving at. He wants to say that the Communist Party forces trade union officials to steal trade union funds for Party needs, and the

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officials get used to stealing money for themselves. Indeed, Soviet trade unions are very efficient 'schools of Communism,' as Lenin used to call them!

Thus at the root of this corruption of trade union officials, their negligence of the workers' interests, and their other numberless sins, lies the dictatorship of the Communist Party. Mr. Tomsky said it himself, and Mr. Tomsky is 'an honest man.'

We have been able to give only very short and incomplete descriptions of Soviet trade unions. For lack of space many very important issues have not been raised, and only a fraction of the material provided by the Soviet Press on the subject has been used.

We are certain, however, that the facts we have given justify the statement made at the beginning of this chapter, namely, that Soviet trade unions are not to be considered as identical with those working-class organisations recognised in Europe and America as 'trade unions.'

As a matter of fact, the Soviet trade unions are more like Fascist labour syndicates, or 'Yellow' trade unions sometimes organised by capitalists. They do not serve the workers; they do not promote or safeguard the vital interests of their members; their main task and purpose are to keep the Russian workers under the thumb of the Communist dictators.

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CHAPTER XII

THE WORKERS AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Soviet 'Triangle' - Communists in Soviet Factories - Communist Morals.

It is generally understood that the Communist Party holds the reins of power in Russia to-day. There is no doubt about it. But the Russian Communist Party not only manages the State administrative machinery as other governing parties do. It also directs and controls the national finances, industry, and trade. Its members occupy all the posts of importance in the co-operative societies, trade unions, municipal councils, and all other public bodies. It exercises the monopoly of the Press through the editors of journals and magazines and the directors of publishing concerns. Theatres, cinemas, museums, and picture galleries - all are made to serve the aims and purposes of the Communist Party.

Never in the modern history of mankind has such a complete and absolute system of the dictatorship by one political party existed, and the Politbureau of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party, with whom the ultimate power rests, can say with much more right than *Le Roi Soleil*, '*L'état, c'est moi!*'

It is impossible to set out here how this absolute dictatorship affects every aspect of Russian political, social, and economic life. This book is concerned only with matters

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relating to the conditions under which the Russian industrial workers live and toil. Therefore we shall deal in this chapter with the following questions only: Is the dictatorship which the Communists exercise over the Russian proletariat benevolent tyranny, or despotism pure and simple? Did the Russian workers make a good bargain by selling their freedom for the doubtful privileges they enjoy, to a certain extent, under the Soviets? What do the workers themselves think of their dictators? What sort of men are the members of the Communist Party?

We must examine first of all the system established in the Soviet factories and works. This system is known in Soviet Russia as the 'triangle,' of which the sides are: (1) The Communist cell, composed of all the members of the Communist Party engaged in the factory or office; (2) The factory or works committee, supposed to be elected by all the personnel of the factory or office; (3) The management members of the factory or office, formally appointed by corresponding Government institutions, but actually by the central or local committees of the Communist Party. The staff of the Soviet factory or office is enclosed within these sides and represents the 'area' of the 'triangle.'

The management is supposed to look after the factory in general. Its duties are to see that the programme of production is carried out in accordance with the prescribed plan; that the supply of raw materials and fuel is ensured; that the technical equipment and machinery is kept in proper order and duly utilised, etc. The factory committees are supposed to look after the interests of the workers, and to see that the regulations of the Soviet Labour Code are observed; that collective agreements are

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complied with; that disputes between the managerial staff and the workers are properly settled; and that the necessary level of labour discipline is maintained. Besides being entrusted with Communist propaganda among the workers, the Communist cell must supervise affairs in order to prevent infringements of general Communist policy.

All this sounds very nice in theory. Power is equally divided between the political, social, and economic organisations, and the forces seem to be well balanced. But what is going on in practice?

We give the opinion of Mr. Tomsky, who, besides being the 'boss' of the Soviet trade unions, is also a member of the omnipotent and omniscient Politbureau. 'He who knows,' says this gentleman, 'the conditions prevailing in our factories and works will not dispute the fact that, in many instances, there exists the so-called "Triple union" between managers, trade union officials, and Communists. The trade unions act hand in glove with the management, and very often say: "Everything is going on splendidly; we have a united front." But I ask: Against *whom* have you a united front?'

Mr. Tomsky does not give a reply to this pointed question; we have to look for the answer in another part of his speech.

Referring to the strikes which took place in many Soviet cotton mills in August 1926, Mr Tomsky says: 'At the root of these troubles was, in the majority of cases, the abnormal union of managers, trade union officials, and Communists. This "union" discussed all matters between themselves without asking the opinion of the rank and file workers. The trade unions supported all the measures enforced by managers without any criticism of these measures; they

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confirmed every instruction issued by the management, even of a purely administrative character.¹

This statement suggests the answer to be given to Mr. Tomsky's rhetorical question. The 'united front' of managers, trade unionists, and Communists is formed in Soviet factories in order to combat discontent among the workers and suppress signs of indignation and revolt. A host of facts published daily in the Soviet Press fully bear out this suggestion.

We shall give these facts later. For the present it is enough for our purpose to state that the picture drawn by Mr. Tomsky faithfully reproduces the characteristic features of the Soviet factory 'triangle.'

As a matter of fact the sides of this 'triangle' tend to coincide and form a straight line, or, according to the Bolshevik jargon, 'to flatten.' Retaining the terminology of geometry, we should say that the plane where the trade union and managerial sides tend to fall is the plane of the Communist cell's side.

The existence of this tendency is confirmed by the Fourteenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party held in December 1926. We read in the stenographic report of the Congress that 'Communist cells constantly interfere with the duties of trade union organisations. . . . The majority of questions in respect to labour conditions, wages, collective agreements, etc. are settled by the Party machinery.'

In the speech already quoted Tomsky also made some very interesting revelations. 'If a disagreement arises between managers and trade union officials, the managers appeal to the County or District Committee of the Communist Party, who discuss the points of disagreement and

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settle them. What is the result of this practice? Non-party workers know very well what questions are discussed by the Party Committee. It is impossible to conceal it. The Party, composed of one million members, lives in a glass house. Even before the official notice is published, non-party workers are sure to know how the disputed matter has been settled by the Party Committee, and the whole responsibility for the satisfactory or unsatisfactory settlement is laid at the doors of the Party. If a cut of wages is made, non-party workers blame the Communist Party. We pointed out several times that the prestige of the Party must be above all things. If a mistake is made by a trade union or by a factory director, it matters little. But if the Communist Party makes mistakes, then great harm is done.'²

These quotations testify that, generally speaking, trade union officials and factory managers are absolutely powerless to do anything without the approval of the Communist cell. It is the Communist cell or the local committee of the Communist Party that counts in the Soviet factory. Everything and everybody is dependent on its decisions.

It would have been a miracle indeed if the situation had been different. As we have already seen, managers of Soviet industrial and other undertakings, as well as trade union officials, are members of the Communist Party and, *eo ipso*, members of the factory Communist cell. Naturally, before they venture to take a decision affecting the conditions of labour, wages, or any other vital subject of factory life, they consult their Communist colleagues and, in obedience to Party discipline, act in accordance with the decisions passed by Party organisations.

The factory Communist cells are, however, not free

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agents. They are subordinated to the District Communist Party Committee, which in turn is responsible to the Provincial Committee, and so on up to the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the Party. Each of the lower organisations is controlled and managed by the upper organisation, and must faithfully execute the orders it receives. Such is the strong and narrow-meshed net which entangles the Russian workers and binds them hand and foot.

We have shown in previous chapters how dreadful are labour and social conditions in Soviet Russia to-day. The relations which exist between the three sides of the Soviet factory 'triangle' leave no doubt with whom the final responsibility for these conditions rests. *It is the Russian Communist Party and its leaders who are directly responsible for the low economic and cultural standard of life of the Russian workers.*

But how is it that Communists, who so ardently protest their devotion to the interests of the workers, can be guilty of such outrages? There are many reasons why the Russian Communist Party, which governs Russia by dictatorial methods, *must* oppress the workers and exploit them more thoroughly than the most 'bloodthirsty capitalist robbers.' The main reason is that the Communists have assumed absolute dictatorship over an impoverished and economically and culturally backward country, with a large agricultural population. Technical progress in Soviet Russia, which would have ensured an increase in the productivity of labour and prosperity for the population, has been handicapped by lack of capital. Under the Communist Government, which suppressed all the private initiative and put every obstacle in the way of personal

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thrift; under the Government composed of men blinded by the narrow fanatical doctrine of 'class war,' and incapable of grasping the most essential economic and social problems – very often corrupted, incompetent, and poorly educated – under such a Government the accumulation of private capital is impossible, and of public capital extremely problematical. But economic science teaches us that it is impossible to secure the progress of a nation without an accumulation of material wealth, and the Bolsheviki were to learn this truth by hard practical experience. They were obliged to advocate the accumulation of capital in Russia, the capital which they so wantonly destroyed during the first years of their dictatorship.

It is true the Bolsheviki advocate the 'Socialist accumulation of capital' which is to serve the public good. But it makes no difference to the workers, because this 'Socialist accumulation' involves great sacrifices for them. Wages must be low, working hours long, social services inadequate, unemployment rife. The lowering of the standard of life of the working classes is the easiest way of keeping down expenses and for the accumulation of some surplus wealth.

There are two other sources which the Bolsheviki could make use of in their efforts to get the necessary capital. One of them is the capitalist countries of the West, and the other the exploitation of the agricultural population. The Soviets extract from the second of these sources all they can, even at the risk of the political stability of their regime. As to the first source, it is closed to them. Repudiation of State debts and obligations; refusal to compensate foreigners for losses suffered on account of the Bolshevik

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nationalisation of industry and banks; persistent revolutionary propaganda directed from Moscow; never-ceasing interference in the domestic affairs of other countries – all this represents an insurmountable obstacle to the influx of foreign capital into Soviet Russia.

She is thus thrown back on her own resources, and as these resources are very inadequate, the Soviet Government can build up its dictatorship only on the exploitation of Russian workers and peasants.

Thus a very peculiar situation is brought about in Soviet Russia – the party which calls itself the proletarian party, which protests everywhere its devotion to the interests of the workers, in fact oppresses workers much more severely than any capitalist country.

'Ah, two souls live in my breast!' the Russian Communist leaders could exclaim – the soul of a revolutionist and radical Socialist, and the soul of a cruel exploiter and reactionary. They have a very difficult task to explain to the Russian workers why the latter should make great sacrifices. It is true that the Communist Party, by assuming absolute control over the State, industry, trade unions, Press, etc., by ruthless prosecutions of all its adversaries, has made its task very easy. But the dictatorship has had a detrimental effect on the welfare of the Russian workers. They now find themselves deprived of all means for defending their immediate economic interests.

Take, for instance, the matter of strikes. They are not forbidden in Soviet Russia. But the Fourteenth Congress of the Communist Party resolved that 'strikes in the proletarian State testify the existence of defects in the State machinery, the weakness of trade unions, and the cultural backwardness of the workers.' The same argument, only

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without reference to the 'proletarian State,' was and is used against strikes by every absolutist regime. Mussolini, in Italy, treats strikes in the same way, using all the resources of the Fascist dictatorial machinery to prevent or suppress them. Strikes were treated in the same way in Russia under the Tsars. Nothing new has been invented by the Communist dictators. They are loth to acknowledge the fact that strikes are the only method of protest against the extreme exploitation of labour, and for the defence of the most vital interests of the workers.

However 'backward' the Russian workers may be, it is hardly to be believed that they are so stupid as to risk starvation, unemployment, persecutions, and severe reprisals for the joy of going on strike. Evidently only desperation and the impossibility of using other methods for the settlement of their grievances force them to 'down tools.'

What part are the Communist workers taking in strikes and other disputes between the workers and the Soviet factory administration? The answer is given by Mr. Ouglanoff, secretary of the Moscow Communist Party. At a meeting of Party members he said that he hoped that disputes would never occur in Soviet factories, and that the Communists would never take part in them if they should take place. 'It happens, however, at present that Communists, some openly, some secretly, take part in disputes between the workers and the factory administration. How should we regard the behaviour of such Communists? We must request that Communists refuse to take part in these disputes. We must insist that Party discipline be observed. We will severely prosecute those Communists found guilty of such infringements of Party discipline, and expel them from the Party.'

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Mr. Ouglanoff's advice to the Communist factory directors is as follows: 'If you want to be good managers you must first of all consider your resources. Do not be kind-hearted fellows whom the workers can easily rob. Such methods won't do. You must calculate carefully how much you can give the workers.' But workers are 'backward people,' and Ouglanoff warns the Communist managers that 'when you organise the work in your factory, the backward workers will sometimes grumble, complaining of low piecework pay or a large minimum output. But it is impossible to act otherwise. We cannot run the factories as they have been run under the capitalists.'³

The advice which a prominent Communist leader gives to directors of Soviet factories is possible only in the 'proletarian State.' Workers must be exploited for the benefit of this State regardless of their protests, and if the Communists - 'shock troops of the proletarian army' - take part in industrial disputes, they must be thrown out of the Party.

The general idea, according to the Communist notion, of how the workers in the Soviet factories should be treated, was very tersely expressed by a certain Mr. Prapor, the Communist managing director of one of the biggest metal works, *Makeevo*, in the Don Basin: 'Workers must be brought under; but it must be done skilfully and in white gloves.'⁴

It is not to be wondered at that Communist cells, as well as trade unions and other Communist organisations, do not enjoy influence and prestige among the rank and file workers. The 'cells' are usually looked upon as the worst enemies of the workers, as 'blacklegs,' spies, and informers.

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The Soviet Press is full of complaints that many factory Communist organisations are 'broken off' from the working masses. Out of many examples we will quote a few.

In June 1928 Mr. A. Runoff, correspondent of *Trud*, visited the *Makeevo* Metal Works in the Don Basin. The impressions which he gathered during this visit are so interesting and so typical of almost all Soviet factories that we give them literally.

After looking in vain for officials of the factory committee and the Communist cell, the author 'went to the works. I spent two days there, and during this time I saw not a single trade union or Party official. I talked to the workers. Even during working hours workers gathered in groups, almost in meetings, spoke of their grievances, and cursed. . . . Whom did they curse? First of all the management, then the trade unions. They cursed very bitterly, exasperatedly. They also cursed the Communist Party organisations. Workers told me that the management is most incompetent and prodigal. Many thousands of roubles were spent to pay the travelling expenses of the members of the managerial staff. They travel anywhere: to the Caucasus, Armenia, Moscow, abroad. They travel in groups of five or seven persons together. During the last six months 110,000 roubles were spent on travelling expenses. Raw materials were bought from private traders, and large sums were overpaid. Colossal sums were spent on the construction of new factory premises and on capital repairs. All this has been done so badly that the new premises had to be pulled down and rebuilt. New machinery was bought and left to rot in the works yard; raw materials were wasted, etc. The workers talked about this daily. They spoke about these irregularities to the administration and trade union

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officials. But nobody would listen to these warnings, and if they did they immediately dismissed the critics for "undemanded interference." ⁵

'We have not got trade unions,' say the workers; 'we don't know them, and won't know them. Our works committee and our management are one family. All the members of the works committee, after they served their turn on the committee, were given posts in the works administration. No trade union work is being carried on in the works.'

'The District Committee of the Communist Party is in full union with the works administration. If the latter decided upon the dismissal of a worker, be he a Party or non-party man, nobody could help; Party organisations would countersign this decision. The Communist Party does not enjoy any prestige or influence over the workers.'⁶

The conditions described above are by no means exceptional. There is plenty of evidence in the Soviet Press that they are everywhere just the same as in the *Makeevo Works*.

A special investigation carried out in the factories in one of the Moscow districts revealed the fact that relations between Communists and non-party workers are very bad. The workers say: 'The Communists have erected a wall between us and themselves; they won't listen to us, and we dodge them' (*Proletarsky Trud Works*). 'At our factory Communists very seldom speak to non-party workers; they mostly try to overhear what we say between ourselves' (*Krasnaya Priesna Factory*).⁷

The paper says that it could cite 'a considerable amount of facts which testify that the Communist cells are only

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very loosely connected with non-party workers, and do not enjoy any influence among them.'

Communists consider themselves to be above the rank and file workers. They form in Soviet Russia the new nobility, the class of men with 'blue blood in their veins.' They keep aloof and do not mix with the common lot. A *Pravda* correspondent writes from Ozero, a place near Moscow: 'It never happens that factory directors and responsible Party, trade union and co-operative workers visit the workers' club, play chess with workers, read papers, and maintain comradely relations with common working men. To do so is considered to be "damaging to their reputation!"'⁸

But how can the Communist Party exercise moral influence upon the workers if it is composed to a large extent of the worst elements in the Russian working class; if the word 'Communist' is very often a synonym for 'drunkard, rotter, thief, embezzler?'

We could quote any amount of evidence taken from the Soviet, not the capitalist Press, if we had the space. But we will give as many facts as possible.

'Why don't you join the Party?' asked a *Pravda* correspondent of the old workers at *Makeevo* Works. 'Because there are many cowards and those who seek personal gains among the members of the Party,' replied one worker, formerly an active revolutionist. 'I do not join the Communist Party because I do not wish to lose influence amongst the workers,' answered another.⁹

Women workers do not join the Party because 'Communists maltreat and insult women. What is the use of joining the Party if Communists are such rotters?' was the reply of working women to a Communist Party recruiter.¹⁰

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In Vladikavkaz, a certain Gritzaieff, a Communist, married three women consecutively within a short time, infected them with venereal disease, and then turned them out of his house, saying: 'What is the use of you, an invalid? There are plenty of healthy women!' 'But who is responsible for my illness?' asked the last wife. 'You have corrupted me!' 'Damn you!' replied the Communist husband. 'I shall ruin twenty more and will not answer for it.' The paper adds: 'Gritzaieff is sure of his impunity. As far as we are aware he has not even been reprimanded by the Party Committee.'¹¹

'If the Party will expel the drunkards and rotters, then the workers may join it,' said a worker of the Riazan Tramways to a Communist Party recruiter. 'Communists drink vodka too much; that is why good workers do not join the Party,' was the opinion of a worker of the *Zubkoff* Metal Works (near Moscow). 'You must carefully consider the characters of those who enter the Party.' Such is the usual advice which the workers give to the Communist propagandists.¹²

A certain Kireeff, an active Communist, persuaded a girl, B., member of the Communist League of Youth, to live with him, and promised to marry her. When B. became pregnant, Kireeff left her. The girl complained to the Communist cell. The case was discussed at a meeting, and one of the Party comrades said: 'Kireeff is not guilty. B. prevented him from carrying on the Party work; therefore she should be punished.' Kireeff was acquitted.¹³

Another revolting case was reported in the same number of *Pravda*. A Leningrad Communist, Kachaloff, met a peasant girl of sixteen, Olga, and invited her to his lodgings. There he gave the girl some vodka, and when she

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got drunk, corrupted her. Kachaloff lived with Olga for some time, but refused to marry her unless a dowry of 1000 roubles was given to him. When the baby was born, Kachaloff took measures to get rid of it. He forbade Olga to visit her elder sister, to speak to the neighbours, to heat the room, and to buy milk for the child. If Olga bought milk, Kachaloff drank it himself. Olga at last left her husband. But the baby died from starvation, and as the poor girl had no money to pay the funeral expenses, she came again to her husband. Kachaloff, however, refused to give any money, and Olga, not knowing what to do in her distress, came to the factory where Kachaloff was employed, carrying the dead baby in her arms. 'Only then,' says the paper, 'after a meeting of protest attended by all the personnel of the factory, was Kachaloff reprimanded and dismissed from the factory.' Communists who lived in the same house as Kachaloff, and knew the whole story, did nothing to prevent the brute from maltreating his girl-wife. Evidently they did not think that there was anything unusual in the behaviour of their Party comrade.

An identical case is reported in the same number of *Pravda* from Astrakhan, where the Communist, Sevastianoff, 'used to thrash his wife brutally.' The Party comrades knew all about it, but did not think it necessary to interfere.

Why? Because it is often dangerous to protest against outrages committed by members of the omnipotent Communist Party. As the following example shows, the denouncers may get into sore trouble if they dare to expose compromising facts about Communists.

'There are about four hundred Communists in the *Asbest* Ural mines. Drunkenness is rife among them. No efforts to stop this evil have been made, and those comrades

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who protest against it are usually punished by removal to poorly-paid jobs. A member of the Communist Party, Popoff, usually comes to the factory drunk, commits all sorts of nuisances, and insults women. The Communist cell reprimanded him, but he did not stop drinking. A Communist woman, Alexieva, insisted that Popoff should be expelled from the Party, but Popoff's friends, headed by Golovanoff, director of the factory, succeeded in hushing up the case. Then Alexieva applied to the District Party Control Commission. The member of the latter, Bazhenoff, came to the mine to make an investigation on the spot, and, as a result of these investigations, Alexieva was expelled from the Party!"¹⁴

Communists usually do everything to hush up scandals in their midst. They do so not because they are afraid to compromise the Party in the eyes of workers, but because they want to show in their reports to the higher Party authorities that everything is going on well with them.

Here is a typical example.

A girl, P., member of the Komsomol (Communist League of Youth), complained that late one night her room was broken into by a Communist, Kostycheff. He was drunk, and threatening P. with a revolver, demanded that she should sleep with him. P. tried to escape, but Kostycheff, after breaking the furniture in the room, and beating P.'s little brothers, pulled the girl from under the bed and forced her to share his room. P. complained to the secretary of the local branch of the Komsomol. The latter took the matter in hand and raised it at the meeting of the Communist cell. But the bureau of the cell decided that the case should be submitted to the Party Control Commission and not given to the public prosecutor.

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During the discussion one of the members of the bureau tried to put the whole blame on the girl, and said that she was a well-known prostitute. When the meeting terminated the secretary of the bureau approached the secretary of the Komsomol group and said to him: 'Ah, brother! I thought you were a good fellow, but . . . you make such a trouble for the sake of a woman, a prostitute. Our cell has always been considered by the District Party Committee a sound one, and now, such a scandal! No, you are a poor Communist! You fall in love with a woman, and make trouble for us.'¹⁵

The secretary of the Communist Party cell does not mind that one of the members of his organisation should be accused of an outrageous crime. What concerns him is that the scandal should become known to the District Party Committee, and damage the reputation of the cell in the eyes of this committee!

It must not be imagined that only rank and file Communists are men of such low morals. On the contrary, the most accomplished scoundrels are usually discovered amongst those Communists who occupy important posts in the Soviet administration. We shall give some examples in support of this statement:

'The secretary of the Siberian Province Committee of the Komsomol, and member of the Siberian Provincial Control Commission, Ladygin, has been convicted of drunkenness and hooliganism. Especially outrageous was a drinking bout organised by Ladygin on 10th June. His brother, member of the Komsomol, and a friend, Communist Mingaloff, came to see Ladygin. They began to drink. When there was no more money to buy vodka, Ladygin sent his wife to borrow from neighbours. The

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wife went out, but failed to get any money. Ladygin fell in a rage, and brutally thrashed his wife and child until Mrs. Ladygin fainted. When she came round she escaped from the house and sought shelter at the neighbours. Ladygin, together with Mingaloff, broke into the house of a Communist, Ovchinnikoff, threw a boiling samovar on the floor, pulled down a wall clock, and demanded that his wife should be surrendered to him. A similar "pogrom" was carried out by drunkards in the house of another Communist, Protzenko. And when at last they found Mrs. Ladygin, they beat her mercilessly once more.¹⁶

It might be said, perhaps, that we are reporting isolated cases, and that in a Party which consists of 1,400,000 members there can always be found individuals whose morals are low, and whose characters are bad. But this excuse can hardly be accepted, as there is no lack of evidence that the total personnel of many Communist Party organisations has been infected with vice, crime, drunkenness, and hooliganism. Evidently some other plausible explanation of these cases must be submitted than a reference to 'a few unruly individuals who manage to get into the ranks of the Communist Party.'

As *Pravda* testifies, during March and April 1928 many cases of outrageous crimes were discovered in the Soviet trade union and Communist Party organisations (Shakhty, Artemovsk, Riazhsck, and Smolensk).¹⁷ The article particularly describes conditions existing in the last-named place. 'According to official reports sent regularly to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, everything went on splendidly in the Smolensk Government. But under this cloak of official optimism many outrageous facts, which revealed the corruption of the Party organisations, were

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hidden. Let us give a few words about the leading members of the Smolensk Provincial Party Committee, to begin with. The secretary of the Committee, Pavliuchenko, members of the Committee, Panfiloff, Milchakoff, Alexeenko, Melnikoff, Boldin and others, all of them were drunkards, sexually corrupted, and bourgeois in their outlook. They were out of contact with workers. They neglected all genuine educational mass work; they persecuted every one who dared to raise a protest against their goings on, and they concealed all crimes and irregularities.'

The author proceeds to give actual facts about these crimes. We omit these details except one – the description of conditions prevailing in the *Katushka* factory:

'The factory employs over five hundred workers, two hundred of whom are members of the Communist Party and eighty members of the Komsomol. The percentage of Communists is very high. Even in Moscow and Leningrad there are few factories where half of the personnel are Communists. And at that factory, which ought to be an example, unheard-of things were going on. Foremen and managers had established conditions absolutely incredible for a Socialist factory. Kovalkoff, assistant technical manager, extorted bribes in money and in kind. Women workers were to bribe him with their bodies. Timofieff, foreman, also forced women to become his concubines if they wanted to retain their jobs. An atmosphere of terrorism reigned in the factory; only bribes could save workers from persecutions. Complaints and protests of the workers – Party and non-party alike – were without avail. Foremen immediately dismissed the protesters.'

We can reproduce only a small portion of the article of over two thousand words which is packed with numerous

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facts revealing the conditions in the Smolensk Communist Party organisation. It is enough to say that, as the result of the investigation carried out by the Central Control Commission – the highest ‘purgative’ body of the Communist Party – over a thousand Soviet, trade union, and Party officials were dismissed from their posts, and some of them were given over to the judicial authorities.

Almost identical reports have been published in Soviet journals during the six months of 1928 from the following places: Mytistchy (near Moscow),¹⁸ Kursk,¹⁹ Seymy, (Nizhny-Novgorod),²⁰ Sochi (Caucasus),²¹ Tuapse (Caucasus),²² Theodosia (Crimea),²³ Tver,²⁴ Kieff,²⁵ and many other towns and villages. It is absolutely impossible to give the details of all these reports. Besides, they repeat almost literally the same grim and gloomy tale which we have already told about Smolensk. Drunkenness, assaults on women, embezzlement of public funds, corruption of every kind, criminal offences (including horrible murders) – such are the crimes in which many thousands of Russian Communists, occupying high positions in the Soviet administration, were found guilty. . . .

The record has, however, been beaten by a certain Mr. Petrakovsky, director of a leather factory in Tashkent. *Pravda*²⁶ describes graphically the character of this ‘Red’ director and Communist. After reporting facts about bribery, drinking bouts, maltreatment of workers, embezzlement of factory funds, and other similar activities on the part of Mr. Petrakovsky, the journal tells a story which even the most bitter enemy of the Communist dictatorship could not have invented.

‘Milibay Rakhimoff, factory night-watchman, had a visitor – his sweetheart came to see him. Petrakovsky,

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who happened to see the girl, approved of the choice of his subordinate, lauded the shy and modest girl, patted the happy would-be bridegroom on the back in a friendly fashion, and then invited him to the director's cabinet for an intimate conversation.

'“So you have decided to marry. Well, congratulations! But there is one condition: the first night must belong to me. If you will not agree, then you must blame yourself. I do not forget good services, but I also remember offences.”

'After some hesitation the watchman agreed to please his chief. The girl was more obstinate—she cried for three days and three nights. But, by and by, she was persuaded to comply with the wishes of Petrakovsky. The bridal feast was celebrated in the director's house, and Petrakovsky got what he wanted.'

Now, when the outrage was found out, this director of feudal habits was dismissed from his post, expelled from the party, and judicial proceedings begun against him. But all this happened only after a strike of the workers, who were forced to act over the heads of their trade union. 'But how should be explained the fact,' naïvely asks *Pravda*, 'that the party and trade union organisations have not noticed the crimes which were performed under their very noses?'

The facts exposed in this chapter provide enough material for the answer to this question. This reply was rather tersely formulated by a prominent Communist, secretary of the Stcherbinovka (Don Basin) District Committee of the Communist Party, who said at a Communist meeting: 'A Marxist is bound by no laws!'²⁷

The philosophy and psychology of men who rule Soviet Russia to-day cannot be described more laconically and

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more correctly than by the short phrase quoted. Verily, members of the Communist Party must do something exceptionally extravagant and unusual, like demanding from their subordinates a revival of mediæval *jus primæ noctis*, before they get prosecuted and persecuted for their crimes. The very Communist journal which protests such indignation against Petrakovsky, daily reports numerous cases where Communists remain unpunished for the offences they commit. In only one number of *Pravda*²⁸ we found several examples of how Communists convicted of various offences, instead of being imprisoned, were removed to higher positions.

A typical story is told about a certain Mr. Krivostchekoff, manager of the Leningrad office of the Meat Trust. This gentleman, owing to his negligence and incompetence, caused losses of 1,135,000 roubles to the Trust. Instead of being impeached, he was sent to London as the representative of the Government Trading Company (Gostorg).

One wonders what practical conclusions the Russian workers would draw from the facts which we have reproduced briefly in this chapter, and which they witness daily. It is very likely that their indignation and discontent with the Communist Party dictatorship will finally become so acute that they will take to heart the advice given to the working men of the *Dvigatel Revolucii* Works, in Kanavino, by the secretary of the works Communist cell. After listening for some time to the complaints of the workers, this gentleman is reported to have said: 'You insist that this is bad, and that is bad. Consequently, everything is bad. If the conditions are such as you say, then raise the cry: "Down with the Soviet Government," and make a second revolution!'²⁹

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⁷ *Pravda*, No. 239, 13th October 1928.

⁸ *Pravda*, No. 204, 2nd September 1928.

⁹ *Pravda*, No. 171, 24th July 1928.

¹⁰ *Pravda*, No. 140, 19th June 1928.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE PEASANTS AND THE SOVIETS

Economic Exploitation of Peasants – Class War in the Villages – Peasant Tactics.

OUT of the many difficult and thorny questions with which the Bolshevik dictatorship is faced, the so-called 'Peasant Question' is, undoubtedly, the most difficult of all.

We cannot discuss this subject fully in a book dealing almost exclusively with labour and social conditions of the Russian industrial workers. Nevertheless it is necessary, very briefly and in a general way, to mention some of the most outstanding facts concerning the relations between the Soviets and Russian peasants, because, without touching the 'peasant question,' it is almost impossible to understand the real nature of the social processes going on in Soviet Russia to-day.

According to the General Census of 1926, the agricultural population in Soviet Russia was put at 120,000,000, representing 82 per cent. of the total. This enormous mass of people is divided into some 25,000,000 separate economic units, peasant family households, each unit tilling the soil and disposing of the result of the toil of its members in the age-honoured, individualistic way.

The question of how the peasant economics could be brought into line with nationalised Russian industry, trade, and transport was always troubling the Soviet

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leaders, because it is evident that as long as agriculture is run on principles of private ownership, or, we should say, of individualist usage of means of production, it is impossible to think of the economic reorganisation of Russia on Socialist lines. Besides, the overwhelming mass of peasants, who belong to the social category of the petty bourgeoisie, represents a political menace to the Soviet regime. At any moment the peasants may demand that the State should be governed in such a way that their essential interests should be safeguarded and protected more effectively than at present.

Lenin understood very well the danger which was in store for the Bolshevik dictatorship in the existence of this huge peasant population and the predominance of peasant economy in Russian national economic life. In one of his speeches in 1921 he said: 'As long as we live in the country of petty peasant capitalists, Capitalism possesses in Russia a much sounder basis than Communism. We must remember it. Everybody who has studied carefully the conditions in the country, knows that we have not yet uprooted Capitalism, and have not undermined the foundations on which our enemies stand. Capitalism is based on small peasantry, and there is only one way to uproot it - that is, to transfer national economy, including agriculture, to a new technical basis, to the technical basis of the modern industry.'¹

Lenin thought that by constructing a network of powerful electrical stations throughout Russia it would be possible to force the peasants to abandon their individualistic methods of agriculture, and to unite them in large communities which would produce agricultural products by common labour and for common benefit. Lenin was so

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enthusiastic about the 'electrification' of Russia that he even invented the formula for describing the Communist order: 'Communism is Soviets plus electrification.'

Of course, it was a mad notion, this idea of transferring backward and primitive Russian agriculture to the highest technical basis, and to enforce Communist methods of production on 25,000,000 separate peasant farmsteads. Even the most advanced and prosperous countries cannot afford enough electric energy to replace all other known sources of mechanical power. Russia is, and for a long time will be, unable to realise Lenin's dreams about electrification. It means that the danger of restoration of Capitalism is always present in Soviet Russia, and that the Soviet Government has always to be on the alert against this danger.

It is true that during the first years of the Bolshevik dictatorship the peasants rendered the Soviets considerable support. It might be said that without this support the Bolsheviks would not have been able to seize power and to hold it in the struggle against 'Whites.' If the peasants had refused to serve in the 'Red Army' the Bolshevik regime could not have lasted even for one year. The peasants supported the Bolsheviks because they saw in the Bolshevik regime the only guarantee against the return of the landowners whose land they had seized and divided between themselves. The peasants thought—subconsciously of course—that after consolidating their Government the Bolsheviks would leave them alone and allow them to live, toil, and sell their products in the same way as they had done for ages.

The attitude of the peasants towards the Bolshevik regime was set out, according to a Soviet journalist,

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Sosnovsky, rather tersely by a Tver peasant at a meeting in 1919: 'Comrade Sosnovsky,' said this peasant philosopher, 'we have nothing against Communism. We only ask that Communism should leave us alone. Let Communism exist by itself, and we shall live by ourselves.'²

But the Communists could not 'leave the peasants alone,' because it would have meant the abandonment of the very idea of Bolshevism to reorganise the Russian national economic and social life on Socialist lines. Hence the everlasting struggle between the Soviets and the peasants, the struggle which has been behind all the political events in Russia during the last eight years.

In 1920, when the so-called 'Prodrazverstka' – the sequestration of peasant 'surplus' grain – brought Russian town population to the verge of complete famine, the Bolsheviks made an attempt to force Communist methods of production on the peasants. A special network of 'posiev-komy' – sowing committees – was introduced. These committees were to decide how much land was to be tilled in each village, and compel the peasants to till this land with their own implements, to sow it with their grain, and to gather the crops with their machinery. The products obtained at the end of the agricultural year were to go to the State, which, after leaving a certain proportion for the satisfying of the needs of the peasants, was to use the balance for feeding the industrial population, for satisfying the requirements of industry, and for export abroad.

The peasants responded to this mad scheme by mass risings. In the early spring of 1921 peasant revolts spread on the vast territories and culminated in the Kronstadt rising, which the Soviet Government was able to quell only with the greatest difficulty. 'Posievkomy' were

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abandoned, and Lenin was obliged to make the greatest *tour de volte* in his political career by declaring the introduction of the New Economic Policy, the notorious 'N.E.P.'

The essence of this reform was that the peasants were to be 'left alone' – to some extent. They were allowed to till their land as they thought fit and proper, and to dispose of their produce by selling it freely in the markets. The Bolsheviks were obliged to seek more delicate and subtle methods for influencing the peasant economy and bringing Russian agriculture into line with the general Communist economic conceptions.

The method which they applied for this purpose is known as 'scissors,' the diverging blades of an open pair of scissors being taken as a symbol of the divergence of agricultural prices from the prices of industrial goods. In America this method is better known under the term of 'corner.' In fact, the Soviet Government, having monopolised industry and trade, and being the largest buyer of agricultural produce, was in the position to dictate the prices of both manufactured goods and food produce, thus 'cornering' the market. When peasants 'turned nasty,' and refused to sell their produce at the fixed prices, as happened in 1928 and is happening in 1929, the Bolsheviks were not reluctant to employ coercion. Peasants who had surplus grain and refused to sell it to the Government were arrested and convicted of 'economic sabotage'; their grain was confiscated.

By 'cornering' the market the Soviet Government was able to extract from the peasants enormous sums of money which were used for the maintenance of nationalised industries. According to the calculations of the Soviet

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statisticians³ peasants have to pay annually, owing to the existence of the 'scissors,' at least 500,000,000 gold roubles (£50,000,000) to the Soviet Treasury.

This figure is probably not quite accurate; it is more likely that the peasants are obliged to make much larger sacrifices on the altar of the Communist deities. The following table, taken from *Trud*,⁴ shows to what extent the Russian peasantry is being exploited by the Communist dictators.

. For one centner of wheat (220 lbs.), a peasant received:

	In 1913	In 1928
Printed calico . . .	26·0 metres	17·3 metres
Sugar . . .	16·3 kilos	10·1 kilos
Salt . . .	205·0 „	176·1 „
Soap . . .	18·0 „	13·0 „
Nails . . .	27·0 „	22·0 „
Petrol . . .	46·5 „	57·3 „

Another table reproduced in *Economicheskaya Zhizn*⁵ gives the comparison between prices of industrial goods in Soviet Russia and in principal capitalist countries.

If the prices in Russia are taken as 100 the corresponding index number in other countries will be:

	1913	1925	1927
U.S.A.	69	40	39
Germany	55	45	34
Great Britain	64	43	45

This table testifies to two facts: (1) industrial prices in Soviet Russia are much above world prices, and (2) while in the rest of the world the industrial prices show a tendency to decline, in Soviet Russia they are on the increase.

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Both the above tables give an idea what material sacrifices the Russian peasants have to make for the pleasure of having a Government of Communist dictatorship. No wonder that they are discontented, and that the Soviet Government is really afraid of them.

An old Roman rule, *divide et impera*, is employed by the Bolsheviks for combating the discontent of the Russian peasantry. They disguise it under the 'Marxist' phrase of 'taking the class war into the villages,' but the essential features of the dictatorial art of the Romans remain the same; the Bolsheviks want to divide the peasants in order to subjugate them.

According to the Bolshevik theory, there are three separate classes in Russian villages to-day: 'kulaks,' well-to-do peasants who possess a good deal of land and cattle and employ hired labour; 'seredniaks,' or middle peasants, who possess all the implements necessary for tilling a certain amount of land but do not usually employ labourers; and 'biedniaks,' or the poor peasants, who have not got the implements necessary for husbandry, and are obliged either to let their land to rich peasants or to look for employment at other farms or in other occupations, like cottage industries.

The Communist policy in the villages was formulated by Lenin himself in 1919. He advised his followers to support the 'biedniaks,' to compromise with 'seredniaks,' and to fight the 'kulaks.'⁶ But, as has been found more than once, it was much easier to formulate this advice than to follow it.

It seems that the main trouble with this advice is that the Bolshevik theories cannot devise suitable methods for telling what category individual peasants belong to. That

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is why the Soviets very often find themselves in such frightful difficulties in their relations with the peasantry. Stalin has told us something of this difficulty in an article in *Pravda*:⁷

'All the Bolsheviks know that it is necessary to establish an understanding with the "seredniaks." But how this understanding is to be reached, many have no idea. Some think that this understanding can be secured if we cease fighting the "kulaks," because the persecutions of "kulaks" may frighten the upper layers of "seredniaks." Others think that an understanding with "seredniaks" can be reached if we refuse to organise the "biedniaks," because the organisation of "biedniaks" results in their isolation from the "seredniaks." It also happens that the fight against "kulaks" is conducted in such a haphazard way that the "seredniaks" and "biedniaks" have to suffer. As a result the "kulaks" remain intact, the union with the "seredniaks" is damaged, and part of the "biedniaks" fall under the influence of "kulaks," who are undermining the Soviet policy.'

Not only Stalin, but Bukharin, Kalinin, Miliutin, Astrov, and many other Bolshevik writers and speakers have many times tried to explain the difference between the three categories of peasants, and failed. Why? Simply because the categories invented by Lenin are artificial. Every 'biedniak' is doing everything possible to become a 'seredniak,' and every 'seredniak' is striving to become a 'kulak,' because it is in human nature not to be content with the present situation, but to improve it, to raise the standard of living, to step further up the ladder of prosperity and progress.

Besides, it is very dangerous from the economic point

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of view to exterminate the 'kulaks.' It is calculated that from two-thirds to three-quarters of the total amount of grain which the Russian peasants sell in the market has been coming from the 'kulaks,' who, possessing enough land, cattle, and implements, produced more than they required for their own use. The 'biedniaks' do not usually sell grain; on the contrary they buy it themselves. As to the 'seredniaks,' they have but little surplus for sale, as they consume all they produce in their own households.

If 'kulaks' were to be exterminated, then the Soviet Government would not be able to collect enough food-stuffs for supplying the needs of the industrial population, and agricultural raw materials – flax, hides, wool, etc. – for the needs of the town industry. Besides, if the peasants have nothing to sell, how can they buy goods produced by the nationalised Soviet industry?

Thus, in their policy towards the peasants, the Bolsheviks find themselves in a sort of vicious circle. If they allow the prosperity of the rich peasants to grow unchecked they will undermine the very foundations of their economic and political power. On the other hand, if the Bolsheviks will firmly follow the policy of the extermination of the 'kulaks,' they will not only handicap, but even endanger the economic stability of their regime. The policy of the Soviets in respect of the peasants is always swinging like a pendulum, between these two extremes. Really, the Bolsheviks are, in the 'peasant question,' between the devil and the deep sea.

The difficulties of the Soviet Government at present are the direct outcome of the persecutions of the 'kulaks,' carried out by the Soviets during the last two years. Owing to these persecutions the well-to-do peasants in many districts refused to cultivate more land than was necessary

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to meet their own immediate requirements, and although the harvest has not been poor, the amount of marketable grain has diminished. Middle and poor peasants have no surplus to sell, and the 'kulaks,' who formerly used to sell, cannot do so now, as they have no surplus.

This long experience has taught Russian peasants that they cannot hope to improve their economic situation under the present Soviet regime. Communism will not 'leave them alone,' as they desired. It must exploit them by means of 'the scissors' and 'corner,' because there are no other ways open for the Soviet Government to maintain their industry, which, as we have already seen, is being run at a loss. The peasants must be prepared to suffer severe persecutions if the 'cornering' does not bring the results wanted by the Soviets. It happened last winter, and it is bound to happen every time the Bolsheviks find themselves in a tight corner.

The peasants have not profited economically by the Bolshevik Revolution. From the political point of view their position is probably now worse than under the Tsars. Even the right of local self-government, which they enjoyed from immemorable times, has been taken away from them. The peasants cannot elect their village and 'volost'* Soviets freely. If the Bolshevik authorities fail to secure the 'election' of their nominees to the posts of chairmen and secretaries of the village and 'volost' Soviets by administrative pressure, they dissolve those Soviets and appoint the officials. As to the higher links in the Soviet administrative system - county, provincial, Republican

* Volost is an administrative sub-division of a county ('ouiezd'); it comprises a group of villages with a population of from five to ten thousand.

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and All-Union Soviets – the peasant representation is very small and absolutely unimportant. The whole policy of the Soviet Government is decidedly hostile to the real interests of the peasants.

Socially the peasants are now worse off than under the Tsars. Educational facilities, medical assistance, social welfare, and many other things, which were attended to more or less satisfactorily by the old 'Zemstvos' (local self-government), are now utterly neglected by the Soviet authorities. Even such indispensable services as supplying the peasant population with commodities are being carried out by the Bolshevist authorities in a most disorderly and unsatisfactory manner.

On account of the lack of space we can only produce a certain amount of evidence in support of our statements. But one fact is well worth recording, as it shows, perhaps better than volumes of statistical data, how badly the Bolsheviks manage those things which bear on the most vital interests of the peasants.

As we have pointed out before, the Bolsheviks have almost succeeded in ousting the private traders and substituting for them the so-called 'co-operative societies.' Like all other public bodies and organisations in Soviet Russia these 'societies' are managed by members of the Communist Party. What this management amounts to was made public at the All-Union Conference of the Consumers' Co-operative Societies in Moscow in January 1929: 'During the last three years the number of embezzlements of co-operative funds has not only not decreased, but considerably increased. The most astounding figures were given in respect of embezzlements in village co-operative societies. In 1926 and 1927 the total sums embezzled by

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managers of co-operative stores was about 21,000,000 roubles (£2,100,000). *This sum is equal to the total amount of share capital accumulated during these two years in the village co-operative societies.*'⁸

Is there any wonder that the peasants are against the Bolsheviks? But there is no legal possibility open to them to try to amend their position in a constitutional way. The political power rests exclusively in the hands of the Communist Party. Peasants are not allowed to organise their own political party. They are scattered throughout vast territories, living in small communities. There is nothing left to them but the tactics of passive resistance. These tactics have been used more than once by the Russian peasants in the course of their history. They resorted to it in 1920-1, and they are resorting to it now.

These tactics consist in cutting the production of food-stuffs and agricultural raw materials and consumption of manufactured goods. The Russian moujik is like a snail - at the hour of danger he retires within his shell.

Somebody has compared the peasant tactics of passive resistance to the Bolshevik experiment of giving orchestral concerts without a conductor. This comparison is, to a certain degree, true. Peasants throughout Soviet Russia are acting now exactly as the musicians in an orchestra without a conductor. They have no leaders. Nobody tells them how they should act, but by the inborn instinct they all employ the only effective method which in the long run will force the Soviet Government to their knees.

'It is possible to rule Russia without the peasants participating in the Government; but it is absolutely impossible to govern the country against the interests of the peasants,' said one of the ministers of the Tsar Nicolas II.

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The Bolsheviks have already found that this maxim remains also true for their regime.

The present dissensions within the Communist Party, the dissensions which are more dangerous to the fate of the Bolshevik dictatorship than Trotsky's opposition, are the direct result of the pressure which the peasants are exercising on the whole structure of the Soviet regime.

In a speech delivered at a Communist meeting in Moscow, on 9th October 1928, Stalin said that 'there were certain Communists who opposed our present policy in the villages, who insisted that the present *tempo* of the development of our industry was perilous, who objected to assigning funds for the upkeep of the Soviet farms, and who demanded the slackening of the monopoly of foreign trade.'

All these 'demands' and 'objections' are nothing else than the formulation of the immediate political and economic needs and requirements of Russian peasants. The more sensible men within the Communist Party begin to realise that 'it is impossible to govern Russia in opposition to the peasants.'

It remains to be seen if the Soviet Government, or, rather, the Politbureau of the Communist Party, will see their way to meet the demands of the peasants, and to change their policy accordingly. Lenin did it in 1921. Will Stalin be able to follow the master's example? 'That is the question!'

Meanwhile, the peasants are showing their discontent with the Bolshevik regime in a more effective way than 'passive resistance.' This is discussed in an article in *Pravda* by Mr. Latzis, formerly one of the chief executioners at the head of 'Tcheka.'

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'Every day our papers report cases of murder of chairmen of the village Soviets, or one of the 'selkors' (village informers), or setting fire to the buildings, Soviet farms, etc. The journal *Krestianskaya Gazeta* calculated that the number of murders of Soviet officials in the villages has increased 100 per cent. from 1927 to 1928. The journal says that the murders bear a distinct political character, of class vengeance on the part of the well-to-do peasants. In reply to the decisions of the Fifteenth Party Congress to prosecute them, and to widen the Socialist sector in agriculture, the 'kulaks' have decided upon a counter-attack, and, being deprived of any other means of protest, they resorted to violence; they are setting fire to Soviet farms, and murdering and terrorising Soviet officials.'¹⁰

As a matter of fact, the peasant terrorism never has been put down in Soviet Russia. Very often only by murdering a Soviet official who extorted bribes from the peasants and made life for them intolerable could they get rid of him. But, as Mr. Latzis testifies, peasant terrorism has now taken a distinctly political turn.

By murdering minor Soviet officials and by burning down Soviet farms the peasants cannot, of course, do much harm to the Bolshevik regime. But the large increase in the number of these crimes shows that the peasants are in bitter, dangerous mood, and that their proverbial patience is nearing the end. . . .

'All the prophets are fools,' says an old proverb, and we shall not indulge in prophecy. Nevertheless, the facts of the present Russian situation point in a direction that is perilous to the Bolshevik dictatorship. When the final breakdown will happen, it is impossible to tell. On the

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other hand, it is impossible to deny that there is plenty of combustible material in Soviet Russia at present, and the stock of this material is rapidly increasing.

We have only touched the 'peasant question' superficially. But enough material has been given in this chapter to show that the attitude of the Soviet Government towards the peasants is absolutely contrary to the interests of the Russian industrial workers, properly understood.

Russian national industry, on which the well-being of the industrial workers depends, can be developed only if the peasants can enjoy a fair level of prosperity, because only a prosperous peasantry can supply cheap food-stuffs and raw materials in plenty and be a steady consumer of manufactured goods. It is absolutely self-evident, and the economic history of all young nations - take, for instance, America - followed these lines. Their prosperity and industrial progress grew up and developed on the healthy foundation of a prosperous and flourishing agricultural population.

It is in the interests of the Russian workers to attain a real union with the peasants. This union will be beneficial for both parties if only the peasants are left alone and allowed to realise their ambitions in their own way.

By checking the growth of peasant prosperity the Bolsheviks are doing great harm to the progress of Russian national industry and, consequently, to the interests of the Russian working classes.

But the Bolsheviks are not really concerned in the interests of the workers. They want to keep the political power which fell to them in October 1917, and they are ready to sacrifice anything and everything to this aim.

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CHAPTER XIV

COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP IN RUSSIA AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

**Communist Conception of Socialism – Red Imperialism
– Menace to World's Peace and Prosperity – Final Con-
clusions.**

THE Bolshevik Revolution aroused great enthusiasm and admiration among several sections of European Socialists. Many mistook it for the beginning of a new era in the history of human civilisation. They thought that the Bolshevik dictatorship in Russia was a prelude to a complete radical reorganisation of Europe, and, indeed, of the whole world, on Socialist lines. Some European Socialists, however, kept a cool head, and from the very beginning were able to distinguish, beneath the Socialist mask which the Bolshevik leaders were wearing, the tyrannical, despotic, anti-Socialist, and anti-proletarian nature of their policies.

Even now, after eleven years of Soviet dictatorship, when the failure of the Bolsheviks to introduce Socialism into Russia has become absolutely clear, there are still men and women in the European Socialist movement who hold the view that Socialists and Communists have the same common aim, namely, the socialisation of the means of production and distribution.

Nothing is more erroneous than this notion. It is only

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necessary to study carefully the programme of the Communist International, adopted at its Sixth Congress in August 1928, and the practical lessons of the Communist dictatorship in Russia, to see how different are not only the methods, but the very conceptions of Socialists and Communists with regard to the ultimate object of the organised Labour Movement.

According to the Socialist conception, 'socialisation' is the transfer of the means of production and distribution from the ownership of private groups and individuals to that of the community as a whole. All the functions of the community, including the satisfaction of its material needs, are to be managed in a Socialist society on a basis of self-government and self-management—that is, of political, social, and economic democracy. 'Everything for the people, by the people, and through the people'—such is the Socialist idea of an ideal human society.

The Communists are deadly opposed to the very idea of democracy. They maintain that the transfer of the means of production and distribution from private to public ownership can and must be carried out only by the dictatorship of the modernised Jesuitical order known as the 'Communist Party.' According to the Communist conception, 'socialisation' means the establishment and the strengthening to an enormous extent of the same State capitalism existing under all political and social regimes.

Socialists who accept the idea of 'proletarian dictatorship' look upon this dictatorship as something to be exercised only during a very brief period. As soon as the resistance of the capitalist classes is broken, and the new social order consolidated, the regime of dictatorship must be given up, and democracy, more extensive and complete

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than is possible under the capitalist order of society, introduced.

Communists, on the contrary, maintain that their dictatorship must be continued for a very long time. The programme of the Communist International says that, 'between the abolition of Capitalism and the establishment of Communism, there is a long period of revolutionary transition. . . . If bourgeois revolutions had been able to put an end to the political predominance of the feudal nobility only in the course of centuries, the international proletarian revolution, though not being an instantaneous act, and not requiring a whole epoch for its execution, will be able to achieve its aim within a shorter period of time. Only after the complete, world-wide victory of the proletariat, and the consolidation of its predominance over the entire world, will a long epoch of the intensive building up of the world Socialist economy follow.'¹

Until then - the dictatorship! This dictatorship will extend itself over an ever-increasing number of countries, and consolidate its absolute power over the whole globe amid wars and revolutions. Who can guarantee that this dictatorship, born and raised in a deadly struggle against all who oppose it, accustomed to the ruthless use of oppressive and terrorist methods, stained in blood from top to bottom, will ever be ready to transfer its power to the people, and to introduce political, social, and economic democracy? The history of the human race teaches us that dictators have never voluntarily parted with their power. Why, then, must it be supposed that Communist dictatorship will be different from all other kinds of dictatorships? Dictatorship and democracy are ideas absolutely opposite to each other. And it will be well in the interests of the

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international labour movement if those Socialists who advocate collaboration between the Communist and Socialist parties fully understand what an abyss lies between Socialist and Communist conceptions of the future social order.

Russian Bolshevism is certainly not merely a Russian problem. It is also an international problem of the first magnitude. The object of the Russian Bolsheviks who succeeded in establishing their rule over the country, which occupies one-sixth of the globe, which is fabulously rich in natural resources, and populated by 150,000,000 of gifted and energetic people, is to extend their power over the whole world. The 'Red Imperialism' of the Kremlin is not an invention of idle or timorous minds, but a fact of burning reality.

'Being the country of proletarian dictatorship,' says the programme of the Communist International, 'the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics becomes the foundation of the movement of all oppressed classes, the heart of the world revolution, the most prominent factor in world history. The international proletariat for the first time finds in the U.S.S.R. its real fatherland; for the colonial countries the U.S.S.R. becomes the centre of gravitation.'^a

A special machinery of the Communist International is created by the Russian Bolsheviks for the promotion of the World Communist Revolution. Like a man who pulls the strings at a 'Punch and Judy' show, the Communist International is to put revolutionary puppets in motion in every and any country of the world. In one country it must provoke national revolutions, in another foment social and industrial troubles. Even the most backward colonial countries are to be benefited by the Communist Inter-

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national. These countries, acting under its orders, will be able to walk out of Capitalism directly into the happy Socialist paradise!

There is no doubt at all that the Communist International is only a mere tool in the hands of the Politbureau of the Russian Communist Party. The numerical predominance of the Russian section of the Communist International over all the other sixty-five national sections gives complete control of the whole of its machinery to the clique at the Kremlin. According to official statistics, out of 4,000,000 members of the Communist parties represented at the Sixth International Communist Congress, 3,200,000 belonged to the Russian Communist Party and the Russian Communist League of Youth.³ It is also a well-known fact that Communist propaganda in all countries is entirely dependent upon the financial support of the Kremlin dictators, who, having behind them the resources of a great country, and being not over-scrupulous with the public money at their disposal, are very liberal with funds for the maintenance of their agents in foreign countries.

The Communist danger must not be under-estimated. The mad schemes of the Bolshevik dictators about the World Revolution are certain to fail. There is no doubt whatever about that. The German 'Putsch,' and the armed revolt in Bulgaria in 1923, the rising in Reval in 1924, the general strike in England in 1926, the Vienna riots in 1927, the failure of the Communist policy in China in 1927-8 - to take only the most important examples - all these facts show what little chance the Bolsheviks have for the realisation of their plots and schemes.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the Russian Bolsheviks can and will make a deal of mischief. It is

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evident that the existence of the Communist dictatorship in Russia represents a serious menace to international peace and the world's economic stability and progress.

The Bolsheviks make no secret of their intentions to begin a new world war as soon as they consider the situation in Europe favourable for their schemes. Extensive military preparations are going on in Russia, and the Communist propagandists in all countries are very persistent in their endeavours to impress upon people the idea that a 'new war' is absolutely inevitable and unavoidable. The 'war danger' was very large discussed at the Sixth Communist Congress, and many practical measures for provoking it were suggested and adopted. This warlike attitude of the Russian Bolsheviks must not be wondered at. They hope, no doubt, to find a solution of their domestic difficulties in a war; in addition to which, war, according to their conceptions, is bound to create favourable conditions for the Communist World Revolution.

It is to be hoped that other countries will not be provoked into a war by Communist intrigues. But there is another danger. Communist propaganda certainly finds very favourable ground in those countries where local agrarian or national movements are on foot, and where people do not enjoy the benefits which democracy provides in the more civilised countries. The possibility of Communist success in these countries must not be overlooked. In any case much mischief will be done to the world if the Communists succeed even partially in stirring up trouble, for instance in India, or in the countries of South America.

The very fact that a vast country like Russia, with 150,000,000 of people, is practically excluded from economic relations with the rest of the world, is wholly

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detrimental to the well-being and prosperity of the world. We live in a world which is, in many respects, tending towards an economic unit. Any serious displacement of normal economic processes in any country affects the whole world in a most unfavourable manner. How much easier would have been the solution of all the present European economic difficulties and political problems had Russian affairs been administered by a progressive democratic government!

This is not the place to indulge in hypotheses. But there is no doubt that the question of European disarmament, for instance, could be solved far more easily if only French fears could be removed that Germany may join hands with Soviet Russia in an endeavour to modify the stipulations of the Versailles Treaty.

European States bordering upon the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic are also in a state of more or less uncertainty, at times approaching to fear, as to what may happen. The 'theses' of the Third International on the 'Inevitability of a New War,' and the necessity of the international proletariat being ready to turn it into 'heavy civil war,' are not calculated to convince the world in general of the pacific intentions of the Russian Communists. 'No one can guarantee that the Soviet Union will not be attacked. Therefore we are forced to expend certain sums for the maintenance of the army. The Soviet Union would be more than pleased to devote these sums to peaceful construction. But as long as we have no security that the Soviet Union will not be attacked, it is our duty to expend the means at our disposal to the best purpose.'

Is there a single war minister of any 'bourgeois' or 'capitalist' country who could not legitimately say the

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same thing in the same words as Voroshiloff, the war minister of Soviet Russia? And would not the Communists of this country vehemently denounce him for saying it?

And the official Soviet report of Voroshiloff's speech at the conclusion of the Kieff manœuvres in the autumn adds: 'In the midst of enthusiastic applause, Comrade Voroshiloff declared that the technical level of the Red Army is not inferior to that of its neighbours or perhaps even surpasses it. The great manœuvres at Kieff have again shown the mighty achievements of the Red Army.'

There is also little doubt that the economic situation in many European countries would be much easier if only Russia could develop her inexhaustible natural resources unhampered by the Bolshevik attitude towards Russian industry and agriculture.

Economically and politically, Russia, under the Bolshevist yoke, can be regarded as a cancerous tumour on the body of Europe, and, therefore, every care must be taken to prevent the dreadful disease spreading to the vital organs.

And however grave the Bolshevist problem is for European statesmen, it is still graver for the leaders of the International Labour Movement. Long experience must have taught them that no good to the Labour Movement can be expected from Moscow. As a matter of fact, the Bolsheviks admit very frankly that they consider the Socialist Parties of Europe to be their most dangerous enemies. The last Congress of the Communist International declared 'war to the knife' against Socialism.

Everyday leaders of the European Labour Movement are supplied with evidence of the disruptive and destructive work of the Russian Bolsheviks in the ranks of organised

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labour. The latter are using every means – even the most dastardly and dishonest ones – to divide the Labour Movement, to undermine the political influence of the Socialist Parties, to compromise the labour leaders, and to sow suspicion, hatred and animosity among the rank and file. Calumnies, lies, monstrous allegations, and accusations are used by Communists in their fight against Socialism. Never before has the old rule of the Jesuits, ‘the end justifies the means,’ been so widely and thoroughly applied as by the Communists in their endeavour to clear the Socialists out of the Labour Movement.

Notwithstanding all these things, there are still Socialists – undoubtedly honest and sincere men and women – ready to forgive and forget and to collaborate with Communists. There are still some sentimental souls who cannot get rid of old sympathies towards those men who ‘made the greatest Socialist experiment in human history.’ In their eyes the Bolsheviks are still ardent and sincere revolutionists who dared to do things of which many generations of brave men have only dreamed.

What a mistake! What an illusion!

We hope that the facts given in this book about the actual labour and social conditions in Soviet Russia will convince all who really have the interests of the working classes at heart that Russian Bolshevism is the most colossal fraud ever imposed upon the world.

Not less mistaken are those who think that, by helping trade relations with Soviet Russia under present conditions, the economic difficulties against which some European countries are struggling can be solved. The events of the last two years have shown that these hopes are futile. As long as Russia remains under the dictatorial rule of the

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Bolsheviks her economic regeneration is impossible. The Bolsheviks, by their economic policy, are doing their utmost to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. They put every sort of obstacle in the way of the development of Russian agriculture, the basic industry of the Russian nation. How can Russia pay for imported goods if she is unable to export agricultural produce? There is, likewise, no hope that the Bolsheviks will ever be able to export manufactured goods, as industrial prices in Russia are far above world prices. Soviet Russia is not, and never can be, in a position to compete with other industrial countries on the markets of the world.

Those who advocate the development of trade relations with Soviet Russia have surely no wish to make presents of the wealth of their countries to the Bolsheviks; they expect to receive an equivalent for the goods supplied. Russia, under Bolshevik domination, is unable to provide such equivalents. Every one who takes the trouble to study the present economic conditions in Soviet Russia must come to that conclusion.

No other event in modern times has aroused so many controversies as the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. While many were prepared to consider the Bolsheviks as fiery, but sincere, prophets of a new, just, and beneficially social, political, and economic order, and were ready to close their eyes to and excuse the atrocities which accompanied the establishment and consolidation of the Soviet Government, others condemned the Bolshevik Revolution, lock, stock, and barrel, without any reservation.

Certainly the time has not yet arrived to pronounce a final judgment on such a complicated and controversial matter. Nevertheless, the twelve years that have passed

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since 7th November 1917 represent a sufficient lapse of time for testing the most essential features of the Bolshevik regime by practical experience.

The first conclusion to be come to on the evidence of this practical test is that economically Bolshevik dictatorship is a phenomenon of regress, and not of progress. The Bolsheviks have failed to raise Russia to a higher level of economic prosperity and development. On the contrary, the economy of Russia is now in the same state as it was half a century ago.

Politically, the Communist regime is a regime of reaction. The most elementary civic rights have been taken away from the Russian people. The Soviet Government is not a popular Government, but a Government of a small coterie, able to retain political power only by means of terrorism and the ruthless persecution of all its adversaries. Such is our second conclusion.

The third conclusion is that, socially, the Soviet regime has not produced any appreciable results for the Russian industrial proletariat and the Russian peasantry.

What have the Russian workers gained socially by the Bolshevik Revolution? The material given in this book provides a full and sufficient answer to this question.

The peasants, it is true, have received land; but at what an enormous price! They have paid for it not only with the blood spilt during the civil wars, but with famine, which was responsible for not less than 5,000,000 deaths. They are paying for it now in money; the 'scissors' are a kind of material compensation the peasants are obliged to pay to the Bolshevik Government for the use of the land.

Why, then, is the Bolshevik coterie able to retain its grip on Russia? What are the forces which support it?

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The Russian masses are still frightfully weary after the terrible experiences of the long years of the Great War and of Revolution. They are still lacking the necessary energy which would enable them to shake off the hated yoke of the Bolshevik dictatorship. They are disorganised and terrorised.

During these twelve years the Bolshevik coterie has consolidated its position. Traditions have been established, and the apparatus of dictatorship – the G.P.U. and the ‘Red Army’ – has been perfected.

The peasants, the overwhelming mass of the Russian people, are notoriously slow and patient. The industrial workers are entangled in the net of the Communist cells and trade unions, and partly corrupted by the petty privileges which the Bolsheviks throw to them as a bone is thrown to a dog.

But there is no doubt about the final fate of Russian Bolshevism. It is doomed like any and every despotism. It may wrestle for some time with the difficulties which are besetting it from all sides, but it will fall, as unexpectedly and as speedily as fell the Romanoffs in February 1917.

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