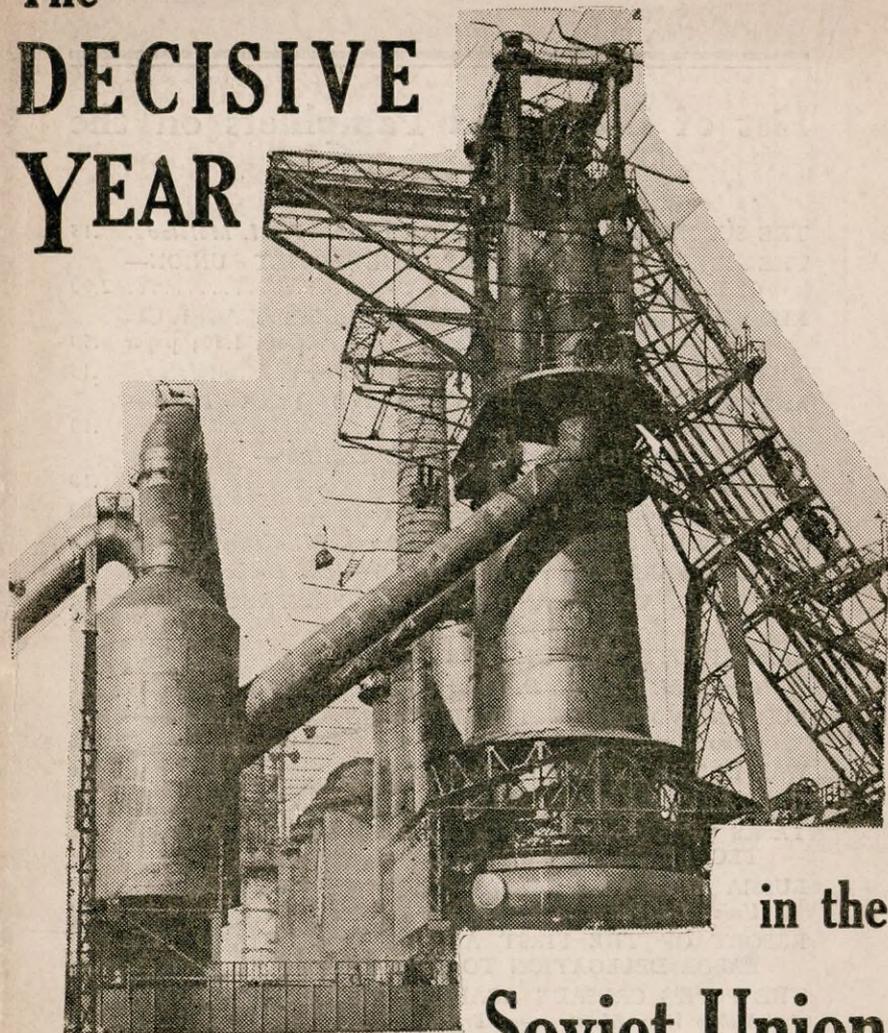


The DECISIVE YEAR



in the
Soviet Union

by
A. A. HELLER

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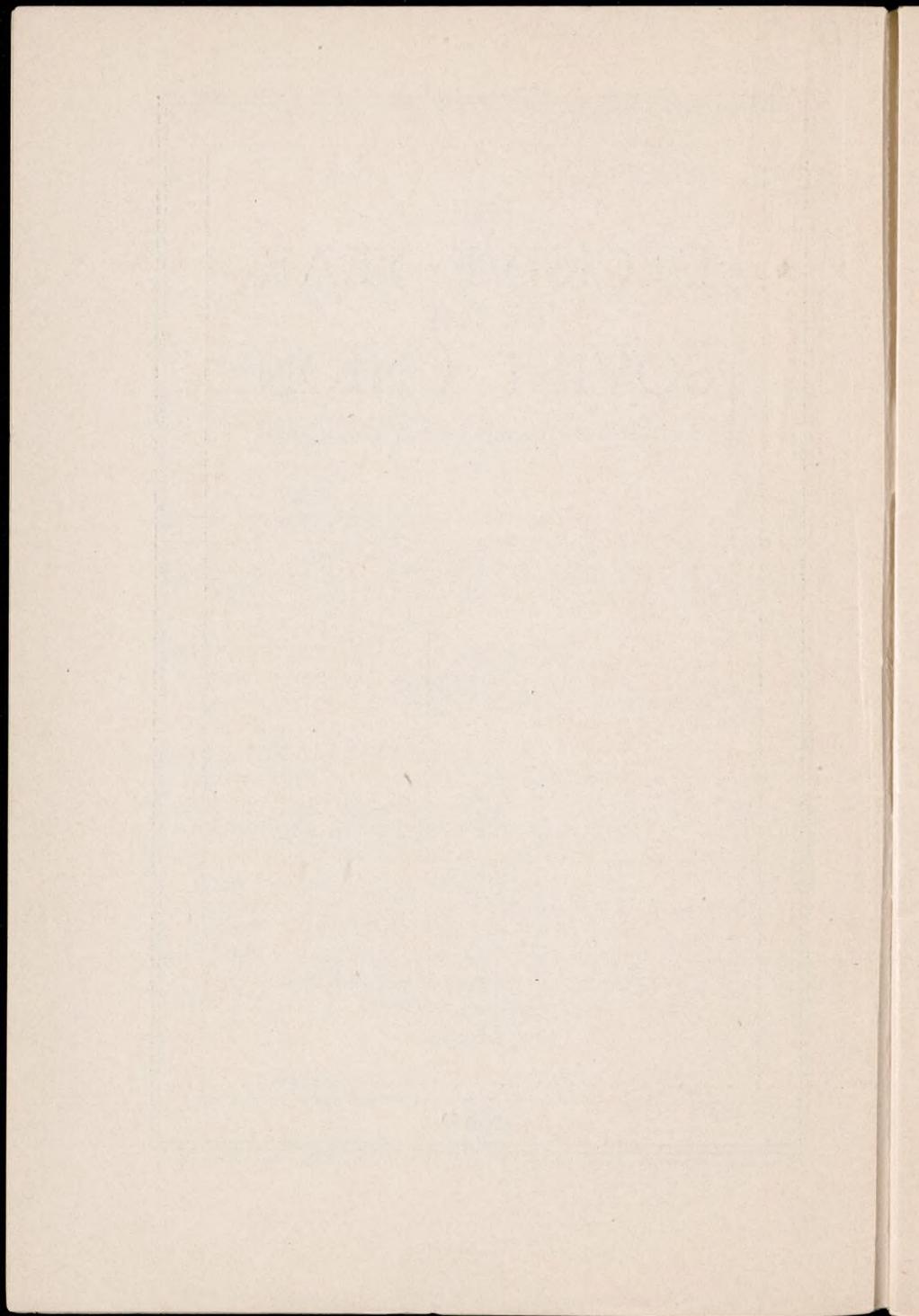
THE
DECISIVE YEAR
IN THE
SOVIET UNION

(Socialist Construction in U.S.S.R. in 1931)

by
A. A. HELLER

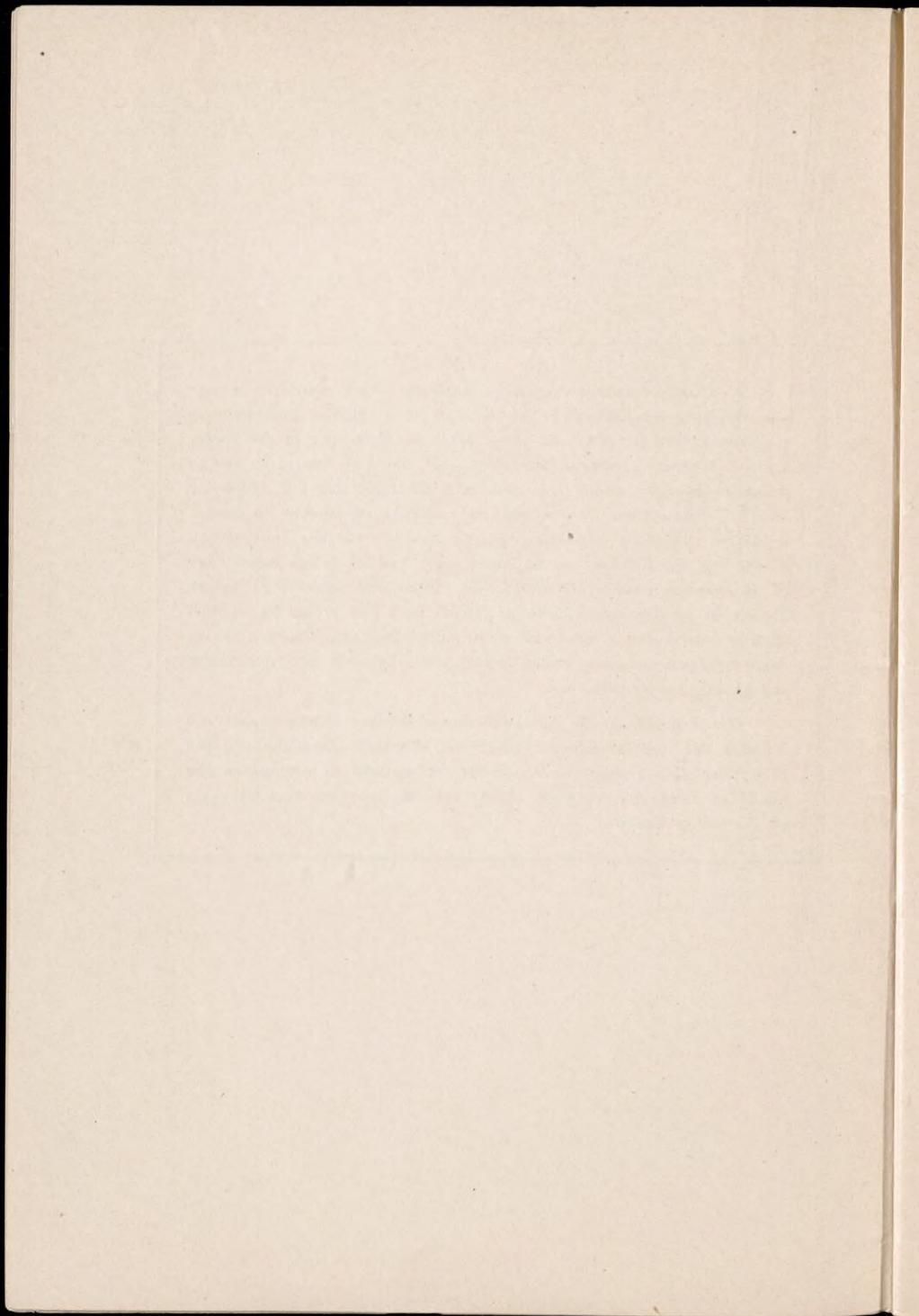
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This little booklet should be read by every worker, farmer and thinking intellectual. The author, A. A. Heller, is known to students of the U.S.S.R. In 1921, after his first stay in the Soviet Union he wrote a graphic description of the first efforts to revive Russian industry under the title of *Industrial Revival of Soviet Russia*. Since then he has been a constant co-worker in Soviet industry. He does not write as an outsider. He has contributed a share to the building of Socialism. He has taken his knowledge of autogenous welding to the Soviet Union and with it helped to lay an oil pipeline from Baku to Batum, and the group he worked with is now laying a line from Armavir to Donbass. Here it means more production, more wages, better life. It is in this spirit that the booklet is written.

The Friends of the Soviet Union publishes this pamphlet to broaden the understanding of the First Workers' Republic and the Five Year Plan among the American masses, and to strengthen the bonds of solidarity between them and the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union.



THE DECISIVE YEAR IN THE SOVIET UNION

The working class is the master of the country, working not for the capitalists, but for its own class.

—STALIN.

Leningrad, June, 1931. A large factory on the outskirts of the city. Several thousand workmen, young and old, men and women, busy at the machines; the hum of motors, conveyors, cranes; a modern industrial bee-hive. The chief engineer is showing me around. He is proud of his plant, of the incessant hum of the machines. He points to a number of new devices which they have developed and are manufacturing at this plant. "What about labor?" I ask him. "Can you get enough skilled men to turn out these intricate products?" "Ah, there's the rub," replies he chief engineer in all seriousness. "Skilled men all right—we can make these in three or six months by intensive instruction; but we cannot find enough workmen of any type. It used to be, two or three years ago, that a telephone call to the labor exchange in the city would bring us all the help we asked for; today you will find more factory managers at the labor exchange clamoring for workmen than applicants."

The chief engineer of the Leningrad electrical works did not exaggerate. I heard this cry of shortage of labor—skilled labor, even common labor—all over the Soviet Union. Everywhere the rapidly growing Soviet industry is absorbing every available man and woman, is finding employment for all who are willing and able to work. There is no unemployment in the Soviet Union, it is a thing of the past, as the capitalist order there is a thing of the past, an anachronism never again to be permitted or suffered in a society organized on a socialist basis, "where the working class is the master of the country."

Socialist System versus Capitalist System

The proposition is so obvious. In a world where labor of hand and brain, applied to natural resources, is able to produce a sufficiency of everything necessary to human well-being, to find abject poverty, misery, starvation; to find in Europe and the United States thirty million able-bodied men and women, able and willing to work and yet unable to find application of their labor power, is it possible to imagine a greater demonstration of the break-down of the capitalist system! On the one hand, modern skill and modern technique produce or can produce an abundance of goods; on the other hand, people starving for the want of these goods because the machinery of production, the land, the government, is the private property of the capitalist class. Because a mere handful of people in every country claim ownership of the riches of the country, the great mass of the people, the working class and the poor farmers, must beg for the right to live, are at the complete mercy of the exploiting class.

Against this, compare the Socialist system as exemplified by the Soviet Union. It is no longer a theory of the learned, a dream of the idealist. It is a living fact, a system actually working, proving day by day its ability to build, to create a new world, a world without war or misery or degradation, a world without master nor slave.

In the Soviet Union it is the working class and the working farmer who are the real bosses of the country and all that it contains. Their well-being is their own business, they are the ones who direct things: the government, industry, agriculture, science, art. They are the real masters of life, and if today they work hard, very hard, they know the reason why: they are building a new, masterless, splendid, plentiful world, for themselves and their children, a world wherein the worker may enjoy the fruits of his labor without fear, without stint, without paying tribute to a useless master class.

I saw these things come to pass, saw them with my own eyes; I can report of them first-hand. For ten years, since 1921, I have been a frequent visitor to the Soviet Union, watching closely the life and the activities there, taking part in these activities if only in a small way; I may speak therefore with knowledge gain-

ed at first-hand, from personal knowledge gained by experience, not as a visitor or outsider.

And what is this knowledge I have gained, what is this report I am bringing to you? In this report I shall attempt to present to you the picture of Soviet Russia as it was in 1921 on my first visit just ten years ago, and the picture of the Soviet Union as I saw it during a visit just concluded. I shall try to trace in as little space as possible the growth and development of the Soviet Union during these ten years and show you if I can why and how the Socialist order in the Soviet Union is making such rapid strides; while in countries under the rule of capitalism crisis follows crisis and the established order is rapidly breaking down.

SOVIET RUSSIA IN 1921

The spring and early summer of 1921 was an unforgettable time in Soviet Russia. The civil war was at an end and the last foreign aggressors were driven out of the country. The revolution was triumphant everywhere over the vast territory. The counter-revolutionary armies of Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel and others were all beaten and dispersed; the Polish campaign, the Czech onslaught, the American, English, French and Japanese armies of intervention were all cleaned up and cleared out of the country. Internal insurrection, like the Kronstadt affair, instigated by Mensheviks and anarchists, was just liquidated, as were the last sporadic depredations of army remnants and robber bands in distant parts. In a word—Russia then was catching its first breath of peace, gathering its strength to repair the ravages of civil war and foreign aggression. It was the end of the period of military communism—everybody was deathly tired, but happy at the thought that there was an end to fighting, that one could give his whole time and thought from now on to peaceful efforts: reconstruction of the wrecked industries and transport, cultivation of the war-trodden and abandoned fields, inauguration of Socialist policies in life and labor. To meet this new situation, to give the necessary spurt to peaceful activities, Lenin promulgated the new economic policy, NEP, the policy of peace time advance as distinct from the war methods of military communism.

From this time dates the reconstruction period in Soviet history.

But not yet was constructive effort to be carried on in peace: the famine of 1921-22 was already on its way, that dreadful scourge which came as an aftermath of civil war and intervention, to threaten the recently won stability of the State. The famine tied up plans of reconstruction, piled up more care and worry on the shoulders of the Bolsheviks, made a difficult situation still more tense.

Let me quote from what I wrote about the conditions at the time after my visit to Soviet Russia in 1921:

"'We have inherited an enormous property,' Smirnov was saying, 'but it is in terrible shape, after these seven years of war and blockade. Our industries are ruined, our railroads lack equipment, fuel; our workmen do not get enough food, and the peasants are not able to till a large part of their soil for lack of tools, horses, cattle. The war has deprived us of two-thirds of our live stock. Our skilled men too laid down their lives in the tsar's wars, and in the struggles against the counter-revolutionists. In this district,' and he pointed to the country we were traveling through, 'we just cleaned up the last remaining band two or three months ago; in fact, old officer bands, simple robbers, are still hiding in the Taiga, and occasionally making raids on the surrounding country. We've got to start building from the bottom; we need industries, coal, iron manufactures. We need new railways to connect our agricultural communities with the industrial cities. Look at the natural wealth about us'—and he pointed to maps showing coal deposits, iron ore deposits, silver, lead and gold deposits—to the timber lands rich in building materials, in fuel, in furs, to the rich black soil, that could grow almost anything man required, to the rivers where fish abound. 'All this wealth needs to be developed, taken out of the ground and turned to man's use. We are helpless just now, without tools, without means of communication. But, mind you,' he continued, and his eyes glistened with inspiration, 'we are just beginning our fight on the industrial front; we are determined to win, as we won on the military front, and nothing will stop us from achieving our aims! We are through with wars, the country is at peace, we shall now have time to tackle the more difficult fight—that of economic reconstruction.' '*

And did the Bolsheviks lose heart under the onslaughts of inimical forces of man and nature; did they slacken their efforts? Certainly not. With courage and determination that characterize Bolsheviks, with relentless energy, with the utmost self-sacrifice, ably directed by the Communist Party with Lenin at its head,

*A. A. Heller, *The Industrial Revival in Soviet Russia*.

they took hold of the situation, they continued their efforts to revive industry, agriculture, transport. By the end of 1922 the wounds of the famine-stricken country were healed, the idle factories began to turn their wheels, the normal workaday life was being slowly instituted all over the huge land.

By what means? The country was bare, the Government treasury was nearly empty—more than half its gold was stolen by the enemies during the civil war—bank notes had no value. The industrial plant of the country, inefficient and insufficient as it was even in the best times of the old regime, had further deteriorated during the terrible years of war, intervention, and famine. The coal mines of the Don Basin were partly flooded as a result of the German advance and the desperate acts of the White generals; the oil fields of Baku, last to be freed from foreign aggression, were dislocated, in wretched condition. Even the fields in the hands of the peasants did not give a normal harvest: there were no horses, no cattle, no tools to work with, a great lack of man-power.

Policy of Concessions

It was logical at that time that the eyes of the leaders should turn abroad, in expectation of some assistance from France, England, Germany, the United States. This was a time when concessions were offered to foreign capitalists on very favorable terms, in the hope of obtaining some relief by the introduction of foreign capital and foreign technical methods. But even then, much as this foreign help was desired and needed, even then, in the fall of 1921, the Bolsheviks turned down the bid of Sir Leslie Urquhart for a huge concession in the Urals and Siberia, because the bid contained conditions inconsistent with Communist principles; and the Communists refused to accept help at such a price. A number of concessions were granted in the following years to various foreign groups and individuals, but all with definite restrictions and with the right of the Government to buy them out on certain notice. As for bringing much capital into the country or great help in the building up of industry, these concessions did not prove of material value.

At this time therefore, the picture presented by Soviet Russia can be summed up as follows:

Agriculture—in very bad shape: the land was in the hands of the peasants to be sure, as promised by the Revolution, but parcelled out among 26 million individual peasant households, each household tilling its own parcel of land with ancient implements, very poorly; many of the younger people killed off in the wars, likewise horses and cattle; old stocks of grain practically wiped out, with the result that even good harvests gave exceedingly small returns.

Natural resources—coal, oil, timber, minerals, metals, etc., workings in wretched shape, many mines flooded, machinery broken down, lack of technicians and skilled workers, miserable housing conditions as an inheritance of the old regime augmented by the destruction of war; a situation that seemed totally hopeless.

Transport—in deplorable condition; the seven years of war, foreign aggression and civil war had played particular havoc with this branch of national economy. The Russian railway system was never extensive nor specially efficient; now, after seven years of the severest strain—a good portion of the system for years in the hands of enemies, foreign and native counter-revolutionists, who made it their business to destroy, by blowing up bridges, tearing up rails, wrecking locomotives and rolling stock—it was a wonder that there was anything left of the railway system at all, that any rail transport still existed in Soviet Russia.

Industry—Russia of the pre-revolutionary days, rich as it was in population and natural resources, was one of the most backward countries in the world industrially. The tsars feared industrial development and the growth of a working class. The country was forced to remain a peasant country, unorganized, easily exploited for the benefit of the hungry crew of the tsar and his hangers-on, the huge military and police machine. Thus out of a population of 160 million in pre-war days, there were not more than two million industrial workers. (In the United States, in 1910, out of a population of 92,000,000, there were 10,600,000 industrial workers.) The total output of Russian industry in 1913 amounted to a little over four billion dollars, a mere fraction of the output of industrially developed countries. How much then could so inadequate an industrial establishment provide for the needs of the country, especially after seven years of fighting and famine? The picture was sad enough.

TABLE I

*Gross Production of the National Economy of the Soviet Union
(In billions of rubles)***

	<i>All industry</i>	<i>Mfg. industries</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>
1913	8.43	6.39	11.61
1921	2.08	1.08	7.42

It was necessary to start from the ground up. It was necessary to find the raw materials for the factories, tools, repair parts, fuel. It was necessary to man the factories, since a great deal of the personnel had drifted away during those years. Commissions were dispatched from Moscow to every part of the country to check up on available resources—coal, iron ore, metals, etc. Every Communist went at a moment's notice where the Party sent him: to the villages to help in land tilling or stock raising, to the mines and factories to gather up the dispersed workers, to infuse enthusiasm and energy among them, to build up the required personnel. Thus slowly, with tremendous efforts, with infinite pains, with perseverance and skill common to Lenin and the Communist Party, were industries started, harvests increased, transport reorganized, and the life forces of the country brought into operation. Gradually the situation of the country began to improve and to gather momentum, month by month, year by year.

Lenin said at this time:

"Comrades! I am going to present to you a report regarding the external and internal situation of our Republic. For the first time I am able to present to you such a report under circumstances where for a whole year we did not have a single act of aggression, not an important one, on the part of Russian and foreign capitalists. The first year when we could take advantage, even if not in full measure, of relative peace from aggressions, and were able to apply our forces, to some extent, to that which is our principal and fundamental problem—to the reconstruction of our economy, to the healing of the wounds inflicted upon Russia by the commanders of the exploiting classes, and to the task of placing again the foundations of Socialist orders***

**Report to the Council of Peoples Commissars at the IX All Russian Congress of Soviets, December 23, 1921.

***G. T. Grinko, *The Five-Year Plan of the Soviet Union*.

RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

On my visit to the Soviet Union in 1925 I attended several sessions of the Congress of Soviets. I listened to reports of Rykov, Dzerjinsky and other leaders, to the speeches of the delegates who came from every part of the Soviet Union, from some of the farthest and most backward sections, and I was amazed and thrilled by the note of vigor, energy, boundless faith in the future that permeated the Congress. "We came here," the speakers said, "to report to you progress. Greater progress than we dared expect, dared hope for, two or three years ago. Then we did not know where to begin, we had nothing to start with except our bare hands and the instructions of the Party to bring order out of chaos, to build up our ruined fields and factories, and our own determination to succeed. And we have succeeded!" One delegate after another, from factories in Leningrad, from the oil fields of Baku, from the Donetz mines, from Ukraine and the Urals, from far-off Siberia or Uzbekistan, presented their reports and proofs of the growth of factory, mine, agricultural output in their sections. Not a paean of self-praise, not a song of conquest did the delegates repeat, but an inspiring picture of a steady upswing.

Every year marked a definite improvement in the condition

TABLE II

*Gross Production of the National Economy of the Soviet Union
(In billions of rubles) **

	<i>All industry</i>	<i>Mfg. industries</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>
1913	8.43	6.39	11.61
1920-21	2.08	1.08	7.42
1921-22	2.54	1.44	6.31
1922-23	3.33	2.13	8.54
1923-24	4.05	2.59	9.28
1924-25	5.65	3.96	9.75
1925-26	7.58	5.72	11.76
1926-27	8.76	6.72	12.37
1927-28	10.08	8.14	12.26

* G. T. Grinko, *The Five-Year Plan* of the Soviet Union.

of the country; every year added so many percent to the output of coal, oil, metal, agricultural and industrial products. Already in 1927 the level of pre-war production was reached, and the following year far surpassed it. In any capitalist country this steady growth would have been hailed as a great achievement, pointed to with pride. A few more men would have become millionaires, some more palaces would have been erected, a few more spendthrifts would have wasted in riotous living the additional profits wrung from the workers. And the great mass of the people, the workers and the farmers, would have stayed as poor as ever. But in a Socialist country, any increase of wealth has a vastly different significance, an entirely different aim. This increase belongs to the masses, it is for their common benefit.

Conditions in Old Russia

Obviously, to improve the condition of so vast a population as that of the Soviet Union—161 million according to the last census, and increasing at the rate of 3 million per year—a rate of increase in the productive capacity of the country as noted above (TABLE II) is totally insufficient. Besides, one has to bear in mind the state in which people lived before the Revolution: a workman earned as low as thirty rubles per month while the average peasant family didn't dispose of fifty rubles in cash a year. And how did they live? The workmen—in barracks and cellars, the peasants—in wretched huts, half starved, in rags, illiterate. Not so after the Revolution. The demands of the population for better living conditions, better housing, more education, higher cultural values, grew faster than the slowly increasing production could provide. Under the old regime perhaps 10% of the population—if that many—had a fair standard of living, and one or two percent of them luxuriated in wealth, while 90% had practically nothing; again, under the old regime only about 28% of the rural and 60% of the urban population received any kind of schooling, with a small number going through colleges and universities, while the great majority remained totally illiterate. After the Revolution it was necessary to provide the great mass—the 72% and 90%—of the population with higher standards of living and education.

Health and Education

Compared with pre-war conditions, the educational and living standards of the masses had already been raised considerably by 1928. A worker's budget in 1928 was far superior to what it was in 1913. Instead of working ten and twelve hours a day as formerly, his working day was reduced to eight hours; in 1927, on the Tenth Anniversary of the Soviet regime, a law was adopted reducing the working day to seven hours. The seven-hour day is now enjoyed by over a million workers. The workers' wages were being gradually increased; his housing conditions were being gradually improved. The children were being much better taken care of from the day of their birth to the age of seventeen when they were to enter industry or the professions. Greater educational facilities were being provided as rapidly as the means of the country permitted. The lot of woman was greatly improved. She was becoming an independent wage earner equal to man, and special laws were designed to protect her during childbirth, illness, etc. For example, a number of institutions catering to mother and child—maternity hospitals, playgrounds, rest homes—were established. The school system was greatly extended in every branch of instruction; grade schools, technical schools, universities, workers' schools in the factories, schools for liquidating illiteracy. Cultural establishments—theatres, movies, workmen's clubs, libraries, sport arenas, public parks—were extended or newly built in every town of the country, as for example, the huge Dynamo Stadium in Moscow, and similar institutions on a smaller scale in smaller towns. A whole network of sanatoria and health resorts in the Crimea and the Caucasus was opened for the workers. The number of museums, libraries, reading rooms had grown enormously; in every village a People's House or a library was established. Workers' wages increased by 126% during the period 1922-23 to 1927-28, and by 30% above the pre-war wage level; to which must be added the value of various other benefits enjoyed by the worker, as social insurance, cheap rent for his apartment, reduced cost of foodstuffs and manufactured articles, supplied by his cooperative store. Strumilin, a prominent Soviet economist, says: "The Soviet worker in Moscow enjoys even at present a higher standard of living than the worker in Paris

and Berlin. There is no doubt that within five years, after the Five-Year Plan has been carried out, we will equal and surpass not only Berlin, but also London."

Need For More Rapid Advance

But this slow rate of improvement in the lot of the masses was not sufficient to meet the rate of the ever-increasing demands. The population, freed from Tsarist oppression and capitalist exploitation, becoming more articulate and enlightened thanks to the colossal efforts of the Communist Party to raise the level of the masses, demanded a speedier rate of development to satisfy their growing cultural and material needs. The demand was constantly exceeding the supply.

Other factors, both inside and outside of the country, had entered into play. Inside the country the remnants of the old bourgeoisie, the old-type intelligentsia, the nepmen, or newly-rich, the kulaks (rich peasants) in the villages, feeling the rising power of the masses, became more and more desperate in their opposition to the Soviet regime. This opposition was being translated from hidden conspiracies to open acts of sabotage aiming at the destruction of the Soviet state. Numerous acts of willful mismanagement and violence by these counter-revolutionists within the country were registered during these years. They went to the extent of burning factories, destroying machinery by neglect or improper use, dislocating transport by diverting and misdirecting shipments, upsetting operations in mine, factory and oil field by willful neglect of instructions. The Schakhta (Don basin) trial in 1928, and later the trial of the Industrial Party headed by Professor Ramzin, disclosed some of the conspiracies and acts of violence committed by these remnants of the White elements. The kulaks, on the other hand, fearing the loss of their power and their prestige in the villages, went to every length to interfere with the policies of the Soviet Government relating to village life. The kulak's opposition to these policies expressed itself in the killing of Soviet officials and local Communists, in the hiding of grain in order to avoid their due share of taxes, in efforts to prevent the poor and middle peasants from joining the collectives.

Foreign Attacks

Also the capitalist states surrounding the Soviet Union, apprehensive of its growing power and fearing the example set by the Russian working class on their own workers and farmers, would not let the country develop in peace. From threats of economic and financial boycott to threats of war, by moral and financial aid to the counter-revolutionists within and without the country, the capitalists of the world did what they could to injure the Soviet Union. In this they were, and still are, supported by all the social-fascists of their countries—socialists and so-called labor leaders—the very men who formerly claimed opposition to the capitalist class. This hatred and fear of the Soviet Union found expression in the killing of Soviet representatives abroad—Vorovsky in Switzerland, Voikov in Poland,—in untold acts of provocation against Soviet Agencies in France, England, the United States and elsewhere, such as raids, arrests, etc.; it finds its expression in the refusal of the United States to recognize the Soviet Union, a refusal dictated by the capitalist interests of U.S.A., supported by the American Federation of Labor. This hatred and fear found its expression in the conflict, forced upon the Soviet Union, over the Chinese Eastern Railway, a conflict which was to test the ability of the Union to defend itself against foreign aggression. The Soviet Union having victoriously stood this test, a more daring scheme was concocted by French financial and military leaders of a direct military invasion, as was disclosed at the trial of the Industrial Party in Moscow in 1930. And the present charges of compulsory labor, of dumping, are but a continuation of the same attitude of hatred and fear on the part of the capitalists, exploiters of labor and their lieutenants against the advancing might of a Socialist State.

These attacks by the capitalist class outside the Soviet Union proved impotent; and the sabotage and opposition on the part of the remnants of the bourgeoisie within the country were crushed and liquidated as they merited. Yet some effect these attacks and opposition did produce—but quite contrary to what was expected: instead of weakening the Soviet State, they helped to strengthen it, they helped to solidify the masses around the Soviet

government with the Communist Party at its head; the proved the wisdom of the policy of the Party during this trying period.

Also it became evident during this period that the country, its agriculture and industries, must develop at a more rapid pace than hitherto attained, in order to improve faster the material condition of the population, to satisfy its ever increasing demands, and at the same time to make the Soviet Union independent of the capitalist countries, able to protect itself against threats of economic boycott and military aggression. The possibility of adopting a more rapid pace of development depended upon the willingness of the Russian workers and peasants to follow the lead of the Party and its program, to exert greater efforts and bear new sacrifices which the new program would demand. The Russian masses, the workers and poor peasants, did not hesitate to give unanimous approval to the proposals of the Party. In thousands of meetings, in resolutions from factory and village, in their votes for party candidates at election time, they expressed their unmistakable support of the Party and its policies, they proclaimed their readiness to exert themselves to the utmost for the speedier construction of a Socialist State.

Thus authorized by the wholehearted support of the masses, taking cognizance of events within and without the country, the Soviet Government adopted a new program of internal expansion, a new plan of rapid advance, the Five-Year Plan. This plan, elaborated by Gosplan (State Planning Organization) and discussed over several years, was confirmed by the All-Union Congress of Soviets in 1929.

THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN

What is this Five-Year Plan? In itself it is simply an accountant's statement, a collection of figures. Every important country, every city, even some business concerns have what is known as a budget. You know what that is. In fact every worker must live according to a budget: limit his expenses in accordance with his actual or prospective income. In the case of governments, a budget is established every year by taking account of the prospective income—from taxes, duties, interest, etc., and apportioning this income among the various departments of the government: so much for the army, so much

for the navy, so much for salaries of officials here and abroad, so much for the payment of debts and interest (Government bonds), a little for education, public works, etc. A budget like this, in capitalist countries, takes no account of the needs of the mass of the people—workers and farmers—at all. Are workmen earning enough, can the family keep in shoes and clothing, will the farmer realize enough to pay off his mortgage—these matters are no concern of the government's budget.

The Five-Year Plan of the Soviet Union is, in a sense, also a budget, calculated on a five-year basis instead of one year, but with this tremendous distinction: it is a Socialist budget—an instrument having an entirely different significance. The construction of a Socialist budget starts from a wholly different premise—its cornerstone is the welfare of the great mass of the people, the workers and peasants. The governing idea of the Five-Year Plan is, therefore: what need the State do in order to improve the condition of the people, in order to make the life of the masses more secure, more abundant, more worthwhile? Hence the Plan embraces every aspect of the life of the nation, enters into every nook and corner, makes a thorough survey of the state of the country and its needs, and plans to meet these needs in the broadest sense possible. Thus the Five-Year Plan appears to be the most comprehensive, the most far-reaching instrument that has ever been devised in the history of mankind, for the economic, political and social upbuilding of a country. The conception of such a Plan is nothing short of a stroke of genius. Being all-comprehensive, the Plan provides for:

1. *The industrialization of the country*: changing the country from a predominantly agricultural state into an industrial, which means: (a) Expansion of heavy industry—production of metals, coal, oil, timber, raw materials of all kinds; (b) Production of means of production—machinery, tools, devices of all sorts; (c) Expansion of light industry—production of food-stuffs, clothing, housing, etc.

2. *Collectivization*: changing the face of the land from a huge mass of unorganized, individual farm-holdings, archaic, inefficient, into Collective Farms (Kolkhoz) and State Farms (Sovkhoz), equipped with modern tools and modern methods of cultivation—tractors, combines, and all the mechanical in-

struments necessary for efficient, up-to-date production of grain, cotton, sugar, rice, corn, flax—in a word, all the products of the soil.

3. *Cultural Development*: (a) Primary schools for all children; (b) Secondary schools; (c) Technical schools; (d) Higher education—universities, institutes, research; (e) Correspondence schools, instruction by means of radio, press, workers' clubs, etc.; (f) Liquidation of illiteracy among adults; (g) Expansion of press, book publishing, the arts; (h) Development of science: academies, laboratories, scientific expeditions, etc.

4. *Improvement of living conditions*: (a) Housing; (b) Food and clothing; (c) Care of mothers and babies; (d) Medicine and hygiene; (e) Entertainment and amusement; (f) Sport; (g) Yearly vacations, travel, etc., etc.

Parts 1 and 2 provide the means for securing parts 3 and 4. Obviously more stress must be laid on the first two—the production and manufacturing, especially where they are still so undeveloped, in order to obtain finally a full measure of the last two. The Five-Year Plan lays down the rules, and outlines the methods of achieving this object.

To describe a bit more fully these four divisions of the Five-Year Plan:

1. *Industrialization is the basis of Socialist economy.* To create a Socialist State in a backward, predominantly agricultural country, surrounded as the Soviet Union is by inimical capitalist states, it is necessary to transform its economy from agricultural to industrial. This policy is dictated by several considerations: one, it is necessary to widen and augment the class of industrial workers, who, as proletarians, are by their very nature the prime support of a proletarian state; two, it is necessary to place the country in a position of independence of the surrounding states in case of attack, or blockade, whether financial, economic, or military; three, to be able to satisfy the rapidly expanding requirements of the population, it is necessary to have an industrial establishment geared to mass production, capable of supplying manufactured goods of all descriptions; and finally, it is necessary to speed up the rate of accumulation, of building up reserves, to be able to provide for the greatest development of science,

art, cultural standards, which can be accomplished only by a highly industrialized state.

This process is now taking place all over the Soviet Union, as we shall see from a later chapter, with an ever greater and greater speed and wider scope.

2. *Collectivization.* The Socialist plan of farming always contemplated collective farming as distinct from individual farming under the capitalist order. Some attempts at collective farming were made directly after the Revolution; a number of such farms, also State farms on a small scale, were organized in various parts of the country. But this form of farming, to be successful, must be mechanized to the highest degree—tractors, seeding, cutting and threshing machinery, elevators for the storage of grain. The tractor is the symbol of large scale farming. Thus the Soviet Government began importing tractors and farm machinery in ever increasing quantities, as well as forcing the manufacture of them in the country. In 1929, according to the Five-Year Plan, the mechanization of farming was to go ahead in dead earnest. The idea arose, and gained ground, of organizing "grain factories," huge State farms of hundreds of thousands of acres, equipped with most modern machinery to produce grain on a large scale. These were started in 1929 and now there are over 150 State farms, of which the "Giant" in Northern Caucasus may serve as a model. Other State farms were organized for the raising of cotton, sugar beets, flax, rice, etc.

The Opposition of Kulaks

This was one part of the job. The second part was to attempt to get the individual peasants to pool their lands and what little equipment they had into single large farms, collectively owned and operated. (Hence the term *Kolkhoz*—collective farm.) It must be remembered that the 26 million peasant households of the Union were most of them small holding, averaging not over 12 acres, the farm divided into numerous strips, often located far apart, one strip miles away from the other. Three classes, generally speaking, comprised the population of the village—the poor peasant with no land at all, therefore hiring out to the kulak (the rich peasant or village usurer), or owning a

bit of the poorest land, without a horse or implements of any sort, reduced consequently to a semi-starved existence; the middle peasant—the more or less substantial householder, having a horse and a cow or two, able to feed himself and family—the class that forms the bulk of the population; then the third class—the kulaks or rich peasants, small in number, but powerful in the village, being more shrewd, calculating and unscrupulous than the others, holding the best land, working with hired labor, raising crops in excess of their own, for the market. The kulaks, these village capitalists, naturally opposed with might and main the movement to organize the middle and poor peasants into collectives, thus to take away from them the ability to exploit hired help and to sell their products at high prices. The kulaks stopped at nothing in their effort to injure the collectivization movement, even to the point of murder. Any number of cases were reported from the villages of kulaks killing Soviet officials, local Communists, or fellow peasants who refused to follow their lead. In this manner the kulaks brought upon themselves severe retribution—dispossession of their holdings, arrest, exile. The elimination of the “kulak as a class,” this last bulwark of private property, became necessary, as it was necessary, in previous years, to eliminate the big landowners, capitalists and nepmen.

With this situation cleared up, the process of collectivization went apace,—collectives were organized in every county and village, the Government furnishing them, either on credit or as a loan, tractors and other implements and seeds. In 1930 collectives comprised six million peasant households, and in 1931, according to the last figures available, close on to 13,000,000, or over half the peasant population of the country.

The peasant question, it can be said, was the hardest nut the Revolution had to crack. The correct solution of this question was found in the two directions which were adopted—that of organization of State farms, and in collectivization.

New Methods of Farming

The profound meaning of collectivization, the vast and revolutionary import of this move, for the Soviet Union, as well as for the rest of the world, has not yet been sufficiently de-

scribed, nor fully appreciated outside of the Union. For collectivization means the substitution of skilled land cultivators, mechanics with a bent for operation on land instead of machines, for peasantry or land-serfdom; in other words, the peasant with bent back and rheumatic bones is transformed into an enlightened worker, having leisure, facility to develop himself, the equal of workers in industry and other branches of national economy.

The third division of the Plan—cultural development—would require the writing of a book all to itself. The process of creating a literate people, cultured in letters and arts, from practically an illiterate population, deserves minute description. I can but cite a few figures to indicate the extent of the process, and touch very briefly upon its general implications.

The program of the Soviet Government provides for (1) free, compulsory general and technical education of all children up to the age of 17; (2) creation of a net of pre-school establishments; (3) furnishing of food and clothing to all school children at government expense; (4) preparation of new educators inspired by communist ideals; (5) every possible assistance to self-education of workers and peasants; (6) the widest development of technical and professional education for persons over 17 years; broad facilities for higher education for workers; etc.

Here is the concrete, matter of fact plan for re-creation of a nation; giving the facilities to every citizen of the country to become a literate, educated, cultured being. Already, by the end of the Five-Year Period (1932-33) there will be 16 million children in primary schools and four and one-half million in secondary schools; special courses are provided for older children (12 to 15 years) who never went to school; also special schools for the village youth; while 19 million adults (16 to 50) are to receive at least an elementary education. Thus in 1933 the literacy of the population will rise to 80% (in place of 28% before the revolution). In the higher schools and universities more than a million students are being trained in technical and liberal professions. Whereas the number of persons in schools in 1927-28 was only 10 to 12 per hundred, as compared with 25% in the U. S. A., in 1932-33 this relation

will be reversed, since in the U.S.S.R. school attendance will embrace 39% of the population.

Cultural Advance

All other educational and cultural facilities are being increased in proportion. Moving-picture houses, for example, which in the Soviet Union are of a higher cultural standard than elsewhere, today count about 10,000 throughout the country; in 1933 their number will increase to 40,000. Similarly with village club and reading rooms; in 1928—21,000, in 1933—40- to 50,000. Such clubrooms or reading rooms are the cultural centres in the small country places; they serve as social halls, a place to read a good book or to get the latest news, or to meet with comrades. The extension of radio is still more remarkable. As it is, every telephone subscriber can obtain a radio attachment, at a nominal charge, which permits him to listen in. But the number of radio instruments installed or to be installed runs into the tens of millions. There are many transmitting stations in Soviet Russia, while one of the Moscow stations is the most powerful in Europe.

A good deal is being done in spreading instruction by correspondence; the number of subscribers to these courses must run into the millions.

Take the question of books; people in Moscow, at least, have complained to me that new books are gobbled up so fast that editions are exhausted in two or three weeks. And editions in the U.S.S.R. mean anywhere from 5,000 to 500,000 copies. Certain publications reach unheard of circulation: 10 million, 15 million! The people, it seems, would rather read than eat. Newspapers, magazines have enormous circulations. *Pravda*, for example, has a circulation of two millions and *The Peasants Gazette*, two and one-half million. *Pravda* is being published simultaneously in Moscow, Leningrad and Kharkov, the matrices being shipped by airplane; the latter point was organized just while I was in the U.S.S.R., in June.

The amount of work being done for children of pre-school age (up to 7 years) is stupendous; creches for babies, kindergartens, children's playgrounds, grow in number and extent from

day to day. In Moscow, in the Park of Culture, there is a "children's town"; a mother can bring her child—a babe in arms or one eight or ten years old—leave it in this children's town for the day, in the hands of competent nurses or instructors, where the child will be fed and entertained, while the mother (and father, if they happen to be out together) can spend her day resting, seeing the attractions, listening to music, etc.

Art and Sports

Older children are organized into the Pioneer movement, embracing millions, for study, sports, excursions. There are many such children's groups, institutions rather, for the study of the flora and fauna of the country, excursions to various places of interest, swimming, skating, etc. Tourism is greatly encouraged: railroads make special rates for tourists, municipalities and village soviets provide facilities—guest houses, camps; one meets any number of young folks in the mountains of the Caucasus, the Urals, through the villages, with a sack on their back and stick in hand, hiking, climbing, adding the explorer's purposiveness to the mere joy of the great outdoors.

Take the arts: everybody knows the Russians' love of the theatre, and the perfection reached by the Russian stage. Not only in the large cities—Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov—are there fine theatres—opera, drama, ballet, light comedy—but in the smallest provincial towns and villages you will find dramatic entertainment; local troupes, or visiting troupes from the larger centers come to stage performances; almost in every factory there is a group of young men and women forming a dramatic circle, sometimes developing excellent dramatic material; as for example the Blue Blouse group, now enjoying a national reputation. Every backward section of the Union participates in this new cultural development: the Kirgiz, the Uzbeks, the Tartars, the Armenians in Azerbadjian, the Jews in White Russia are developing the dramatic art in their own languages.

Painting and sculpture are old arts in which Russians excelled; these arts have not lost their old vigor and colorfulness; the young Soviet artists may not have produced as yet a Repin, an Antokolsky. But there are plenty of art schools, art exhibi-

tions where fine examples of modern Soviet art can be discovered. The heroic group by Merkurov in the Lenin Museum, representing Lenin's funeral, is an example.

Perhaps young Russians are not creating as fine musical compositions as did Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky. Yet even in this branch you will find a great deal of work going on, ground work perhaps; and there exist such geniuses as Shostakovich and the 18 year old Julien Krein, for whom a future as great as Mozart's is predicted.

Science and Invention

And you would imagine that scientific development, research, invention, have no place under the Soviets, the Bolsheviks have killed off the old scientists and stopped scientific endeavor? Another silly bourgeois lie that hasn't a leg to stand on. In Moscow alone there are twenty or more scientific institutes that carry on research in every branch of pure and applied science. Every large plant has an extensive research laboratory; the Russian Academy of Sciences, an old institution with a lot of fresh young blood now, has grouped around itself a body of scientists of which any advanced country might be proud. Old Professor Pavlov is still working in his laboratory which is the training centre for the most advanced ideas in medical science; Professor Ipatiev is still contributing discoveries in the chemical field; Professor Joffe speaks of harnessing the power of the sun, by means of photo-electric cells, as of an immediate possibility; in far off Tashkent a laboratory is built for the study of methods of capturing the rays of the sun, for power purposes.

In Leningrad, a factory produces synthetic rubber on a commercial scale, something the world has been searching for many years, and no country has as yet achieved in practice. Not far from Moscow a Russian Burbank is at work, in a quiet and modest way, duplicating the work of the famous American. Only this spring a new experiment was successfully tried which may change the method of rice-planting, and thus raise millions of the most abject human slaves to the level of human beings; viz. the planting of rice by airplane instead of the old method of laboring up to the waist in water.

Already the better part of the program of the Five-Year Plan has been achieved. The designers of the Plan, as it was adopted in 1928, provided two variants—a maximum and a minimum, applying to every section of the Plan; content to carry through the minimum, in case the maximum should prove too difficult of achievement. But the enthusiasm of the masses, the physical and mental forces tapped through the agency of the Plan were so great, so unprecedented in their devotion and will to see it through, that already many of the maximum limits set by the Plan are surpassed. The slogan: “the Five-Year Plan in Four Years” can be considered now as an accomplished fact.

THEE SOVIET UNION IN 1931

The year 1931 is the third year of the Five-Year Plan, called the Decisive Year. This year is to prove whether the Five-Year Plan is going through as anticipated or whether through foreign or domestic complications its fulfillment will be retarded.

Ten years passed since my first visit to Soviet Russia—but a brief space of time in human history. In the capitalist world these ten years have brought the masses greater misery than they knew in 1921—more unemployment, severe wage reductions, harder labor through speedups and rationalization schemes, a general lowering of the standard of living. Nor has the millenium arrived in the Soviet Union. Communism is not yet established there; but the amount of preparatory work accomplished in these ten years towards the establishment of a socialist society, the depth and strength of the foundations already laid is nothing less than heroic. If John Reed were alive, he would write another book: “Ten Years That Changed the Face of the Earth”; for that is exactly what the Bolsheviks achieved in these ten years—literally changed the face of Old Russia, as eventually they will change the face of the world.

As I write this I see in my mind the Russia of 1921 and compare it with the Soviet Union of today. Then—idle factories, hosts of unemployed, broken down transport, flooded mines, silent oil wells, and what was most painful—the wretched villages with a strip of land cultivated here and there, but miles and miles of waste land, unused, neglected, overgrown with

brush and wild grass. Now—what a change! Let me take you around with me, on my all too brief journey through the Soviet Union, and let us together examine this change.

A glance at Moscow. First of May, International Labor Day. The greatest demonstration of workers' solidarity the world has ever seen. A genuine holiday spirit pervades Moscow, bright, warm sunshine, smiling skies, the sound of music everywhere. The marching hosts pass through the Red Square, in front of Lenin's mausoleum, at first regiment after regiment of Red Army men, then the workers of Moscow, young and old, men and women, over a million strong. They are greeted by Soviet leaders, by delegates from distant lands. From early morning till late in the day the paraders file by; all Moscow is out in the streets, in festive mood.

Industrial Development

But let us see the city in its workaday clothes. Here is the Amo Plant (automobile manufacture). In 1921, when I first visited it, it was standing still; now it has grown into an enormous plant; it is already putting out thousands of automobiles (trucks mainly, Soviet type); while a year from now its production will reach 25,000 trucks. Next to it is Dynamo—another huge electrical plant, employing over 10,000 workers, quadrupled in size and capacity within the last few years, and still expanding. A whole new city has grown up around this section of Moscow—new plants, workmen's homes, clubs, technical institutes. Nearby is my familiar Ragas Plant, now called Wat—All Union Autogenous Trust. In 1928 this was an empty lot. Today almost a dozen acres are covered by handsome buildings, housing the latest machinery, working 24 hours a day every day in the year (except legal holidays) and planning additional buildings and equipment to satisfy the demand. "Come visit us next year," the plant director said to me, "we shall clean up all this muck around the buildings—some of them are on the point of completion—and put down lawns and flower beds!"—We visit another Wat plant, at Rostokino, at the other end of the town. I saw it completed in 1926, a bit of a plant then. Now it has become a huge establishment. So it is with other plants

in Moscow—electrical plants (Electrozavod), metallurgical (Hammer and Sickle), rubber (the famous Bogatir), clothing and shoe plants, furniture plants, etc., etc.—old and brand new, huge establishments, employing thousands of workmen, operating two and three shifts a day, 350 days a year. The population of Moscow is near 3 million now; in 1921 it was less than two million!

Come a bit outside of Moscow. At Podolsk, some thirty miles away, is located the old Singer Sewing Machine plant. It employs 12,000 workmen, and turns out more sewing machines than Singer ever did. They are just completing a huge foundry—the largest I have ever seen—equipped according to the last word of engineering technique, mechanized throughout.

Autostroy

Let us go somewhat farther afield. Nijni Novgorod—the famous old Nijni of the annual Fair, and drunks and rowdyism. Now the new automobile plant, the one to which Ford is giving his technical assistance, is the attraction of the town. The plant is to produce 150,000 automobiles a year. I do not know what the actual territory of the plant is, but it takes more than a day to get around it. I am not an engineer; I cannot give a technical description of the plant; all I saw was building upon building, handsome, with plenty of light and air, where the latest type of machinery is now being installed; how many of them—ten, twenty, thirty buildings? Wide streets between them, a railroad several miles long, huge warehouses, a whole new town for the workmen—to accommodate 60,000, with a magnificent clubhouse, theatre, public hall, central kitchen, etc. The apartment houses for the workers are four and five stories, modern in every respect, with lots of green and playgrounds for children. At the other end of the territory—probably five miles away—is the “American Settlement,” housing the American engineers and technical men employed there. Only two years ago this was virgin land, woods, some 12 or 15 miles from the town of Nijni.

Suppose we go south, to Kharkov. An old provincial city before the Revolution; it is now the capital of the Socialist Soviet

Republic of Ukraine, and a proud city it has become. Handsome new buildings, important factories, parks. The "Building of Industry" is one of the attractions of the city—a twelve-story office building recently completed, enormous, ultra-modern. The chief offices of most of the Ukrainian trusts are located here: Don coal trust, steel trust, electrical works, chemical trust, new tractor plant. Extensions on either side of this new building are now in the course of construction.

Kharkov is the center for the vast industries of Ukraine—the Don coal basin, the iron ores of Krivoy Rog, chemical industry, sugar industry, glass industry, and dozens of metal working plants enormous in size, each employing 10,000 to 25,000 workmen, producing pig iron, rails, sheets and finished products, from nails to locomotives. At night as you go through the country, you cannot tear your eyes from the car window—the country seems to be aflame; at one place we actually passed a golden river, a stream of molten metal flowing down a hill, through a specially constructed channel from the furnace to the mill. You see construction going on on every side, tall red smokestacks of new factories, people at work everywhere.

Another night's journey brings us to Dnepropetrovsk, an industrial city of huge metal and chemical plants, a small Pittsburgh of the plains. The great Petrovsky plant is located here, with 25,000 workmen, and numerous others. But our object in coming here is not so much to visit the established industries here, as to get to Dneprostroy—the new power development on the Dnieper, the coming industrial Niagara Falls of the Union. Much has been written about this project, its importance and possibilities; it is to be the largest hydroelectric power station in Europe, 800,000 h.p., constructed under the supervision of American engineers—Col. Cooper and his staff—altogether an object of prime interest.

Dneprostroy

We arrive at Alexandrovsk in the wee hours of the morning; this is the railway station nearest to Dneprostroy. It was formerly called Zaporozhje and was the headquarters of the Ukrainian Cossacks; a sort of natural fortress with the impassable Dnieper

protecting the place; from here the Cossacks carried on their depredations over a wide territory, coming back to Zaporojye with their booty. Now Zaporojye—Alexandrovsk—is a peaceful, sunny town, basking in the glory of nearby Dneprostroy.

To throw a dam across the Dnieper here at the Porogi (rapids) in the heart of the former Cossack country, was an old dream of Russian engineers. Already under the old regime surveys and investigations were carried out, the tsarist government considering it of military importance to raise the waters of the Dnieper in order to make it a navigable river; but the project never got beyond that stage. It was left for the Bolsheviks to bring the project to realization, not at all out of military considerations, but in order to tap a vast amount of power for the rapidly growing Soviet industries. Already in 1919-20 Krzhizhanovsky, in his plans for the electrification of the Soviet Union, named Dneprostroy as one of the chief sources of electric power; and Lenin heartily supported Krzhizhanovsky—for to Lenin, as you will recall, electricity plus Soviet power equal Socialism.

Cossack Country

Work on Dneprostroy is now nearing completion; it comprises a dam of magnificent proportions and beauty, a power station to house nine turbogenerators of 90,000 h.p. each, and a lock canal to permit ships to pass above the rapids. The raising of the river level some 25 feet will flood a territory fifty miles in extent, and will provide sufficient storage capacity to permit uninterrupted operation of the plant. With the dam and power station as the center, a whole new industrial city is rising all around; an aluminum plant, chemical and metallurgical plants are projected here on a scale unknown in Russia, or in Europe for that matter, to take up practically the entire power generated; a number of buildings are already rising above the foundations—in a year or two the hum of machinery, the whistle of passing ships and trains will have replaced what was a short time ago a robbers' nest and an impassable barrier. Dneprostroy was to be completed, according to original plans, in 1933, but the Five-Year Plan has hastened construction, so that

it will be completed at the end of 1932; and part of the power plant, I was told, may be in operation this year!

I was so impressed by Dneprostroy—its sweep and magnificent dimensions, by the industrial undertakings projected in the immediate proximity, by the vast and daring scope of the whole lay-out—that I accepted this as a symbol of the growing might of the Soviet Union, as a milestone on the road to universal Communism. And Dneprostroy is but one of a number of great undertakings that are beginning to dot the Soviet land in every direction and that create an impregnable foundation for the approaching Socialist State.

We bid goodby to our hosts—at three in the morning—and speed along to the next point—Rostov on Don, for a sight of Selmash (agricultural implements plant) and the large state farms, Giant and Verblud, in Northern Caucasus, some little distance from Rostov.

Across Donbass

From Dneprostroy to Rostov is a journey of some twenty-four hours, through the southern part of Ukraine, across the Don Basin, past the Sea of Azov. I crossed this country many times in the last five or six years; but never have I seen such activity, in the field, mines and towns, as I noticed this time. Only two years ago, even a year ago, small farms abounded here, with bits of fields, cultivated by hand, and much idle land; now the small fields and idle lands are organized into collective farms and are tilled by tractor and four-share plow.

In the morning we are at Rostov—a friendly town; wide streets, shade trees all over, new parks; the town has improved wonderfully since I saw it last two years ago. Many new buildings, fine stores, automobiles on the streets. Here is the main square—an old church was standing here; on its place a big office building is going up, four blocks square. I meet a number of old friends, my co-workers in the Ragas organization; they are here to do a big job again—lay a huge pipeline to carry oil from Armavir in the heart of the Caucasus, to the Donetz Basin, a distance of some four hundred miles. Two years ago this organization completed a still bigger job, a 600-mile pipeline

from Baku to Batum, now carrying millions of tons of oil from the oil fields of the Caspian to ships on the Black Sea.

We visit Selmash, a small town by itself. These Bolsheviks, when they build a factory, they are not satisfied to do as capitalists would — a building or two, crammed with machinery, crowded, noisy. They must have elbow room, and light and air, and homes for workmen, and clubs with reading rooms and lecture halls, and playgrounds for the children, and schools and hospitals. With the Bolsheviks a factory is not merely a place to work in, to curse and run away from as soon as your work-day is over; it is the central interest in your life, where you spend a number of hours in labor each day, but also find your social and cultural milieu; more as a sort of laboratory of human development than a mere work-place. You have your factory meetings, and discussion clubs, and this marvelous thing which the Bolsheviks have created in the last two years—Socialist competition, shock brigades*—active influences which get a man out of his narrow, enclosed self-interest, make him a part of a great whole, throbbing, alive; make of each one a conscious builder of the future.

The buildings of Selmash are so arranged that operations follow one another, in an endless chain. It is fully two miles from one end of the plant to the other. A young engineer takes us through the various buildings: the power house, the foundry, machinery department, tool making department, woodworking shop. One cannot cover the grounds in a day. Ploughs are made

* The most active workers in every plant, factory, Sovkhoz and Kolkhos organize themselves into a "shock brigade" to carry through an extra important or urgent piece of work, to complete a job ahead of schedule, like setting up of a new machine; or to give an extra spurt to production, if conditions require it.

Socialist competition is a novel feature introduced into Soviet life some two years ago—competition between plants—which one will do its work better, or complete the program quicker, or show greater skill in mastering new methods. Says Stalin: "The most remarkable feature of competition consists in the radical revolution it has wrought in men's views of labor, because it transforms labor from a disgraceful and painful burden, as it was reckoned before, into a matter of *honor*, a matter of *glory*, a matter of *valor and heroism*. There is not, and cannot be, anything similar in the capitalist countries."

here, and binders and threshers, many thousands of them, but not enough to satisfy a land hungry for these tools. We stop before a huge poster on one of the buildings—a record of the daily output of the plant, in huge figures. The date is given, the number of pieces produced and percentage of the planned output. Only 76 per cent of this, or 83 per cent of that. “Why is this, comrade?” I ask my guide. “Bad record,” he agrees, “but you see our working force,” he says, “young fellows, girls—they are learning their trade; they haven’t yet acquired the needed skill.” It is true, the majority of the work people here are young, perhaps between 18 and 25, some of them may have just come up from the village. But one can see they are intelligent, eager to learn—it won’t be long before the poster will register one hundred per cent and more.

Soviet State Farms

We are done with factories for a while; we want to see what is being done on the land, to see for ourselves wherein a Communist farm differs from a capitalist farm. On to Verblud, some three hours by train from Rostov.

I have seen some farms in my life, large and small; but I have never before seen anything like this farm; in fact I could not imagine a farm of this type, and if anyone were to describe it to me, I should not have grasped its full meaning. I wonder what impression you who read these lines will get from my description.

Imagine a field of young wheat, green; imagine it to stretch as far as the horizon, smooth, even, green—without a hedge, a bush, or any object—to disturb the stretch of green before you. Imagine that you start out in a car and travel a mile, ten miles, twenty miles—still the same expanse of green, uniform, slightly waving in the breeze, as far as your eye can see. This is a Sovkhoz grain field—a green ocean with a sail here and there in the distance—a caterpillar puffing away. . . . I have seen our Western wheat fields, and Canadian fields, and endless fields along the Nile; but such a feeling of limitless green spaces you get nowhere else.

Comrade Margolin is head of this farm; a young man in his

thirties, slim, modest; a more interesting, charming person I have rarely had the privilege of meeting. When he talks about his "farm" his eyes sparkle; he is all aglow. The farm covers over 250,000 acres; 90 per cent of the product is wheat; the rest corn, rye, oats. They have a vegetable farm and dairy for their own needs. Fourteen hundred people are employed on the farm. They have 60 caterpillar tractors, quite a number of combines, a large number of implements of the best types. It was all virgin ground a short space ago. Now they produce 200 puds of grain per hectare—about two and one-half tons per acre.

Margolin's pride is the Technical Institute on the place. It has now 600 students, and new buildings are being added to accommodate 400 more. The Institute provides a two-year course, part work, part study. The Institute celebrated its first anniversary while I was there: a new type of peasant boy and girl—with a college education!

I found my old friend George McDowell here, as chief mechanic of the farm. George has learned to speak Russian, and is one of the most respected and loved men on the place. He took great pride in showing me through the machine park—a set-up of tractors, combines and plows—huge mechanisms prepared to tear up, cut and thresh miles and miles of field. George is growing more peppy and enthusiastic as the years roll on. He started with Harold Ware on the first tractor experiment in Soviet Russia in 1922. Now he manages the mechanical department on one of the world's largest farms.

With two comrades we went driving over the territory; the farm is divided into eight sections, each section with its own buildings and equipment, looking after the territory allotted to it. We visited the dairy section—a huge farm in itself, with a good lot of cattle; fine piggery, creamery, etc. This was an old estate, now become part of the Sovkhoz. We also visited the vegetable farm, which was a novel sight to me. Planting was going on—cabbages, onions, carrots, and what not; fully a hundred girls setting out the plants row after row, with the precision of a machine. They work here eight hours a day, and after their day's work they have their clubhouse and gatherings, the same as in the cities.

A Farm Institute

Late in the evening we returned to the main farm. The students of the Institute were celebrating its first anniversary. Speeches and music, and a social after that in the Stolovaia (restaurant), large enough to seat a thousand people. A healthy, joyful crowd, well-dressed, clean-looking. Indeed a new type of farm worker; the proverbial dirt farmer in these parts is a thing of the past; he has been transformed into a land mechanic, if I may use the expression, working his seven or eight hours a day as a tractor operator, repair man or helper; no longer a slave of the soil and of the elements.

In addition to their own work, the Sovkhoz does work for neighboring peasants and collectives, to whom they send out brigades when necessary to help with the plowing or harvesting. The individual peasants learn quickly the value of machinery; Margolin told us a story which was quite to the point: a peasant came to see him one day to borrow a tractor for the village; he had his little son with him. The boy was asked whether he knew what a tractor was. "Oh, yes," he answered. "Is this the kind you want?" asked Margolin, pointing to a Fordson. "Oh, no," promptly said the little fellow, "this one can't do much work; give us a ca-ter-pil-lar."

I speak of Sovkhoz Verblud as a farm; but you can no more compare this huge grain-producing establishment with a farm than you can compare Ford's plant with a country machine shop. The old conception of "farm" disappears when you deal with an entity that is Verblud. * It is a new departure, a revolutionary departure in land cultivation—a gigantic advance over age-old methods prevailing under capitalism.

The Gigant Farm

The truth of this assertion is still more forcibly proven by the next Sovkhoz I visited—Gigant (Giant), fifty or sixty miles from Verblud. Arriving there in the middle of the night, we located the "office" of the farm and later the guest-house, after

* This name—from the railroad station nearby—is being changed to Zernograd—Graintown.

what seemed miles of walking. In the morning, as I stood outside of the guest-house, I rubbed my eyes and wondered where I was. The place certainly did not look like a "farm." Already in Verblud I had been struck by the fine buildings, shops, offices, forming a compact little town; but this place is a large city, laid out on a grand scale—wide avenues, four- and five-story houses, office buildings, mechanical shops, quite a number of stores, restaurants, a sizeable park in the center, grain elevators of concrete—all come up within a couple of years and housing a population of many thousands.

I met the director of the "farm," Comrade Bogomolkin, and his assistant, and was invited to join them on a tour of inspection. We started off and the moment we left town, we were in the midst of a sea of green—young wheat to the right and to the left and in front of us—stretching away to the ends of the earth. It is all black soil here, even ground, hardly a rise anywhere—virgin steppes two years before. Giant has over 600,000 acres, three-quarters of it under cultivation. The plan followed is similar to the Verblud: the farm is divided into a number of sections, each with its own center; the main crop is wheat; other crops are raised to a small extent; there is a dairy and a vegetable section. They have 220 tractors, combines and modern farm implements of all descriptions; an excellent machine shop is on the place, small power house, fire department, etc.

Bogomolkin, a man of perhaps 35, was acting like a schoolboy on vacation, while the car sped on. "See this wheat—pretty good wheat! And look, there are oats—already so tall." "How many hectares in this field?" I ask. "I'll tell you," is the quick reply. "I'll drive you today, and I'll drive you tomorrow, and I'll drive you the next day, and still you will see no end to this field!" . . . That is really the impression you obtain from this vast expanse of green; you simply feel that you are in green velvet all the time. How beautiful it must look at harvest time, an ocean of gold then, the huge combines—sixty feet wide!—creeping through it, downing the waves, and sending a golden shower of grain into the bins.

Return to Moscow

Moscow once more. I was planning another tour—Stalingrad with its tractor plant, the Urals with its Magnitogorsk, Cheliabstroy, Beresniaki, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Saratov on the Volga—but this was not to be. I should have had another three months at my disposal to visit the places named; and they are not all, for everywhere through the length and breadth of the Soviet Union are new plants going up, new Sovkhozes and Kolkhozes are being established, all centers of a new life and activity. My time was getting short—I had to be satisfied with what I had seen. Nevertheless, we made a trip to Leningrad to complete the picture, inadequate as it was.

Once again in the train, again new sights—factory chimneys that were not there last year, busy towns in the midst of construction and farms, tilled, cultivated farms where there were only swamps and brush a year or two ago. Nearer to Leningrad—miles of vegetable farms, new to this district. I was glued to the car window; I could not believe my eyes. I knew so well the vast distances of Russia, the open spaces, the primitive landscape. Could all this have been changed in so short a time—two years, three years, since the Five-Year Plan began to operate?

Old Petersburg and New Leningrad

St. Petersburg, the proud capital of the tsars. In a flash, its whole history passes through the mind. Nineteen hundred and five, the shooting of unarmed workmen in front of the Winter Palace; 1917—abdication of the tsar; July days; the Seventh of November—"Ten Days That Shook the World"; Lenin at the helm; Civil War; famine; Kronstadt. And back, through the century—the uprising of the Decembrists in 1825, executions, Peter and Paul Fortress and Schlisselburg, where revolutionists were buried alive. My first visit there in 1921—a dead city, listless, forlorn; its population of two million reduced to 700,000; idle factories, dead harbor. Ten years have passed and not a trace is left of the old feeling of depression. The town has again become a busy mart of civilization. It houses now over two million people; its academies, universities, institutes, laboratories are

again in the forefront of the land; its art galleries, museums, opera, theatres, parks, clubhouses, meeting halls are again holding crowds of eager visitors. The old palaces in Leningrad and the suburbs have been turned into popular museums, daily visited by thousands. There is work, instruction, play to meet all demands.

The famous Putilov plant in Leningrad—the former Krupp of Russia, as well as the most active center of old revolutionists—took us a day to look over. Instead of manufacturing cannon and shells, they are now building tractors, dredges, ships. A great mixture of old and new here; building crowds upon building, some equipped with latest American and German machinery, others still of ancient vintage. The tractor plant is the most modern, from immense foundry to finishing plant—where every few minutes a completely equipped tractor drives off the belt.

We visited several other plants in Leningrad. Near the Putilov works is a factory-kitchen, a huge food establishment which supplies, I was told, 100,000 meals a day, carried by trucks to the numerous workers' stolovaia of the city. The textile works Red Dawn, the Svetlana lamp works, the famous rubber factory Treugolnik, where synthetic rubber is now being manufactured on a commercial scale—the first of its kind in the world; two Ragas gas and welding plants, expanding in every department, and working their heads off to meet the demand.

The few days' stay in Leningrad could no more do justice to it than the six weeks' stay in the Union. There is too much going on for one to take it all in. But the fever of construction, the untameable spirit of advance is so patent, so deep in the soul of present-day Russia, that only willful blindness can prevent seeing it.

TEN YEARS OF SOCIALIST ADVANCE

I do not know if I have succeeded in the foregoing pages in giving even a faint account of the extent of the new structure which is being erected in the Soviet Union in every field of human endeavor: industry, agriculture, science, art, popular education, invention. To me, the tremendous thing about the present situation in the Union, this year 1931, is that the last vestiges

of reaction have been completely routed, along with superstition, illiteracy and all the dark prejudices of the past, and the building of a new world—a Communist world—is proceeding with rapid strides.

Five years ago, even two years ago, doubts may have been legitimate—not as to the ultimate triumph of Socialism, but as to the rate of advance. The Soviet Union was then in the midst of terrific struggles—internal, external—the pains of the Reconstruction Period. The exploiting classes in the capitalist world thought themselves securely entrenched, powerful, proud. Now the tables are turned: in the Soviet Union the building of Socialism is firmly proceeding, enthusiastically supported by millions and millions. In the capitalist countries—the era of declining capitalism has definitely arrived, with deepening economic crises, permanent unemployment, increasing exploitation of the workers and poor farmers; which in turn leads to sharper class struggles that must culminate in the final struggle for power by the working class.

The feverish activity stimulated by the Five-Year Plan, the actual accomplishments in the fields of industry and agriculture, the figures and tables of increased production and of much greater production to come as soon as the plants, the power houses, the railways, the roads, the State and collective farms now in the course of construction are put into operation—do not disclose the whole picture. There is much more than the material side. And that is, to use the language of Engels: Quantity is beginning to change into Quality. The cultural level, the sense of manhood of the citizens of the Soviet Union is rising with amazing rapidity. Not every worker and peasant in the Soviet Union is a Communist. Certainly not. But there are very few among them, among the many millions of the younger people particularly, who are not communistically minded. The Socialist State is not yet; but everyone sees it clearly in the immediate future, in two years, in five years—immaterial. In the meantime, the present is full of interest, of an awakesness that is not known outside of Russia, of wholesome enthusiasm.

Stalin said, in his report to the Sixteenth Party Congress, June, 1930:

"The development of production is subordinated, not to the principle of competition and safeguarding of capitalist profit, but to the principle of planned guidance and systematic improvement of the material and cultural level of the toilers. The distribution of the national income takes place, not in the interests of enriching the exploiting classes and their numerous parasitic hangers-on, but in the interests of systematically raising the material position of the workers and peasants, and extending Socialist production in town and country."

Rise of Men from the Bench

The tremendous labor of lifting up the masses, from the darkest peasant to the sorely beset intellectual torn by doubts, to a realization that the masses, the workers and peasants, are the bosses of the country, as guaranteed to them by the November Revolution, is fairly on the way to being accomplished. Men "from the bench" are constantly being elevated to high positions in the Party and the Government. Brigades of factory workers are given the opportunity to control the work of all departments of the government. Every official is accountable to a workers' committee; every factory, every institution is constantly pushing forward and upward men from the ranks to positions of responsibility. The Communist Party is constantly renewing itself by new blood, young blood from the masses, constantly pruning itself in order to keep fresh, alive, in living contact with the masses, in order to escape dry rot and bureaucracy.

There are rulers in the Soviet Union, leaders in the Party, trusted Communists at the head of the government. But to talk of a dictatorship, of one-man power in the Soviet Union, is as silly as it is ignorant. The common worker, the simple member of the Party is being taught to advance, to direct, to prepare himself to replace the old leaders.

He is being taught another thing: to keep himself ready to defend the Revolution, the Socialist Fatherland, against all aggressions, within and outside the country. The anti-war agitation by the Communist Parties in every country is the greatest force in the world today which is actively at work against the stealthily approaching war catastrophe. The number of workers in capitalist countries who realize how close we are to war is growing, fortunately. But the danger of it is so pressing, so close, that agi-

tation against war, tenfold as great, must be carried on, incessantly, in order to open the eyes of the masses to its immediate possibility.

Pity our American worker has little inclination for study. He buys a yellow capitalist newspaper—enemy's dope—and gets his information—and education—from that. Your Russian brother is more of a student, therefore better informed. You can hardly meet a Russian worker without a book in his hand, or in his pocket. The printing presses in the Soviet Union are the hardest worked machines—literally millions of books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers are printed and circulated; the bookstores are the busiest places in every town and hamlet of the Union. The worker takes an interest in things outside of his job—in the progress of his country, as well as conditions abroad.

Thus the cultural advance in the Soviet Union. It has one aim, like the industrialization of the country, like collectivization—to raise the material well-being and mental stature of 160 million human beings within the borders of the Soviet Union, and to serve as a living example of Socialism-in-practice to the two billion human beings over the surface of the globe, the vast majority poverty-stricken, ignorant, at the mercy of the exploiting classes.

Present Conditions in the U.S.S.R.

Also, while the material conditions of life at the present time are still far from ideal, nevertheless there is a vast improvement in the living conditions of the Russian masses as compared with what they were twenty years ago or even ten years ago, as compared with the living conditions of the majority of the working population in most European countries; and even with the conditions of life forced upon tens of millions of people in these United States in this year of grace 1931.

What are the conditions today? The fear of losing one's job is abolished; no person who can and is willing to work need go begging for employment; there is no unemployment problem in the Soviet Union. The working day in the major industries is being reduced to seven hours; in some hazardous trades it is six hours. The Soviet scale of wages is higher than the German, and much higher than the wages prevailing in Poland,

Italy, Rumania and some other European countries. Every workman gets annually a two weeks' vacation with pay, some even four weeks. They get free medical attention, places in rest homes and sanatoria at very low rates. They have social insurance—if a man is disabled, or reaches the limit of his working age—60 years now—he knows he can depend upon a pension for the rest of his life. He need have no worry about the future of his children, as provision is made for them by the very scheme of things in the Soviet Union. In fact the child is the most catered-to person in Soviet life, and rightly so, for is not "the child father to the man"? For him there are creches in the first years of his life; then playgrounds and kindergartens; after that, school up to the age of 17; later, college, university, technical and military training; and when he is of age, his place in life is awaiting him, whatever his occupation may be: as worker, engineer, teacher, artist—all of the callings are open; there is room for every new member.

And the conditions of adult life are improving from year to year. Quibishev, chairman of Gosplan, says in his report of January 5, 1931: "In 1931, the payroll of the nation will increase from 12.5 billion rubles to 15.3, providing an increase of six per cent to eight per cent in the workers' wages. An increase of 1.5 billions (from 5 billions to 6.5) is provided for social and cultural needs: education, social insurance, health. For the construction of workmen's houses a billion rubles will be spent this year, in place of 580 million spent last year. We shall increase the supply of manufactured goods by 27 per cent—from 11.5 to 14.6 billion rubles—and the supply of foodstuffs—grain, vegetables, meat and milk products—even in greater proportion."

I told you of the new workers' cities I saw—handsome apartment houses four and five stories high, roomy, airy and light; with wide streets, gardens, numerous public buildings, theatres, etc. Two hundred such cities will be erected by the end of the Five Years. And as fast as means permit, old hovels in the villages and dark tenements in the cities will be replaced by modern, hygienic homes. Already as you travel through the country, you see this construction going on; brick buildings and electricity in villages—something pre-revolution Russia had not dreamt of.

Communist Youth

The young people of the Soviet Union bear concrete, tangible evidence of the improvement in living conditions of the last ten years. Wherever you meet them—in factories, on state or collective farms, in the streets of the cities or in the gatherings of Pioneers or Komsomols—you meet bright-eyed, healthy human beings, boys and girls, eager, peppy, full of life. Watch them at their sports—on the rivers, swimming or boat racing; on the football field; at various athletic exercises; on skates or skis in winter; at Red Army maneuvers—you see skill and beauty and strength. Visit schools or universities—you are amazed at the alertness, the high spiritedness of the students. I was told by old professors in Moscow that teaching has become a pleasure instead of a drudge as in the old times; one has an eager, attentive audience before him; and woe to the slacker, to the hell-raiser: a council of his fellow students will quickly put him to rights—either mind your studies or get out. . . . Last year, in June, there was an international athletic meet of Pioneers in Moscow. There were thousands of boys and girls from every part of the Union, and numerous delegations from Germany, England, and other countries. It was marvelous to watch these youngsters go through their paces; being among them, one became young again!

The Soviet Union is a new world, a young world—it is but fourteen years old. What is left of the old forms—man's degradation, woman's slavery, the iniquities of the church, exploitation of man by man, ignorance, fear of the morrow—are fast disappearing.

Socialism in Our Time

The ten years under review have seen the foundation laid of a Communist State on a territory covering one-sixth of the globe, catering directly to 160 million people. In the balance of the Five-Year Plan period, whether at the end of '32 or '33, this foundation will be completed. The next Five-Year Plan—it is being elaborated even now—will see the erection of the superstructure, and the Socialist edifice will be completed. The archi-

pects, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, designed this edifice, using all the tools that science and love of man could furnish. Lenin's disciple, Stalin, is supervising the erection, following the blueprints closely, carefully selecting his materials, building soundly and firmly, to withstand all attacks of time and elements. The stockholders of this marvelous edifice—the workers and peasants of U.S.S.R., with its Board of Directors, the government of the Soviet Union—are as one with the manager, supporting him in every move and straining every nerve to bring the structure to successful completion. The stock books remain open: there are shares available for all the workers of the world; the designs and blueprints are at their disposal. Lenin said "Who will conquer whom?"—this magnificent edifice of Communism, or the rotten and crumbling structure of capitalism? The answer is now patent and evident to all who have eyes to see. The salvation of the world is in Marx's testament: "Workers of the world, unite." As Molotov says: "The work of Marx, Engels, and Lenin will conquer."



10/5/1931
W.A.M.

FRIENDS OF THE SOVIET UNION

United States Section

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NEW YORK CITY

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