

FOREWORD

It was six years ago, back in 1932, that my wife and I made our first visit to the Soviet Union. We spent six weeks in the country at that time and traveled extensively throughout the western part of Russia, from Leningrad in the north as far as Tiflis and the Black Sea in the south. We stayed three weeks in Moscow, took a boat down the length of the winding Volga River from Gorki to Stalingrad, motored through the beautiful and awe-inspiring Caucasus Mountains, enjoyed ourselves in the warm and sunny resorts of the Crimea, and finished up with the key cities of Kharkov and Kiev in the Ukraine. It was a splendid and rewarding trip. And we were greatly impressed with what the Soviet people had already achieved in both an economic and cultural sense.

Then in the spring of 1938 we went to the U.S.S.R. again. This time we remained a month and concentrated on the larger cities and on collective farms. We did not get a chance to repeat our sail down the Volga or our tour of the Caucasus and the Crimea; but otherwise we covered about the same territory as before and were able to compare specifically the tremendous improvement in conditions as between 1932 and 1938. This brief survey, which makes no pretensions to completeness, is based on what I saw and heard and did in the Soviet Union during my two trips there and also of course on the considerable amount of careful study that I have devoted to the U.S.S.R. over the last decade. I have incorporated here part of the material which I used in a pamphlet published several years ago and entitled "On Understanding Soviet Russia." The subject of the Soviet Union is still such a controversial one that it is difficult to be objective about it. All I can say is that I am sincerely and honestly presenting the truth as I see it.

C. L.

October, 1938.

Published by Soviet Russia Today
Printed in the U.S.A.

THE STORY OF SOVIET PROGRESS

By CORLISS LAMONT

I.

THE RUSSIAN BACKGROUND

Before taking up in detail the present situation in the U.S.S.R., it is essential to run our eye over a few simple facts about the physical characteristics and historical background of this remarkable land. The Soviet Union is the largest country in the world, covering a vast and sprawling territory representing between a sixth and a seventh of the entire land surface of the earth. It is greater in area than all of North America and two and a half times as big as the United States. When Howard Hughes, the American aviator, flew round the world recently, roughly one-half of his land flight was over Soviet territory. From the Arctic Ocean to Afghanistan more than 3,000 miles south, from Poland to the Sea of Japan more than 5,000 miles east, the Red flag flies; and over a total population of 175,000,000. In Bering Strait less than five miles of water separates islands belonging to the Soviet Union and islands belonging to the United States as part of the Territory of Alaska. And it is interesting to reflect that if Secretary of State Seward had not put through the purchase of Alaska from Tsarist Russia in 1867, Soviet socialism might today have a foothold on the North American continent reaching to within approximately five hundred miles of the United States proper.

These huge proportions of the Soviet Union entail immense advantages in the scope and variety of natural resources, making the country the most completely self-sufficient political unit in the world from an economic point of view. Within its extensive domains lie one-half of the earth's iron ore, one-third of the oil reserves, two-thirds of the manganese, and 95 per cent of the platinum. Its coal reserves are more than a thousand billion tons, the second largest in the world; while copper, lead, zinc, gold, bauxite, potash and apatite are plentiful. Its all but limitless timber reserves cover two billion acres of forest land; its harvests of grain, flax, and sugar beets are larger than any other nation's; its cotton production stands third. And most of these figures are likely to need revision upwards as further scientific surveys proceed throughout the Soviet Union and as its economy develops.

These almost infinite resources of the U.S.S.R. and its enormous territorial expanses prove the truth of the old peasant proverb, "Russia is not a country, it is a world." Obviously the Soviet regime has been building socialism in what amounts to a whole continent rather than in one nation in the ordinary sense of that term. These facts mean also that from a military standpoint the workers' and peasants' republic is well-nigh impregnable. Yet at the same time these far-reaching boundaries and economic potentialities create a sheer problem of administration which is breath-taking in its extent and complexity, and which in itself alone explains many of the troubles that the Soviet government has encountered in the first two decades of its existence.

The Tsarist Autocracy

This problem of administration is made even more difficult by the fact that within the U.S.S.R. and comprising nearly half of its population, there live, in addition to the Russians proper, 188 different minority peoples, speaking 150 different languages and adhering to 40 different religions. The Tsars cruelly oppressed these national and racial minorities, discriminating against them in all kinds of ways, forcing upon them a policy of strict Russification, and attempting to stamp out their native cultures. The Jews were, of course, especially subject to persecution, found themselves forced to live in ghettos, and endured time and again the most violent reigns of terror. In the fall of 1905, for example, more than one hundred pogroms occurred in the different parts of Russia, resulting in the slaughter of 3,500 Jews and the wounding of 10,000. Cooperating closely with government authorities in these atrocities was the Greek Orthodox Church, the official state church of Old Russia with the Tsar himself as its head. And this corrupt and organization included in its persecutions all minority religious groups in the community, including the Roman Catholics and the Protestants.

The semi-feudal Tsarist autocracy treated the masses of the workers and peasants with appalling brutality, condemning them to a wretched life of economic misery, political repression and cultural backwardness. Although pre-war Russia had a long revolutionary tradition and a most alert and able intelligentsia, the country had never experienced the progressive and invigorating influences of a Renaissance and Reformation, an Enlightenment and Bourgeois Revolution. In 1917 capitalist industry was weakly and spasmodi-

cally developed; about 85 per cent of the people were peasants (muzhiks), engaged in agricultural pursuits and using, for the most part, decidedly primitive methods. Up until 1861 these peasants had actually been serfs in the old medieval sense. Over 70 per cent of the entire population was illiterate, enjoyment of the great Russian achievements in literature and drama and music being confined to a very thin layer of the economically and socially privileged.

Genuinely democratic institutions were practically unknown in the old Russia, since the Duma or House of Representatives, conceded by the Tsar as a result of the unsuccessful 1905 Revolution, soon became reduced to a parliamentary nonentity. At the same time the Tsarist government was notorious throughout the world for its nepotism, its corruption and its impossible inefficiency—all of which contributed notably to the breakdown during the Great War. Looking at Russia as a whole, it is no exaggeration to say that in 1917 it lagged a century or more behind advanced nations like Great Britain and the United States in the development of industry and machine technique, of public administration and a modern culture in general.

Such was the unpropitious setting in which the Russian followers of Karl Marx set out to construct the first socialist commonwealth in history. Even had no other important factors entered into the situation, Lenin and his colleagues would have had a hard enough time; but other factors did arise which made their task at least twice as difficult. When in November of 1917 the Bolsheviks took over the state from the muddling liberals and middle-class republicans, Russia had already been through one revolution, that of March, which resulted in the abdication of the Tsar and the establishment of the Provisional Government. Meanwhile, in the intervening eight months, the condition of the country had gone from bad to worse, with the transportation system in collapse, the fields denuded of working hands, and the bread lines in the cities growing longer and longer. The nation had endured more than three years of disastrous warfare and had suffered therein more than 9,000,000 casualties, with approximately 2,300,000 dead, 4,700,000 wounded and 2,000,000 prisoners.

Capitalist Intervention

Within a few months the Germans had seized a large part of the rich, grain-producing Ukraine and forced the humiliating Treaty of

Brest-Litovsk on the Soviet government. But the troubles of the Communists were just beginning. For in spite of Lenin's sincere and continued efforts to establish peace, armed intervention on the part of the Allies began in the spring of 1918 and went on for several years, long after the defeat of the Central Powers had done away with the shadowy excuse of trying to re-establish the eastern front. During this period of intervention the armies of no less than ten foreign nations, including an expeditionary force from the United States, invaded the Soviet Union, maintained a hostile blockade, and gave lavish aid and comfort to the White counter-revolutionaries.

In fact, there can be little doubt that had it not been for the support in men, munitions, and money which the Allies contributed to the Whites, the civil war in Russia would have come to an end in rather short order. As it was, it lasted in extreme form three terrible years during which 2,000,000 people were killed, approximately \$6,000,000,000 worth of property destroyed, and indirect losses suffered amounting to some \$20,000,000,000 more. Industrial production was reduced to less than 20 per cent of the pre-war level, while the Allied blockade almost completely eliminated foreign commerce. When the Communists came into power in 1917 they admittedly did so with comparatively small loss in life and property; that later there took place a cataclysmic counter-revolution, stimulated and sustained by widespread foreign intervention, was certainly not of their choosing.

It is illuminating to quote in this connection from the English writer Bruce Lockhart, who was a member of the British diplomatic corps in Russia during the exciting civil war period and who neither was nor is a Soviet sympathizer. In his book *British Agent* Mr. Lockhart writes, as of March, 1918, that the Communists:

"...had not yet embarked on their own campaign of suppression. I mention this comparative tolerance of the Bolsheviks, because the cruelties which followed were the result of the intensification of the civil war. For the intensification of that bloody struggle Allied intervention, with the false hopes it raised, was largely responsible.... It sent thousands of Russians to their death. Indirectly it was responsible for the Terror."

The fact is that the "Red terror," so played up by foreign commentators, did not go into effect until the autumn of 1918 after the

all but successful attempt on Lenin's life and after Allied intervention had got well under way. Thus it becomes perfectly clear that the Communists, so often portrayed as bloodthirsty sadists, resorted to extreme measures only when internal and external violence forced them to do so in order to save the Soviet regime. But with their backs to the wall they fought desperately and, like their opponents, with every weapon at their disposal. Both sides in this terrible civil conflict fully bore out the old Russian saying, "One life, one kopek," popularized abroad by Mr. Walter Duranty, brilliant Moscow correspondent of *The New York Times*, as the title of his novel on the subject of these tragic years.

In the spring of 1920, when the Soviet government had clearly gained the upper hand over the White armies, Marshal Pilsudski of Poland launched a totally unprovoked and temporarily successful attack on the Ukraine. The Red troops finally drove out the Poles and, indeed, carried their counter-offensive to the very gates of Warsaw, whence they were driven back. The added strain on the U.S.S.R. was very severe. Yet still another great crisis was to try the Soviets. In the autumn and winter of 1921-22, after the government military forces had finally triumphed throughout the length and breadth of the land, a new enemy appeared on the scene. Its name was drought, failure of crops, famine. This crisis on field and on farm, aggravated by the shattered state of transportation and the general war-weariness of the peasantry, brought another fearful toll of death. Well over a million persons perished.

Besides the terrible inroads on life and property during this period of storm and stress, the Soviet Union suffered, either through military force or independence movements, the loss of all the western provinces: Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Bessarabia. In these regions had been many of the most highly developed industries of the Tsar's empire, including the Polish coal and textile centers and the Finnish pulp and paper mills. Though these districts comprised only one-thirtieth of the area of old Russia, they possessed one-fourth of its manufacture, one-fifth of its railway trackage, and nearly one-sixth of its population. They also embraced all of Russia's shipping outlets on the Baltic Sea. Hence the loss of these territories entailed such an extensive reorientation of Russia's economy as to constitute in itself a major task for the Soviet government.

When one reflects, then, upon the Soviets' five-year ordeal of

civil conflict, foreign invasion, territorial loss, economic breakdown and famine, all following hard upon three calamitous years of the Great War and two far-reaching revolutions, it seems something like a miracle that they came through with their heads up and their colors flying. It was an epic triumph of unsurpassed energy and intellect on the part of an inspired people; and some day, I hope, will be described, as it deserves, in a literary document of Homeric quality and proportions. When on this background which I have outlined I view the picture of the Soviet Union's progress during the past fifteen years, I cannot help concluding that its achievement has perhaps been the greatest and most heroic in human history.

II.

THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS

It took several years, including a number of concessions to the deeply engrained feudal-capitalist spirit and the traditional method of conducting business activities, for the Soviet Republic to recover from the destructive civil war period and struggle back to the economic level from which, had fate and history been kinder, it might have started forward in 1917. Then in the autumn of 1928, following three years of experimentation in comprehensive planning, the First Five-Year Plan went into effect. A year later such immense progress had been made that it was decided to attempt fulfilment of the Plan in four and a quarter years and thus bring it to a close December 31, 1932. While the revised and final schedules of the Plan were not all 100 per cent achieved by this date, the main objectives were carried out and the original 1928 estimate greatly surpassed.

In general the major goals of the First Five-Year Plan were to establish heavy industry on a sound and permanent basis, to mechanize and socialize agriculture, and to bring about the rapid technical training of the population. These achievements were designed both to provide a solid and lasting foundation for the building of complete socialism and to make the Soviet Union, in case of need, independent of the capitalist world. But the Plan naturally cost something in terms of human stress and strain, especially since the emphasis on heavy industry meant unprecedented savings for capital investment and therefore the temporary foregoing of consumers' goods. Accordingly, the Soviet people tightened their belts in order that the manufacture of producers' goods such as blast-furnaces and

steel foundries, tractors and agricultural combines, hydro-electric plants and all kinds of machinery should go forward at top speed. Huge quantities of foodstuffs and raw materials, which could easily have been used at home, were exported in face of declining depression prices on the world market to pay for the import of machines and the hiring of foreign technicians.

Socialist Farming

The socialization of agriculture in Russia meant *collectivization*, that is, the merging of separate farms into large-scale collectives (kolkhozi), managed as a single cooperative unit by the individual peasant members and owners. The average size of the Soviet collective farm is about 1,300 acres. But usually each peasant family retains the ownership of its own dwelling, small kitchen garden, and cow, pigs, poultry or perhaps beehives. In other words, the communal side of the collective chiefly involves the major aspects of agricultural production in sowing, reaping, storing, making improvements and, above all, in applying machine technique and scientific methods in these various activities. Undeniably crucial in the collectivization program was the establishment throughout the countryside of the government-run Machine-Tractor Stations, which rent to the collective farms tractors, reapers and other machinery as well as providing the necessary technical assistance or instruction for the operation of this mechanized equipment. Eventually more than 7,000 of the stations were set up.

Besides the collectives the First Five-Year Plan saw instituted thousands of huge state farms (sovkhozi), owned outright by the government and managed by certain of its Commissariats. The state farms are in actuality big agricultural factories with all their hands working for regular wages and organized into unions. In practice they have proved, mainly because of their sheer size, somewhat unwieldy and inefficient. Hence they were later much reduced in area and in many cases broken up into collectives. One of the main functions of the state farms now is to carry on large-scale agricultural experiments.

There can be no shadow of a doubt that collectivization was an absolute necessity for the advance of socialism in the U.S.S.R. The continued existence of some 21,000,000 scattered strips and separate peasant holdings throughout the nation meant, in the first place, production that was inefficient and also insufficient: for the needs of

a growing population and an expanding socialist economy. The obvious solution was to combine these innumerable small farms into two or three hundred thousand large enterprises (about 250,000 is the present number) in which the benefits of modern machinery and planned cooperative endeavor could be utilized. In the second place, the retention of the old individualistic agricultural system meant the persistence of the old individualistic psychology and ideology that went with it. And since the Soviet peasants constituted an overwhelming proportion of the population, it would very likely in the long run have proved fatal for the new society had they gone on maintaining their anti-socialist system and attitude. Hence collectivization had to come in the Soviet Union and did come—to stay.

Admittedly, however, certain organizers temporarily pushed the drive for collective farms too hard, as Joseph Stalin himself told them in his famous speech warning against "dizziness from success." This error in tempo markedly increased the amount of waste and inefficiency inevitable in the process of the peasants adapting themselves to the new system, and did not give the factories time for the production of sufficient tractors and other agricultural machinery. In addition, there was widespread sabotage engineered by dissident Right and Trotskyite elements, the stubborn resistance of the kulak class naturally opposed to the whole idea of collectivization, and serious passive resistance stirred up by the Ukrainian nationalists who aimed at a separatist revolt. The combined result of these factors was a poor harvest in 1932 and a terrible slaughter of livestock by disgruntled peasants. An alarming food crisis developed. And during the winter of 1933 the entire Soviet Union felt the effects of the food shortage, which in some areas undoubtedly was responsible for a considerable toll in malnutrition, disease and death.

But as so often happens in Soviet Russia, a bad situation quickly changed for the better. The Soviet government made certain concessions to the individualistic tendencies among the peasants, established special political departments in the Machine- Tractor Stations, and dispatched 25,000 picked Bolshevik workers to some of the key agricultural districts to help in the 1933 campaign. At the same time the resistance of the kulaks was broken by severe measures which included deportation of the more recalcitrant ones, to distant regions of the U.S.S.R. The result of these various moves became clear in the fall of 1933; the country had the biggest harvest

in its annals. But even more important was the fact that collectivization, which means socialism in agriculture, had won a great and lasting victory. This was one of the most significant agrarian revolutions in history, and without it, no matter what strides industry made, full socialism in the Soviet Union would have been impossible and even partial socialism endangered.

The accomplishment of the third great goal of the First Five-Year Plan, the mastering of modern technique, was likewise a costly process. A large proportion of the old skilled professional class left Russia at the time of the revolution; many of those who remained continued to be anti-Soviet in their sympathies and to sabotage whenever possible the economic program of the Socialist Republic. Hence, the Soviet government had to train a whole new generation of socialist technicians whose efficiency and loyalty could be counted on. This took time. It was also expensive in terms of production costs. Tens of thousands of unskilled workers and raw peasants from the fields started from scratch to learn how to operate complicated machinery. It is no wonder that they showed a great deal of awkwardness at first and that they ruined a great deal of machinery in the course of their education.

In the end, despite these various obstacles, the objective was largely achieved. The Soviet workers demonstrated their proficiency in the arts of modern industry. The Soviet institutes of technical education turned out increasing numbers of engineers and technicians fully capable of coping with the complex problems of the machine age. And the quality of all sorts of manufactured goods steadily and notably improved.

The Second Five-Year Plan

The Second Five-Year Plan, extending from January 1, 1933, to December 31, 1937, continued in practically every respect the advances made under the first Plan. The chief differences were a greater stress on consumption goods—clothes, kitchen utensils, furniture, bicycles, and the like—and a somewhat less arduous rate of expansion. As the Second Plan progressed, the Soviet people proceeded more and more to reap the benefits of their hard work and self-sacrifice under the First Plan. Consumers' goods poured out of the factories in vast quantities, causing an enormous retail turnover throughout the country, and quickly and noticeably raising the standard of living in urban and rural districts alike. Labor productiv-

ity in industry, stimulated especially by the Stakhanov movement to increase the workers' efficiency, went up 78 per cent and the average real wage more than 100 per cent.

In the volume of industrial output the last year of the Second Five-Year Plan saw the Soviet Union rise no less than 800 per cent above 1913 and attain second place among the countries of the world. Today the U.S.S.R. is first in the production of airplanes, tractors, agricultural combines, wheat and hemp; and second in respect to gold, coal, oil and the generation of electricity. "Communism," Lenin wrote, "is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country." Lenin's dream has gone a long way towards fulfilment; for scores of huge, modern power stations now cover the Soviet land from one end to another and high-tension transmission lines carry energy to factories throughout the nation. The annual output of electric power in Russia today is more than twenty times that of the pre-revolutionary era. The biggest power plant in the U.S.S.R. and in fact the largest in all Europe is that of the Ukraine's Dneproges, which American engineers helped to build. I was greatly impressed by my visit to this dynamic center in 1932 when it was under construction and again in 1938 when the magnificent dam and the nearby factory concentration, the "Soviet Pittsburgh," had been completed.

In agriculture, during the Second Five-Year Plan, the proportion of collectivized peasant households rose to 92 per cent of the total number and, together with some 4,000 state farms, covered 99 per cent of the cultivated land. Since 1933, with the exception of one year in which drought conditions were widespread, Russia's harvests have been progressively the greatest in its history. The biggest one of all in 1937 amounted to more than 110,000,000 metric tons of grain as compared with an annual average of 80,000,000 before the Great War. Famine and the threat of famine, which for generation after generation in the old Russia constituted the greatest single economic evil (there were nineteen famines in the last century alone) have become merely bad memories. At the same time there have been enormous increases in industrial crops such as cotton, flax and sugar beets; while the livestock situation has rapidly improved since the tense days of the early collectivization period.

In the sphere of foreign trade the Soviet Union had, during the ten years from 1928 through 1937, a total business turnover of approximately \$6,600,000,000 and imported approximately

\$3,250,000,000 worth of goods without once defaulting on a single penny; and this in spite of the unusually severe credit terms imposed by capitalist business. Socialist planning has meant that behind every obligation, small or large, of the U.S.S.R. stand the resources of the entire nation. Soviet Russia for many years has been a very good customer of America and during the worst period of the great depression provided an invaluable outlet for certain of our machine-tool industries. Since 1935 the Soviet government had made purchases in the United States averaging more than \$40,000,000 annually, and since 1937 has done more buying in this country than in any other.

Conditions in 1938

When my wife and I made our second trip to the Soviet Union we found evidences everywhere of the vast progress which the Second Five-Year Plan has brought. The contrast with 1932 was especially striking in the realm of consumers' goods, both foodstuffs and manufactured articles, which filled to overflowing the shops of Moscow, the other cities we visited, and the villages through which we wandered in the Ukraine. The people in general were much better dressed than before, with both men and women becoming increasingly well-groomed and the latter paying much attention to manicure, coiffure and cosmetics. There was an abundance of bread and pastry, milk and cheese, fresh eggs and vegetables, meats and fish, Spanish oranges and good ice cream, including delicious chocolate-covered eskimo pie. Wherever we went in the cities we found fleets of trim blue and white kiosks on wheels, selling nuts, fruits, soft drinks and cigarettes. At the many stations where we stopped on our three-thousand-mile tour women appeared with appetizing sandwiches, chocolate and other light edibles for sale. The meals on the dining cars were ample and well cooked. All this was very different from 1932. And there can be no doubt that for the first time in history the Russian people are getting plenty to eat.

Another of our chief impressions was the immense amount of construction that is going on everywhere. The first thing you notice coming into a city by train is that new buildings are rising wherever you look. All the big cities are in the throes of extensive building programs—including factories, workers' apartments, offices, schools, theatres, stadiums, parkways and bridges—that can hardly fail to make foreign observers sick with envy. Such programs could

not be duplicated in America at present for the reason that they are based on great five or ten-year plans of reconstruction made possible only by socialism applied on a municipal and national scale. Despite all this, urban housing still lags behind the needs of the people, who have flocked to the cities by the million in the last decade and in some cases, like that of Moscow, have actually doubled the pre-revolutionary population. Another shortcoming is in my opinion the architectural quality of Soviet workers' apartments, which do not yet measure up to the splendid Vienna housing developments I saw in 1932 or the fine Stockholm cooperative apartments I visited in 1938 on my way back from the Soviet Union.

I was struck, too, on this trip to the U.S.S.R. by the widespread mechanical development. Russian-manufactured automobiles, buses and trucks now fill the newly macadamized streets of Soviet cities with quite heavy traffic and, I may add, with quite ear-splitting noise. The new Moscow subway, with its smooth-working escalators and beautiful, airy stations, runs with admirable efficiency and altogether constitutes a remarkable feat in the art of engineering. Soviet mechanical progress extends, of course, to military equipment, as we saw for ourselves on May Day when we stood for six hours on the Red Square and watched the tanks and artillery, the airplanes and other mechanized units, pass in review. Even the most casual tourist can now see that the Russians have gone far towards mastering that modern technique in which they used to be so deficient.

As for the Soviet people, they constantly impressed us with their spirit of gaiety and confidence. We saw them dancing and merry-making in the public squares; we mingled with them in the streets and the parks and during holidays; we joined with them in festivities at workers' clubs; we enjoyed with them theatre and movie, opera and ballet; we met them personally at their offices and homes, at lunch and dinner and during special outings. One of our more memorable days was a long boat-trip down the new Moscow-Volga Canal with about thirty Russians—artists, authors, journalists, economists, professors and others—with whom we conversed freely and frankly, on topics both light and serious, for hours on end.

On this outing we talked with, among others, Vishnievsky, the scenario writer who did the cinema, "We Are From Kronstadt" and who is now at work on another picture dealing with the civil war;

Afinogenov, the talented young dramatist whose celebrated play "Fear" had a long run in the U.S.S.R.; and the engaging children's poet Mikhailov, who had translated Walt Disney's "Three Little Pigs" into Russian. Apparently the song was a huge success among Soviet children. So we told him about "Snow White." We thought that "Whistle While You Work" and "Heigh Ho" might go very well in the Soviet Union but that "Some Day My Prince Will Come" would not be too popular! Later we sent Mikhailov the lyrics and words of the first two songs in hopes that he could use them.

In spite of the enormous increase in consumers' goods, Soviet industry is not yet able to meet the ever-increasing commodity demands in either the urban or agricultural districts, demands to a large degree generated among the people by the economic and educational advances of the socialist system itself. Prices remain relatively high in some lines, while in others new stock is quickly bought out. Distribution and retail trade are not yet as efficiently organized as production. And production of consumers' goods is itself handicapped by the degree of work-time which has to go to turning out military supplies for purposes of defense. Then there have been the widespread sabotage and wrecking activities of the past few years, activities which, in my judgment, probably set back the Soviet economy as a whole by 15 or 20 per cent. But the human resources in the U.S.S.R. are just as great as the natural resources. New and younger elements, vigorous, able and well-trained, have come up from the ranks to fill the gaps left by unfaithful officials exposed in the purge. And the Soviet economic machine is again hitting on all cylinders in its swift course forward, with industrial production for the first half of 1938 thirteen per cent above the corresponding period of 1937. The army, too, has more than recovered from its personnel troubles and is unquestionably at its all-time high in strength and reliability.

Economic Crises Abolished

In a general sense, the most significant thing of all in the total Soviet picture is, I think, the fact that during the first two Five-Year Plans the Russians have accomplished the unprecedented feat of eliminating the cycle of boom and depression by making economic boom, or rather controlled prosperity, a continuous and permanent thing. Though various sorts of growing pains will no doubt from time to time continue to cause trouble in particular industries or re-

gions of the U.S.S.R., the general, country-wide breakdowns which characterize capitalist crises seem to have become a relic of the past. The fundamental reason is that wide-scale and long-range socialist planning ensures such a balance between production and consumption, between supply and demand, between the goods manufactured and the ability of the people to buy them, that the disastrous phenomenon of overproduction cannot take place. There can be no piling up of unbought commodities, as in capitalist lands, in profitless abundance in store and warehouse so that a crisis for the owners as well as the would-be consumers inevitably results.

If my opinion on this matter is correct, then surely Soviet socialism has achieved a step forward in economic affairs at least equal in importance to the industrial revolution. Looking into the dim future, I think it can be said that at the present time the potential capacity of a people, even one with a relatively high standard of living, for absorbing consumers' goods approaches infinity. Yet it is conceivable that some day what we might call *absolute* overproduction in one field—foodstuffs, for example— could threaten a socialist economy like that of Russia. In such a case it will not be difficult to adjust the situation by reducing hours of work in agriculture or arranging for some of the farm workers to shift to other vocations.

The Third Five-Year Plan started January 1, 1938, and will end December 31, 1942. The Soviet State Planning Commission expects that more will be achieved in this third period than during the First and Second Five-Year Plans together. And it has brought forward as a slogan, "To overtake and surpass America." Since Soviet economists admit that American labor's efficiency is still two or three times higher than that of their own workers, special stress will be laid in this third plan on further increasing labor productivity and on improving the quality of goods. The Planning Commission is already looking ahead in a general way to the Seventh and Eighth Five-Year Plans which will be finished respectively in 1960 and 1965. It is expected that by the latter date the Soviet population will have increased from its present 180,000,000 to well over 300,000,000. At the New York World's Fair which opens in the spring of 1939, Americans will be able to see, in the large Soviet section, representative exhibits showing past and projected progress under the Five-Year Plans.

III. SOVIET CULTURAL PROGRESS

I have been emphasizing so far the Herculean economic achievements of the Soviet Union. But we should not forget for a moment that cultural growth in the Socialist Republic has paralleled the material and has been just as striking. The ultimate goal of socialism is to build, upon the foundations of lasting economic security and equilibrium, the greatest culture that the world has yet seen both in terms of its qualitative achievements and the number of people able to participate in it. I shall review a few outstanding examples of the Soviet advance towards this goal without in any sense trying to cover the country's entire cultural enterprise.

It was Lenin himself who said:

"Art belongs to the people. It ought to extend with deep roots into the very thick of the broad toiling masses. It ought to be intelligible to these masses and loved by them. And it ought to unify the feeling, thought and will of these masses, and elevate them. It ought to arouse and develop artists among them."

These ideas of Lenin about art are daily becoming more and more of an actuality in the Soviet Union. Art there has become the possession of the masses of the people and has entered into the very fibre of their beings. It is no longer the private property of a small minority at the top. The whole population is sharing in the enjoyment and creation of literature and painting, the theatre and the motion picture, music and dancing. As so often among the Soviet Russians, a succinct slogan sums up the situation. In this case it is, "To live without work is robbery; to work without art is barbarism."

The Educational Advance

In the realm of education the progress in the U.S.S.R. since Tsarist times has likewise been prodigious. Some of the statistics here are enlightening. During the First and Second Five-Year Plans illiteracy went down to 5 per cent of the population as compared with the 70 per cent pre-war figure of 1913; the number of children in primary and secondary schools increased from 8,000,000 to 30,000,000; and the total students in a vastly augmented number of higher educational institutions grew five times over. There are 550,000 such students in the Soviet Union today as compared with a combined aggregate of 416,000 in the highest educational institutions of Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Japan. The Soviet stu-

dents, moreover, are provided with free tuition, free living quarters and a monthly allowance for ordinary expenses. It is significant, too, that 38 per cent of them are women. Formal education is already compulsory between the ages of eight and fourteen; the Third Five-Year Plan will make it so for everyone up to eighteen, a step unprecedented among the nations of the world.

At the same time the masses of the Soviet people have become voracious readers. In 1937, 2,000 magazines were being published in the U.S.S.R. with an annual circulation of 391,000,000 copies; 7,000 newspapers, nine times the pre-war number, with a circulation sixteen times as great; and 53,000 titles in books and pamphlets with 1,300,000,000 copies, ten times the 1913 level. When Albert Rhys Williams wanted to express what was going on in the publishing field he wrote an article appropriately called "Billions of Books." No one should be surprised that there has been a constant paper shortage in Soviet Russia.

The spread of education has gone on, not just in the cities, but throughout the agricultural regions as well. The awakening of millions and millions of formerly ignorant and illiterate peasants to the new cultural life has been perhaps the most noteworthy thing of all. During my trips to Russia the young people with whom I talked in the villages and collective farms seemed just as intelligent and alert as the students I met in the urban centers. The educational program has also extended to all the national and racial minorities throughout the U.S.S.R. In many cases new alphabets have been created for the benefit of backward minority groups. And, exactly reversing the policy of the Tsars, the Soviet government has not only permitted but has encouraged these minorities to develop their own language, their own theatres, their own schools and their own institutions in general. The result has been a veritable renaissance of the various minority arts and cultures in Russia along the lines of the general principle, "national in form and socialist in content."

Emancipation of Women

Another group in the U.S.S.R. which has especially benefited from the cultural and social remodeling of the country is the women. They have experienced a far-reaching emancipation; and now are on a plane of equality with men, both legally and otherwise. It is revealing that in the All-Union Congress of Soviets there are 184 women or 16 per cent out of 1,143 deputies as compared with

twelve women or two per cent in the British House of Commons and six women or one per cent in the Congress of the United States. In the extensive Mohammedan regions of Russia the women have gained through the abolition of the good old custom of polygamy by the Soviet government, so often portrayed as encouraging lax sex relations. In these districts, too, they have won freedom from wearing the veil and from the evil of child marriage.

Again, it was Lenin who said that no nation can be free when its women are household slaves and doomed to "daily sacrifice to a thousand unimportant trivialities." This saying has become a basic principle in the Soviet Union. Women in their function as mothers are provided for with particular care; babies and small children are allotted the best of everything that the land possesses. The Communists are not, in my opinion, breaking up the home; what they are breaking up is family drudgery and family egotism. And they want people's ambitions and interests to extend beyond the family to the country at large. Since the tumultuous years of revolution and civil war the institution of the family in Soviet Russia has unquestionably been becoming more and more stable. The Soviet Union has, moreover, come close to the complete abolition of prostitution.

In Soviet medicine we find definitely established the principle which many eminent physicians and surgeons in America have recently been publicly supporting, that "The health of the people is the direct concern of the government." Since the revolution the Soviet government has increased the number of doctors from less than 20,000 to more than 100,000; it has increased the number of hospital beds from 175,600 to over 500,000; it has reduced infant mortality by more than 50 per cent and the general death rate by more than 62 per cent. Whereas in the United States only one out of every 30 dollars spent on medical care goes to the prevention of diseases, in Soviet Russia the whole system of public health is built around the idea of prevention. And the guiding principle is the creation of the best possible conditions for work and living.

In the new Soviet Constitution there is a remarkable clause that reads:

"Citizens of the U.S.S.R. have the right to rest and leisure. The right to rest and leisure is ensured by the reduction of the working day to seven hours for the overwhelming majority of the workers, the institution of annual vacations with pay for workers and other employees, and the provision of a wide network of sanatoria, rest homes and clubs

for the accommodation of the toilers.”

The development of sports and all kinds of other recreational facilities has also contributed greatly to the increasing health and well-being of the Soviet population. The physical culture movement has millions of adherents. Stadiums are being built throughout the land. But fortunately there can occur no commercialization of sport for the sake of private profit such as we have known in America; and no prostitution of educational institutions to football in order to finance a general program of athletics or to attract donations from the wealthy.

Soviet Science

An excellent measure of the difference between the old Russia and the new is the situation as regards science. Whatever political commentators may say about the Soviet Union, foreign scientists who have gone there and studied conditions in their specialty almost invariably bring back glowing reports. The number of professional scientists has increased from 3,000 under the old regime to 40,000 now. In every field, from public health to archaeology, and in every locality, from the thickly populated industrial cities to tiny hamlets in distant Siberia, the methods of science are replacing those of religious supernaturalism and are exerting a far-reaching and beneficent influence.

In their monumental and definitive book on the Soviet Union the English authors, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, tell us:

"We find today in the U.S.S.R., what exists in no other country, an elaborately planned network of more than a thousand research laboratories, with their own extensive libraries and collections, scattered over the vast territory between the Arctic Ocean on the north, and the Black Sea or the Central Asian Mountains on the south, at each of which selected staffs of trained researchers, with salaries and expenses provided, are working in coordination on particular problems, allocated largely with special reference to local needs, opportunities, or resources." *

While the Soviet Russians believe that in the long run all science should be made to serve practical purposes, they are thoroughly awake to the need of "pure" scientific research more or less re-

* Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization?* New York, 1938, p. 956. Quoted by the special permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

mote from immediate utilitarian pressures.

The extraordinary scientific work which Soviet socialism fosters has been well symbolized in the stirring non-stop flights of Soviet aviators to the West Coast of the United States via the North Pole and even more solidly in the thrilling and successful efforts to explore and develop the Arctic regions. The Soviet regime has sent out expedition after expedition during the past fifteen years to these far-northern territories, has laid the groundwork for the exploitation of their fishing and other vast resources, set up seventy-five Arctic radio stations for the study of climatic and other conditions, established a regular Northern Sea Route from the west to the east of the Arctic Sea, and trained a special air fleet to aid and cooperate in these various ventures. The high point of all this activity came in the spring of 1937 when Soviet airplanes flew a group of scientists to the North Pole itself to conduct scientific observations and study. Four of these men remained nine months on an ice-floe, which finally drifted far from the Pole. In February of 1938, with their records and specimens intact, they were at last rescued off Greenland by Soviet ice-breakers.

It is of course impossible to consider the present role of science in Soviet Russia apart from the new economic system. For that system of socialist planning in effect turns the country into one huge laboratory in which, because of the central controls, scientific experiments on an unprecedented scale can be carried on. Furthermore, in the economic realm, since there is no fear of overproduction, there is no fear of science. Thus the Science Section of the State Planning Commission encourages all kinds of new labor-saving inventions and experiments.

While the individual inventor in every case is amply rewarded, the fruits of his work go to industry as a whole. There are no private interests in the U.S.S.R. to patent an invention and limit its use, for the sake of profit-making, to one particular business concern. If a worker or technician in a steel plant in the Ukraine invents an important instrument or process, every steel mill throughout the Soviet Union will as a matter of course soon be using it. Nor are there any private interests in the Socialist Republic which can buy up and suppress new inventions lest they ruin investments in obsolete processes or machinery. Under socialism science fulfils its proper end of serving mankind and does not, as under capitalism, have a prior obligation to the cause of profit.

Transformation of Motives

Along with the education and cultural developments in Soviet Russia there has occurred so profound a transformation in human motives that it is legitimate to call it a spiritual revolution. It may be asserted that the Communists have changed human nature, but it is more accurate to say that they have *channeled* it. That is, they have taken the raw materials of human impulse and set them going in certain specific directions both rewarding for the individual and beneficial to society as a whole. There is, for instance, more ambition in Russia than ever before; but this ambition, instead of fulfilling itself in trying to make a million rubles, fulfils itself in doing a first-rate job for the community and climbing the ladder of achievement in socially useful ways. There is, too, plenty of competition; but it is "socialist" competition in building the new society, in carrying through the Five-Year Plans, not in trying to win a business or financial advantage over the other fellow.

This far-reaching change in motives is being affected not only through education and propaganda, but even more importantly through the establishment of material security for everyone. This makes it unnecessary for a man to carry on a bitter struggle with others to maintain himself and his family. It is difficult to feel full of brotherly love towards your neighbor when he is well-fed and you are half-starving; and when the competition for jobs and the brute necessities of life are so severe that another man's gain is sure to be your loss. Such is the kind of situation that the capitalist system is always making inevitable. Within a country its terrific pressures are always turning well-meaning men into enemies; in the world at large the same pressures on a vast scale turn whole countries into enemies. Only in the Soviet Union do the basic economic relationships harmonize with and support the highest ethical and social ideals instead of, as elsewhere, brutally contradicting and counteracting them.

Soviet Russia is attempting to bring into actuality certain universal aims which ought to appeal to every intelligent and humane person. The American Declaration of Independence, for example, declares that all men have the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This happens to define in general the goal of the founders of the new Russia. Or take other great and moving human ideals such as equality of opportunity, international peace and un-

derstanding, the abolition of race prejudice, and the creation of a great art and culture. These are all objectives, as I hope I have made plain, constantly in the minds of the Soviet people and their leaders. And they believe that only through a socialist system can they be fully achieved.

In their devotion to the great ends of socialism and its inspiring philosophy the citizens of the Soviet Union have literally forgotten themselves. In their adherence to the new, invigorating loyalties they have been released from age-long economic fears, sexual repressions, and religious guilt-feelings. Their more petty personal problems and Freudian complexes have been driven into the background. Of course, the high purpose and enthusiasm of the Soviet Russians in their drive toward the goal of a free and classless society has had its analogies in other countries. During the Great War some of the belligerent powers produced a somewhat similar mass spirit, thus bearing out the statement of Karl Marx that "The highest heroic effort of which old society is still capable is national war." But the Soviet Union is the first nation in history to harness the inspired imagination and devoted energies of an entire people to the constructive work of peace instead of the destructive works of war. And this is a most important difference.

From all this it ought to be perfectly clear that, far from discouraging individuality, the Soviet socialist order aims to give every member of the community the greatest possible opportunity for development. The Communists insist, however, that economic freedom is the basis of all others; and that only through planning can they free mankind from the chaotic control of the market and its blind, unconscious forces. The much-publicized issue of individuality versus collectivism or socialism is a totally false one. The truth is that in the industrialized and mechanized world of the twentieth century some sort of collectivism is necessary in order that individuality may flourish. Socialism rules out only individualism in the narrow, selfish sense of people exploiting, harming, ruining others for the sake of their own personal advantage. Marx himself wrote in *Capital* of socialism as a "higher type of society whose fundamental principle is the full and free development of every individual." And the motto he chose for himself was, "Follow your own bent, no matter what people say."

IV. TOWARDS DEMOCRACY AND PEACE

The deep concern of Soviet socialism for the individual is clearly discernible in its aim of developing the fullest and most far-reaching democracy that the world has ever known. In Marxist theory the dictatorship of the proletariat has always been considered a temporary phase for a transitional period; as the need for it gradually disappears, the dictatorship disappears. This constitutes one of the most important differences between a Communist and a fascist dictatorship. People have the habit of lumping the two together as if they were in essence the same, but with fascism the dictatorship has a very different purpose and is supposed to go on forever; there is no thought of or provision for an ultimate transition to democracy. Hitler talks of the Nazi form of government lasting a thousand years, while Mussolini revels in calling democracy "a putrid corpse." Stalin, on the other hand, only recently made the following characteristic statement:

"Leaders come and leaders go, but the people remain. Only the people are immortal. Everything else is transient."

Undoubtedly, the Communist Party still remains the most important and powerful organization in the U.S.S.R. Composed now of some three million members, subject to strict discipline and expected to set an example in both public affairs and personal behavior, this body has been since the Revolution the greatest cohesive and initiating force in the growth of Soviet socialism, giving an indispensable and decisive impetus to everything from economic planning to the formulation of the new Constitution. It has provided, as Sidney and Beatrice Webb put it, an organizing group for "the vocation of leadership." This does not mean that the many non-Party sympathizers and the masses of workers and peasants do not themselves demonstrate the qualities of initiative and leadership; but the best of them, as they reveal their ability, tend to gravitate towards the Communist Party and become members of it.

It is true that at present no other political party besides the Communist exists in Soviet Russia. But in America itself, it is appropriate to recall, two distinct and functioning political parties did not come into existence for a good fifteen years after the Revolution, and George Washington was unopposed in the first two elections for President. Whatever the particular evolution of democracy

in the Soviet Union, and whether it eventuates in a multi-party system or adopts, other more efficient forms, that evolution must be judged chiefly in terms of the particular conditions which come to prevail in the country. For we can neither expect nor wish socialist democracy in the U.S.S.R. to follow the pattern of the democracies, or rather pseudo-democracies, with which the world is already acquainted.

The Soviet Constitution

The most convincing sign that the Soviet Union is putting democracy into effect was the enactment of the new Constitution in the latter part of 1936. Since the Soviet idea has been from the start that true democracy demands certain economic and cultural foundations, this Constitution reflects the tremendous progress that has been made. Its epoch-making new "rights of man"—the right to employment, the right to leisure, the right to education, the right to material security in old age or in case of physical disability, the right of sex equality, and the right of racial equality—show that, in Stalin's words, "the complete victory of the socialist system in all spheres of the national economy is now a fact." Soviet Russia is surely the only nation in the world that would dare make unemployment unconstitutional!

The socialization of agriculture and the remarkable growth of education in the rural areas have written themselves into the Constitution in the important provision establishing electoral equality between the workers and peasants. Formerly the workers had a relative advantage in voting power of about two to one. The Constitution gives the franchise to all persons of both sexes over the age of eighteen, which automatically means restoring the ballot to certain groups which, like the kulaks, the clergy and former tsarist officials, were for many years disfranchised for political reasons. This step signifies to what a large degree the old class lines are becoming obliterated and to what a large extent has been actualized the policy announced by a leading Soviet official several years ago that: "All those who work for the socialist state are comrades, including those who have joined the working class in that work as well as those born in it." The Constitution also guarantees by law freedom of religious worship, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and meetings, and freedom of street processions and demonstrations. The creation of a second legislative chamber, the Soviet of Nationalities,

ensures that the particular interests of the various minorities shall be protected.

Of course, it is easy to say that this is only a "paper" constitution. But it is obvious in the nature of the case that *all* written constitutions are paper constitutions. The extent to which constitutional provisions become actualized is always dependent on the good faith of the government and people involved. Now I do not contend that the new Soviet Constitution will be lived up to 100 per cent, especially during these first years of its existence; but I venture to say that its fundamental principles will become the law of the land sooner than in most other cases. The United States Constitution has been in effect for one hundred and fifty years, but we all know how frequently it is violated even today, particularly its guarantees regarding civil liberties and the rights of minorities such as the Negroes.

I want to remind Americans also that here in the U.S.A. people tend to think of democracy primarily in terms of free political activity. In the Soviet Union, however, democracy means in addition *economic* democracy, in which no class can exploit another class; *social* democracy, in which every member of the community has a fair and equal opportunity to share the good things of this life; *sex* democracy, in which women are in all relevant matters on a par with men; and *racial* democracy, in which all racial groups have without qualification the same privileges. In view of the growing persecution of Jews in many other countries, it is extremely significant that in the U.S.S.R. the expression of anti-Jewish prejudice should be treated as a crime under the law; and that Joseph Stalin, himself a native of once oppressed Georgia, now one of the eleven constituent Republics of the Soviet Union, should specifically denounce anti-Semitism as "a relic of cannibalism" and "a lightning conductor" which enables the exploiting capitalists to evade basic economic issues.

The Moscow Trials

What about the recent purges in the U.S.S.R., and do they indicate a trend away from democracy? I do not think so. The purges are now happily over, I believe. But in any case they were transitory phenomena which do not represent the fundamentally democratic direction in which the country is moving. I do not like violence, I do not like executions, I do not like any sort of bloodshed. But I can

hardly blame the Soviet government for dealing sternly with the plotters and wreckers who aimed to pull down the structure of the first socialist society. Whether these enemies were out-and-out fascist agents from abroad, followers of Leon Trotsky or Nikolai Bukharin aiming to overthrow by force the present Soviet regime, generals with Napoleonic ambitions, or White Russians seeping over the Far-Eastern borders from the big emigre settlements in Manchuria, it seems to me that they deserved the utmost severity.

I was, like so many others, deeply shocked and troubled by the series of treason trials at Moscow. But after reading the long and detailed verbatim testimony of the three big trials—a check-up which few critics of Soviet justice have bothered to make—and after careful consideration of the main factors involved, I felt no doubt of the defendants' guilt and of the genuineness of their sweeping and frequently surprising confessions. For years Trotsky, burning with resentment because the Soviet people refused to follow his hare-brained policies and driven to the most fearful extremes by his megalomaniacal itch for political power, has been openly agitating in behalf of a violent revolution against the Soviet government. Both he and his followers have made it clear that they consider any means towards this end justified. And they actually succeeded in assassinating Sergei Kirov, one of the top Soviet leaders. Since Trotsky and his fellow-conspirators could count on no mass support in Russia, it is easy to see why the natural result was terrorist plotting and, as a last desperate measure, even cooperation with foreign governments interested in bringing about the downfall of the Soviet regime.

History clearly shows, not only that the defenders of the *status quo* always fight a new social order to the last gasp, but also that bitter dissension always develops among the makers of far-reaching revolutions. And because the Revolution in Russia is the most far-reaching that has ever occurred, because it abolishes and not just rearranges private property in production and distribution, the struggles revolving around it are bound to be more ferocious than in other cases. The Webbs give us the correct historical perspective when they say:

"Even England and Scotland, in the small population of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with a much less fundamental revolution, produced generation after generation of conspirators, to whom treason and killing, with lies and deceit, were only part of what they felt

to be a righteous effort....

"The French Revolution of 1789-1795 ushered in a similar period of conspiracy and struggle, leading to a whole succession of counter-revolutions, not reaching the stability of a democratic republic, with its large measure of personal security and social equality, for nearly a century.... In Russia (which was in 1900 in the matter of morals and civilization very much where Britain and France stood in 1700) the pattern of behaviour of the revolutionary conspirators culminated in a bitterness and mutual antagonism more acute and all-pervading than in any other example."^{*}

The Soviet Republic, I may add, is not going to permit the unhappy French experience of successful counter-revolution; nor the unhappy American experience of dreadful civil war long after the founding Revolution; nor the unhappy Spanish experience of bloody, fascist-militarist rebellion aimed to throttle the emancipation and progress of the people. These things are not going to happen in the Soviet Union!

Unfortunately, however, many liberals and radicals in foreign countries have become quite confused over the internal troubles which the U.S.S.R. has been experiencing. A number of them have joined either the international brigade of Soviet-haters or the association of fair-weather friends. Intellectuals, such as my former teacher and colleague, Professor John Dewey of Columbia University, have aligned themselves with the professional enemies of the Soviet people and have allowed themselves to become regular publicity agents on behalf of the Trotskyites. Most of Trotsky's defenders in America are, like Dr. Dewey himself, New York intellectuals. Trotsky as an individual seems to have a remarkable appeal for such people. They view him as a brilliant, dashing, heroic, misunderstood intellectual—quite similar to themselves—whose dramatic role as the Lucifer of the world revolutionary movement arouses all their sentimental impulses. To these incurable romantics Stalin appears prosaic and unexciting in comparison, despite the fact that in a quiet and unspectacular way he has played the outstanding part in the consolidation of Soviet socialism.

* Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *op. cit.*, pp. 1158-59. Quoted by the special permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

The Struggle for Peace

I am convinced that today the chief factor holding back the full flowering of Soviet democracy, and especially of the proper psychological atmosphere for it, is the constant threat of military aggression on the part of foreign powers, together with their constant attempts within the borders of the U.S.S.R. to sabotage, carry on espionage work, and enlist for their own hostile purposes whatever dissident individuals they may still discover. If in June of 1938 a Federal grand jury in the U.S.A. finds sufficient evidence to indict eighteen persons operating as spies for the German War Ministry in far-off America, we can be sure that the Nazis are stopping at nothing in nearby Russia, which they regard as their foremost enemy. With Hitler's recent success in dismembering the democratic state of Czechoslovakia, the peril to the Soviet Union grows greater and nearer.

It is to be remembered that at present international war—open in Spain and China, underground in the rest of Europe and Asia—is actually going on, with the fascist and near-fascist states, more particularly Germany, Italy and Japan, everywhere the aggressors. And the chief external aim of the fascists and their allies in every nation is to crush the Soviet Republic, to put an end to the ever more successful socialist commonwealth whose stirring example fills the masses of the people in capitalist countries with what the Japanese so charmingly call "dangerous thoughts." As long as the foreign situation remains as menacing as it is today, one can hardly expect the Russians to act as if they were surrounded by nothing but sweetness and light. Towards the enemy within the gates and the enemy outside they must necessarily maintain an attitude of stern vigilance and safeguard themselves with adequate measures of defense.

That the Soviet Union does not itself harbor aggressive military designs is proved by its whole record since the Republic came into existence in 1917. It was on the day following the October Revolution that Lenin proposed to all the belligerent powers that they start negotiations at once for "a just and democratic peace." But the answer of both Germany and the Allies was invasion. It is hardly too much to say that the idea of peace was treated as a sinister Bolshevik plot! Even after the period of civil war and intervention came to a close the Soviet Union found great difficulty in establishing nor-

mal relations with the capitalist countries. One would have thought that Soviet Russia had been invading *them* rather than the other way round. Nonetheless, as time went on most of the capitalist nations, both big and small, entered into commercial and diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Of the larger powers the United States was most stubborn, holding off recognition until the late date of 1933.

Shortly after it came into power the Soviet government proceeded to publish the secret imperialist treaties connected with the Great War, a step which the capitalist nations have never forgiven, and to renounce the imperialist aims of the former Russian governments. Instead of continuing to cherish the romantic Tsarist vision of annexing Constantinople, the Soviets initiated cordial relations with Turkey and even ceded that country certain territory near Armenia. In China the U.S.S.R. gave up all extra-territorial privileges. In Manchuria, it sold its rights in the Chinese Eastern Railway to Japan in order to lessen the chances of friction in the Far East.

The Soviet Union's policy of international amity has made particular progress since Maxim Litvinov, who carried through the difficult negotiations for American recognition, became Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs in 1930. Under Litvinov's leadership the Soviet Union signed the Kellogg Peace Pact and later entered the League of Nations, though not with any illusions that either the Pact or the League was an adequate instrument for the abolition of war. Mr. Litvinov has negotiated nonaggression pacts, marking a new stage in strictness and clarity of definition, with all states bordering the U.S.S.R. except Japan, which has steadfastly refused to enter into any such treaty. In conference after conference at Geneva the Soviet delegation has shown its sincere desire for disarmament and has continually made proposals towards that end far more concrete and drastic than those of any other nation.

At the same time the Soviet Union has been thoroughly realistic and, since the open fascist offensive against world peace, has supported more stoutly than ever the principle of collective security. This principle is based on the belief that aggressors can be stopped dead in their tracks if the peace-loving nations will stand firmly together against them and without delay make it plain that they will invoke economic and, in case of final necessity, military sanctions against war-makers, whether the intended victim be Ethiopia or China, Spain or Czechoslovakia or any other country. Not only has

the Soviet Republic been foremost in exposing and opposing the aggressions of the German, Italian and Japanese governments; it has also sent substantial and saving aid to the invaded Spanish and Chinese peoples, to the latter in fulfillment of its pledges as a member of the League of Nations.

Causes of War Eliminated

I have often heard it said that the main reason for the peace policy of the Soviet Union is that it has plenty of territory for its present purposes. Now while it is certainly true that the U.S.S.R. is not land-hungry, it is to be recalled that the Tsarist Empire, one of the most imperialist, war-mongering regimes in history, possessed much more territory than the new Russia, which lost so heavily in the west after the Revolution of 1917; and that Nicholas II aimed to enlarge his domains substantially following the expected victory in the Great War. The point is that Tsarist imperialism, no matter how much territory it acquired, was always hungering for more. But Soviet Russia, in which the economic roots of war have been permanently eradicated, has neither the need nor desire to expand.

Because the Soviet people as a whole own the means of production and distribution and because private profit-making has been abolished, the possibilities of war-profiteering are nil. Because socialist planning has put an end to the capitalist cycle of over-production and depression and has brought under its control the country's foreign trade as well as its domestic, the Soviet Union has been able to pass sentence of death upon the chief practices of war-provoking economic imperialism. Surely the most prejudiced Soviet-hater can see that from the point of view of sheer self-interest the U.S.S.R. most ardently wants peace. For the most important and pressing item on the agenda of Soviet Russia is the unimpeded building of socialism throughout its vast homeland.

In addition, there are the moral considerations involved in socialist Russia's attitude towards world affairs. There is the fact that the Soviet Republic, from the very start, has stood for full equality between the various races and nations of the earth. On account of the many different minorities living in happiness and harmony within its borders, it is in itself a functioning and splendid example of international cooperation and understanding. As the first workers' republic and socialist state in history, Soviet Russia believes in internationalism as a basic principle and refuses to admit that geo-

graphic boundaries should be allowed to limit the expression of the human spirit and the interchange of human values.

For all of these reasons, then, it seems to me that cooperation with the Russian peace efforts is one of the categorical imperatives of both nations and individuals who are genuinely working for the abolition of war. Such cooperation is in my opinion one of the touchstones of sincerity in the peace movement. For the truth is that there are many who purport to be peace-workers who hate the Soviet Union and socialism more than they do war, who would actually rather see a new world war than try to prevent one, hand in hand with a Communist-run nation. Such persons have a right to their opinions, but they should not pretend that they are very anxious to have peace established. Meanwhile, regardless of its enemies, Soviet Russia can be depended upon, in the future as in the past, to support without equivocation the age-long ideal of world peace and the brotherhood of man.

V. SOME CRITERIA OF JUDGMENT

In formulating a final judgment on the economic and cultural achievements of the Soviet Union since the Revolution of 1917 and during the first two Five-Year Plans it is highly necessary to keep in mind certain general considerations concerning the particular characteristics of the U.S.S.R. I have already mentioned the very special background of the country. Now given that background, it is obviously absurd to expect that Russia could completely catch up in twenty years in all respects with nations such as England, Germany and the United States. As a standard of reference in regard to things like modern technology and administrative efficiency, these countries must always be held in view. But one cannot be fair to Soviet Russia without constantly taking into account the question: How much have conditions improved since the time of the Tsars? In other words, we cannot afford to neglect the important principle of *historical relativism*.

Consider the matter of shoes. It can be easily demonstrated that the Soviet masses are still in need of more and better shoes and that it will be some time before they overtake the people of the U.S.A. in this important sphere of equipment. The most significant point to remember, however, is that the Soviet Union is turning out seven and a half times as many shoes as in the pre-war days, that is, 150,000,000 pairs per year in comparison with 20,000,000. Moreo-

ver, before the Revolution the shoes were distributed mainly in the cities and among the upper classes. The great majority of the peasants went barefoot in the summer and fashioned themselves straw footwear in the winter. When the average peasant wanted to get married he had to hire a pair of decent boots for the occasion from one of the well-to-do farmers in the community. Today, on the other hand, the shoes which are manufactured are distributed to all sections of the population and not just to a privileged group.

This same principle of making comparisons between Soviet Russia and other countries on a relative rather than an absolute basis holds in other fields. I think especially of the modern conveniences and mechanical gadgets so dear to the heart of Americans. Anyone familiar with traveling in Russia before the Great War knows that conditions were unclean, uncomfortable, and generally unsatisfactory. The last edition of Karl Baedeker's guidebook, published in 1914, makes this very plain. It is hardly to be expected that the Soviet Russians, who have had world-shaking and world-making problems on their hands, could have turned the U.S.S.R. into a tourists' paradise overnight. Yet tourists continually come back from Russia disgruntled and disgusted with the whole country because it was so difficult to find taxicabs in Moscow, because the meals in the hotels were not always served with the accustomed dispatch of a Child's Restaurant, and because they could buy only drugs in the drugstores and not milk-shakes and fountain pens!

Now everyone knows that Europe in general lags far behind the United States in its provisions for creature comfort. From personal experience I have learned, for example, that plumbing in France and Italy, especially in the provinces, is in drastic need of improvement—where it exists at all. Yet American tourists are willing to overlook or even to romanticize the discomforts which they meet in traveling through European countries other than Russia. For some strange reason, though, they will return from the U.S.S.R. and construct whole books or lecture tours around the profound subject of their troubles with trains and hotels, food and insects. As time goes on such lopsided travelogues should occur less and less frequently, since, as I discovered myself in 1938, the Soviet Russians are becoming increasingly efficient in the small things that often loom so large in the consciousness of travelers from abroad.

The Meaning of Compromises

Another misunderstanding on the part of foreign observers is in reference to the various compromises and shifts in policy that occur in the Soviet Union from time to time. Now no intelligent Marxist ever dreamed that it would be possible for socialism in *any* country to leap up full-fledged all at once from the chaos of the old order. How much less so, then, in a land which was as far behind as the Russia of 1917! There one could see quite obviously that the building of socialism would entail a long, difficult struggle even had there not been an immediate background of international and civil war. In such a struggle there are bound to be bad years as well as good, failures as well as triumphs, detours as well as marches straight ahead. And it is essential to distinguish temporary setbacks from permanent defeats.

Since the Soviet Union was the first nation in history to attempt the construction of a socialist society, and had no precedents on which to draw, serious and unforeseen problems have inevitably arisen and unfortunate mistakes on occasion have been made. But far from attempting to cover up their blunders, the Soviet officials and workers have set them forth in self-castigating detail in the press throughout the land. Their frank self-criticism has become a veritable institution and has been an exceedingly effective weapon in combating bureaucracy and inefficiency. At the same time, thanks to it, foreign detractors have obtained some of their most potent ammunition. A naive reader of the average Soviet newspaper can easily get the impression that the whole country is daily going to the dogs.

Lenin's formula of "one step backward, if necessary, in order to take two steps forward" has seemed to be just plain common sense in the Soviet Union. What temporary compromises or changes in policy indicate is not failure, as hostile critics are always claiming, but a willingness on the part of the supposedly dogmatic Communists, controlling a radical government actually in power, to face the facts and to exercise an intelligent flexibility in carrying out their program. Certainly no other compromise compares in extent with the N.E.P. (New Economic Policy) which was introduced by Lenin himself in 1921 in place of the stringent "War Communism." Yet this far-reaching but transitory move in the direction of capitalist principles did not result, as the outer world predicted, in the

abandonment of socialism in Soviet Russia. Indeed, not many years later the First Five-Year Plan was displacing the N.E.P. In other words, the Soviets always eventually take those two steps forward.

An excellent example of Soviet procedure and foreign reaction to it is to be found in the handling of the 1932-33 food crisis which I have already described. In November of 1932, when the agricultural outlook was rather gloomy, the *New York Herald Tribune* published an editorial entitled "The Retreat from Marx" in which it said that the Soviet agrarian problem could be solved "only by such a swift retreat from Marxian first principles as will leave no doubt in any Russian or foreign mind of the collapse of the Communist experiment under the relentless pressure of faulty but unalterable human nature." In point of fact "a swift retreat" did take place, a wise and statesmanlike one that abandoned certain extremist policies which were provoking opposition among the peasants; but it was not a retreat that sacrificed any fundamental Marxist principle. By November of 1933 things had improved to such a startling measure that, as I stated earlier, a harvest breaking all records was the result. Hence, the only thing that collapsed was the prophecy of the *Herald Tribune*, originally made, I suspect, "under the relentless pressure of faulty but unalterable" editorial policy.

Not only internal, but also serious external difficulties arise to confront the U.S.S.R. and to make its general forward march follow something of a zigzag pattern. Ever since the Japanese militarists invaded Manchuria in 1931 the Soviet Union has been faced with the acute possibility of aggression in the Far East. Then in 1933 the rise of the fascists to power in Germany brought a serious threat from the West, with Adolph Hitler stating that the dearest aim of his life was to make large portions of the Soviet Union part of an all-conquering Nazi Empire. These dangers have forced the Soviet government to make extensive alterations in the Five-Year Plans and to allocate to the manufacture of munitions and other military equipment men and materials that could be ill spared from normal productive operations.

There remain to be mentioned those compromises which the Soviet Union supposedly makes, but which are not really compromises at all because they have never been part of the socialist program. Some critics assert that the new regime has failed in Russia because it has not established equality in wages. But wage equality under socialism was at no time an item on the Soviet agenda. In-

deed, *absolute* equality in wages is not even an aim under far-off Communism, into which socialism will presumably some day evolve. Marx's own ideal formula for the eventual Communist stage of society is: "From each according to his capacities, to each according to his needs." But this allows for a certain amount of variation in compensation, though there will be an approximate equality, at a general level carefully determined on the basis of all relevant factors. In a speech at a recent Congress of the Communist Party, Stalin took especial pains to make the present Soviet policy clear.

"Equalization of needs and personal living conditions," he said, "is a reactionary, petty-bourgeois absurdity, worthy of a primitive set of ascetics, and not of a socialist society organized on Marxist lines, because we cannot demand that everyone have similar needs and tastes, that everybody in personal life lives according to one model."

Then, other critics complain because the Soviet government has not yet nationalized clothes and bicycles. They have the curious idea that true socialism precludes the owning of personal property. But in a socialist society, be it in the Soviet Union or anywhere else, there is no reason why an individual should not own a bicycle, an automobile, a clock, a library, a suit of clothes, or indeed six suits of clothes. One of the chief aims of socialism is that every citizen should have an abundance of personal possessions, including so-called luxuries. The point is that personal wealth must be for consumption, for use, for enjoyment. It must not become capital. All property entailing production or distribution or the possible exploitation of workers is, under socialism, collectively owned; intimate personal property is not and never will be.

The Future

Any proper evaluation of a country, besides taking into account its past and present, also demands some estimate of its probable future. The Soviet Union is certainly not a Utopia as yet and no sensible person could have expected it to be. It can hardly be doubted, however, that from both a material and cultural standpoint the direction in the U.S.S.R. is steadily, sometimes spectacularly, but in any case on the whole, upward. The problems are very definitely those of growth and not decay. Undeniably the Soviet people have made great sacrifices since the Revolution. But these sacrifices have been, I think, worth-while and constructive, and made with a high purpose

held consciously and continually in mind. In the rest of the world, too, millions and millions of people have been making sacrifices; but these sacrifices for the most part have been purposeless, muddling and to a large extent useless. There has been no plan behind them. They are not leading anywhere, unless to a new world war and economic crisis.

What compensating gains, for example, resulted from the sufferings of the fifty million unemployed in the capitalist nations during the four years of the Great Depression? And does it not seem likely that the sufferings of these millions and their families—and of other millions and their families—will continue indefinitely under capitalism? In the final perspective of history this distinction between constructive and fruitless sacrifice is bound, I believe, to be of the utmost importance. History judges no great event or social change simply by tallying up the number of lives lost and the amount of suffering that went on. It always asks what was the total situation: what kind of a past were the people trying to escape from and what kind of future were they trying to build? And I am confident that the ultimate judgment of history on these first twenty-one years of the Soviet Republic, if arrived at fairly in these terms, will be a most favorable one.

It might be well for us in the U.S.A. to remember that during the first two decades after the American Revolution our own Republic went through a rather difficult period. In 1797, twenty-one years after the Declaration of Independence, the youthful United States was still experiencing grave troubles. The Constitution had been in effect comparatively a few years; the country was in a turbulent state, chaotic, disunited, and poor; European observers were predicting failure; foreign powers loomed menacingly on the horizon. And, paradoxically enough, the most reactionary of the old world nations, Tsarist Russia, refused to recognize the American government for thirty-three years after the break with England. No one could have foreseen in 1796 the immense and startling developments which would come to the United States in the next century of its existence. Yet I venture to say that, relatively speaking, equally unforeseen and remarkable things will take place in the U.S.S.R. during the next hundred years.

Today, as the U.S.S.R. swings into the full rhythm of its Third Five-Year Plan, it looks very much as if the Soviet people had finished the most difficult and grueling stage of socialist construction.

The Third and Fourth Five-Year Plans, in comparison with the First and Second, are going to be comparatively easy. This does not mean that there will not be plenty of problems to solve and plenty of good hard work to be done. But the tempo will be slower and the nervous pressure less. Meanwhile the standard of living will continue rapidly to rise; and it would seem that the future in Russia has more than just hope, indeed that it has *promise*, of a steady and almost indefinite advance in every field of human endeavor. Of course if the U.S.S.R. is forced into war, another period of storm and stress will sweep the Russian land and the people will again have to live twenty-four hours per day in the heroic mood.

In any case I can testify that I left Soviet Russia in 1938 with the definite feeling that its people were well-nigh invincible in an economic, moral and military sense. From without Soviet socialism can undoubtedly be set back, but hardly destroyed; from within there is about as much chance of its being brought to an end as of the United States voting to become a colony of Great Britain. The idea to which the Trotskyites still cling, that there can be a successful revolution against the present Soviet regime, is fantastic, since the class divisions and economic discontent which are the Marxist prerequisites for revolution simply do not exist in the U.S.S.R. I do not consider it over-optimistic to state that, happen almost what may, socialism has come to stay in the world. This is the portentous fact that all the dire prophecies about the impending "collapse of civilization" so blindly ignore. Civilization has taken a new and lasting lease on life in the Soviet Union; and through the Soviet people mankind again forges ahead to conquer new heights of economic and cultural achievement.