

THE SOVIETS AND OURSELVES

TWO COMMONWEALTHS

EDITOR Professor John Macmurray

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TWO COMMONWEALTHS

BY K. E. HOLME

WITH 14 ISOTYPE CHARTS IN
COLOUR AND 30 PHOTOGRAPHS



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P R I N T E D I N G R E A T B R I T A I N

PREFACE

This is the second volume of a series of three which sets out to help us in Britain to understand the people of the Soviet Union by comparing and contrasting their way of life with our own. In this book we are concerned with the public life—the organization and working of the political and the economic system—of our two Commonwealths. What it has to say does not require any reference to its predecessor—*LANDSMEN AND SEAFARERS*, by Maurice Lovell. It is complete in itself. But the knowledge of the background and resources of the Soviet Union that book provides will be found helpful in surmounting the difficulties we have to face when we try to understand the public life of the Russian people.

For it is difficult for us to discover the real meaning of Soviet democracy. The Soviet system is an answer to Russian needs and the solution to a Russian problem. The people's struggle for freedom in Russia is as old as our own. Our long struggle towards full democracy enjoyed a gradual and increasing success, with freedom "broadening down from precedent to precedent." In Russia success came suddenly, like an avalanche, in 1917; and it came late. Until then the Russian people had always been foiled and beaten, often with violence and cruelty, by an unenlightened and autocratic government. There was no Parliament to check the unlimited authority of the Tsar and his nobles, a Parliament which could grow more and more representative of the whole nation and voice the peoples' demands. The Russian struggle for freedom had to take another road, an economic road. Throughout Russian history the People meant overwhelmingly the peasants. "The land for the peasants" was not just a slogan of the Communist revolution; it was the cry of centuries of struggle for freedom and democracy. For the Russian people freedom has always meant first and foremost the right of the village community to own the land it tilled, and to farm it for itself and not for the big landowner and his overseers. If we forget this we shall fail to see why to the people of that great Commonwealth freedom means the right to own and control the farms and factories where they work. For the Soviet citizen the symbol of democracy is not the right to curse the Government and to combine to turn it out of office. It is the right to curse the management of his factory and to get it sacked.

The author of *TWO COMMONWEALTHS* is obliged to conceal his identity under a *nom de plume*, and I must respect this necessity. I can only say that he is a young Englishman who is peculiarly well qualified by training and experience to interpret the public life of the Soviets to us in Britain in its actual working and its inner meaning. He has been in a position to provide his readers with accurate and up-to-date information which is hard to come by, and which is also essential if we are to understand.

It may be well to add that the charts and photographs are essential to the plan and purpose of the book, and not mere decoration. They will repay study; for they say things that cannot be said, or said so well, in words.

JOHN MACMURRAY

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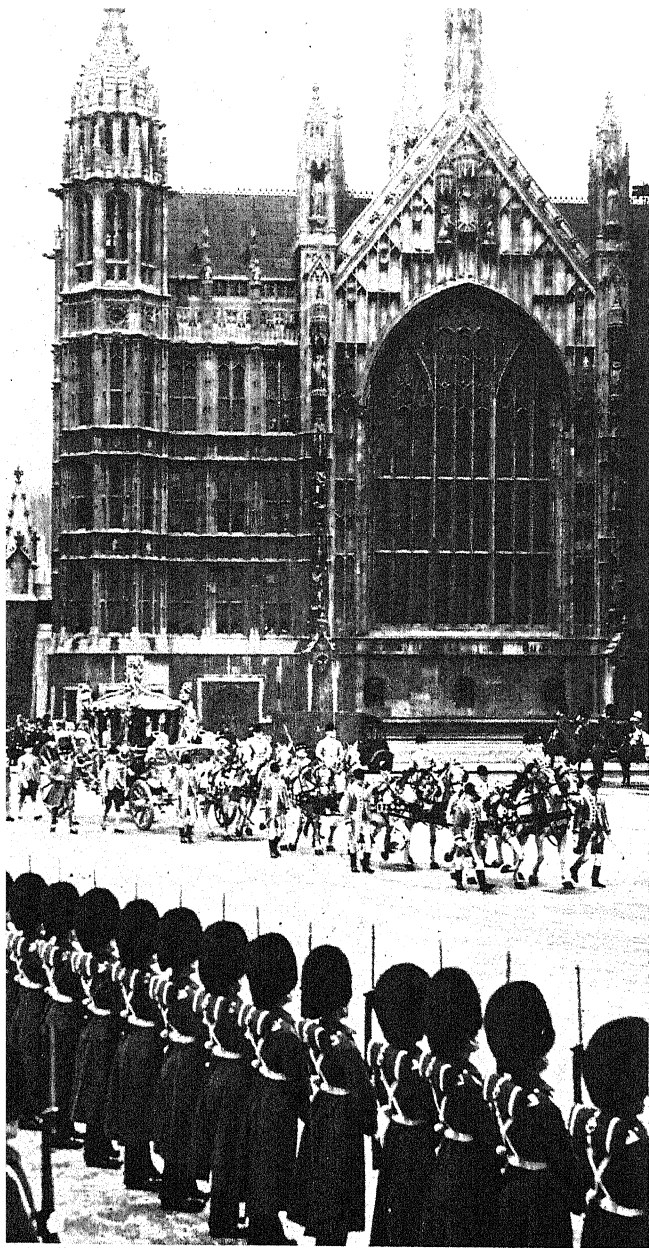
INTRODUCTION

"The U.S.S.R." has appeared on maps only since 1922: "Great Britain" has existed since 1603, and the phrase "the British Empire" goes back a few years earlier still. But Russia is as old as England, and of no countries in the world is it as true as of these two that their present cannot be understood without a knowledge of their past. To-day the U.S.S.R. is with Britain one of the three or four greatest industrial and military Powers in the world, and its peoples have revealed, under the severest test of war, a skill, an adaptability, a power of improvisation unrivalled in history. It is therefore the more remarkable to reflect that a generation ago it was an economically backward country, politically disunited, with three-quarters of its population wholly illiterate. Its Government was, and had been for centuries, a rigid, incompetent, and corrupt autocracy, denying any of the accepted Western liberties even to its Russian citizens, still more to its subject populations and to Jews. Serfdom began to disappear in England in the fourteenth century, if not earlier, and had entirely vanished by the seventeenth century; in Russia serfdom was not abolished until 1861, and many of its habits of mind still survive among the peasantry. If, however, we compare (as we should) the British Empire as a whole with the Russian Empire, we must remember that the slave trade continued to disgrace the former until the early nineteenth century. On September 3, 1943, a West Indian began a B.B.C. broadcast with the words, "My grandparents were slaves." He himself had just been asked to leave a London hotel on account of his colour. Such a request would be a criminal offence in Moscow to-day, and would have been regarded as uncivilized over two centuries ago, when Pushkin's African grandfather was a respected figure at Peter the Great's Court.

One reason for the absence of a colour bar in Russia is the simple one that she never possessed a tropical empire. For centuries in the Middle Ages Russia was dominated by the Mongols; then in their turn, until 1917, the non-Russian peoples in the Empire occupied a colonial status, and were governed badly by British colonial standards; but there was never a Russian equivalent of the White Man's Burden.

Take another historical difference. Christianity reached the British Isles through Rome, and Britain remained Catholic for over nine hundred years, until, in the great political and social turmoil of the Reformation, England, Scotland and Wales denounced their allegiance to Rome and set up Protestant churches as a part of the process of establishing national independence. Since that time Protestantism, with its emphasis on the private judgment of the individual and the right to be a non-conformist for conscience' sake, has been a recognized part of the British tradition, and has left its mark on the British Constitution, still more on the individualistic mental habits of Englishmen, Scots, Welshmen and Northern Irishmen.

Russia never "broke the bonds of Rome," because Russia never endured them. Her Christianity came from Byzantium, and there was no violent upheaval in which Russia established her national independence in religion: Russia did not leave the Church, the Church left her. In 1453, nearly a century before the English Reformation, Constantinople (Byzantium) fell to the Mohammedan Turks. Fourteen years earlier Constantinople had surrendered to Rome in the vain hope of military help from the West. The Turks swept over the Balkans, and by the sixteenth century



Parliament is opened by the King in the traditional way. Parliamentary government in England is about six hundred years older than the present Houses of Parliament.

Russia was the only Christian state in which the Orthodox rite survived.

This had both external and internal effects. In foreign policy it gave Moscow, "the third Rome," the sense of a mission. Russia alone was Orthodox; truth was in her and her alone, and if Russians believed that the true faith would one day spread all over the world this could clearly happen only through the human agency of Russia. This Messianism was directed, in the first instance, towards rescuing Orthodox co-religionists in the Balkans, and could on occasion make religion a very convenient cover for the imperialist policies of the Tsarist State. In internal affairs the effect was enormous. There was no Protestant revolt in the old Russia, no Protestant martyrs, no Non-conformist Conscience, no diversity of sects, no voluntary societies for promoting and abolishing this and that, no tolerance. The Church never lived in an atmosphere of free criticism, and consequently proved rigid and unadjustable. Of the few sects, most differed from the Orthodox only in laying even greater stress on the importance of traditional ceremonies. By the time of the revolution of 1917 the Church had forfeited the loyalty and affection of most of the population, and remained only as a buttress of the old social order. Even more than in France



The Kremlin (the word means 'fortress') is nearly five hundred years older than the Soviet system in Russia.

radical politics in Russia were automatically anti-clerical. Not, however, always necessarily anti-religious. Now that the Church has, during a twenty years' sojourn in the wilderness, purged itself of its politically reactionary associations, it has been accorded once more a recognized place in the Soviet state. In the course of centuries it had adjusted itself to the life of the democratic village communities in which the overwhelming mass of the population lived: the idea that the collective wisdom of the community or congregation is better and nearer to the truth than the thought of any of its individual members is a teaching of Orthodox Church and Communist Party alike, and lies very near to the heart of the Russian peasant. It appears in the deeply felt Russian desire that the decisions of the village meeting should be unanimous. This was true of the pre-revolutionary *mir*, and it is true to-day. After the most hotly contested election for a village Soviet the list of successful candidates is finally presented to the meeting for unanimous approval. (This must be borne in mind when we come to consider the Soviet electoral system.) Nor, for that matter, is the desire for unanimity peculiarly Russian. Until the seventeenth century decision by majority vote in the English Parliament was exceedingly rare. The jury system, with its roots deep in the medieval English village, is so far from recognizing the rights of majorities that the whole jury used to be locked up until unanimity was reached. Historically, government by majority decision has existed only where



Oliver Cromwell led our revolution, brought Charles I to the scaffold, and is now honoured with a statue outside the Houses of Parliament.

sections of the community with fundamentally differing aspirations can make themselves heard. There cannot be *fundamental* differences about the running of communal agriculture, whether in Russia or medieval England; it is only a question of adjusting individual desires to the necessities laid down by Nature. (There can, indeed, be differences as to whether agricultural ownership and production should be communal or individual. But even there a decision, when taken, must be assumed to be unanimous, and must be enforced on the minority, otherwise production will suffer.) So the village communities of Russia and medieval England tended to aim at unanimity in government, just as the Fellows of an Oxford college still prefer unanimity to majority decision. On the higher levels in Tsarist Russia there was also no government by majority decision, not because no sections of the community had fundamentally differing aspirations, but because the mass of the population whose aspirations differed from those of the Tsarist autocracy could not make themselves heard. Hence the revolution. Majority government therefore had no roots in Russia. It is important for us, who for three hundred years have assumed that counting heads is the only alternative to breaking them, to under-



Lenin led the Russian Revolution to victory. His genius is now being recognized outside Russia, as it has long been among his own people.

stand that. A few assemblies elected on a narrow franchise were summoned between 1906 and 1917, but when they were forcibly dissolved (the Duma by the Tsar in 1906, the Constituent Assembly by the Bolsheviks in 1918) "not a dog barked," as Cromwell said when he dissolved Parliament in similar revolutionary conditions in 1653. But Russian tradition possesses something that we perhaps have lost in the past three hundred years: a respect for the opinions of the collectivity, the belief that if two heads are better than one several hundred are better than two—*provided they are in agreement on fundamentals*. This emergence of a synthesis of different wills on a higher level than the will of any individual member of the collectivity, now expressed in terms of the Marxist dialectic, found a fertile soil in minds accustomed to working in the village community and the Orthodox congregation. In England the voluntary societies, from Nonconformist sects to humanitarian and reforming organizations, have played something of the same role; but because voluntary they have always been confined to an active, politically conscious minority and have lacked the universalism of the *mir* or Soviet. We have believed more in political arithmetic, adding and subtracting votes, each individual counting as one. For avoiding conflicts where deep cleavages of opinion exist this has its advantages; but if and when agreement on fundamental purposes can be attained there is a good deal to be said for the Russian tradition.

The reverse side to this absence of individualism in Russia has been an undervaluing of the individual. Stalin tells a story of the days of his exile to illustrate this. A lumberman had been killed, and, on Stalin complaining of the heartless attitude of his fellows, who were much more concerned with watering their horses than with the dead man's fate, one of them said, "Why should we be concerned about men? We can always make men. But a mare—just try to make a mare." Stalin still found it

necessary in 1935 to press home the point that "it is time to realize that of all the valuable capital the world possesses the most valuable and most decisive is people."

These, then, are two historical differences between our country and Russia. Our Reformation took place more than four hundred years ago, and for the first three hundred years of this period the adherents of the old religion suffered political disabilities: Roman Catholics were not allowed to vote in Parliamentary elections until 1829 and are still excluded from some State offices. In Russia there was no Reformation until the onslaught on the Church in 1917; political disabilities on adherents of all religions were withdrawn nineteen years later, though only in this last year has provision been made for the training of Orthodox priests. Secondly, in this country we have been effectively governed by Parliaments for three hundred years, during the first hundred of which (1640-1745) conditions of revolution and counter-revolution, denunciations and political trials, prevailed; but during the last two centuries our development has normally been by way of moderate and peaceful reforms. In the last century and a half there have been innumerable English radical reformers of all degrees of eccentricity, but very few revolutionaries in the Mother Country, though plenty in Ireland and India. In Russia there was no such Parliamentary tradition. Before 1917 she was an autocratic empire periodically shaken by violent and unsuccessful revolts and colonial wars. To-day the U.S.S.R. has only just emerged from the aftermath of a period of revolution, civil war, and foreign intervention, even bitterer than our own in the century before the Jacobites were finally defeated. Accompanying all this has been something very like our religious Reformation. Even leaving the war against Nazi Germany out of account, it is not the sort of background which produces the easygoing, tolerant, rather lazy liberalism on which we English pride ourselves perhaps most of all.

There is a third difference affecting the structure of the two countries and the psychologies of their peoples. For over a century and a half England has been mainly an industrial country, where large-scale factory production predominates; whereas in 1917 Russia was still in the stage England left during the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century, with three out of every four of its population living in isolated villages, untouched by the culture of cities, alternating between exhausting toil with primitive implements in summer, and ignorant lethargy in winter. For decades now the lives of most Englishmen have been regulated by the alarm clock, the factory whistle, the railway time-table and the last bus. Before the Bolshevik revolution the lives of the overwhelming mass of the inhabitants of the Russian Empire (as of India to-day) were subject only to the comings and goings of the sun, the slow and irresistible rotation of the seasons. Russian 'backwardness' and 'technical inefficiency,' of which we used to hear so much, as well as 'Russian fatalism' and a lack of appreciation for the virtue of punctuality, were not the product of the 'Slav soul' or 'Asiatic barbarism,' but were phenomena inevitable in a population of which the majority had never had any contacts with a machine civilization. The Soviet-German War, "a war of engines," Stalin has called it—has amply demonstrated to what an extent these 'national characteristics' of the Russian people have been transformed by a change in material circumstances and environment.

Russia in 1917, then, was at about the same level of civilization, of economic and political development, as England in the seventeenth century. Moreover, she suffered

more than any belligerent in the war of 1914-18. Her losses have never been accurately calculated, but they were prodigious. Nearly all the areas occupied by the Germans in 1941-2 were similarly occupied in 1917-18: and no Russian Government had then had the foresight to develop industries of any consequence outside the Ukraine. After the Armistice, when other countries were devoting all their energies to reconstruction, Russia was, for another three years, torn by foreign invasions and civil war stimulated by external enemies, which devastated the whole of the vast country. Incalculable damage was done during these seven years of warfare on her territory, for which Russia received no reparations. Industry came to a standstill; transport ceased to function; the currency was so inflated as to lose all value; famine and disease swept away hundreds of thousands; homeless orphan children and bandits ranged over the country; in many areas organized civilized life broke down. In 1921 industrial production was estimated to be 20 per cent. of the pre-war figure, agricultural production about 50 per cent.; and the pre-war standard of living had been close to the starvation line. Stalin spoke vividly of 1918, "when for whole weeks not a piece of bread, let alone meat or other provisions, was distributed. The best times were then considered to be the days on which we were able to distribute to the workers in Leningrad and Moscow one-eighth of a pound of black bread each, and even that was half bran. And this continued not for a month or six weeks, but for two whole years." Many of the educated and skilled classes who survived this period emigrated, and they had always been few enough; those who remained were of doubtful loyalty. The Soviet Government was thus left to face problems of reconstruction of unprecedented magnitude, with a minimum of resources, material or human. A whole army of new technicians had to be trained. For political reasons foreign capital was hard to come by, and reconstruction had to be financed by tightening Russian belts.

These facts must never be forgotten. Before the war of 1914-18 Russia was by West European standards a backward country, more appropriately compared with India than with Great Britain; and during the period 1914-21 such organized civilization as existed in Russia broke down. After a preliminary breathing-space (1921-28) the Bolshevik leaders, of whom Stalin was already chief, set themselves two main tasks. The first was the carrying through of an economic revolution which should make their country the equal in power of the great states of the world, and this meant also the education of their people in the productive use of modern mechanized technique. This was the task of the Five Year Plans. The second task was the completion of the political revolution of 1917 by spreading education to all strata of society, giving them experience in self-government, making them participate in administration, which, in a socialist state, covers much wider functions than in a capitalist state, and includes the whole running of the economic life of the country.

It is to be noted that neither of these problems exists in the same form in this country. Because of the economic backwardness of Russia in 1917 the problem of the Soviet Government has been to increase production, so as to obtain the essentials for social security and material well-being; distribution will be in accordance with a political equality already established. For Great Britain the problem is rather the more equitable distribution of existing wealth, the extension of social security to all classes of the population, even at the cost of limiting the liberty of some.



Local government in the Gold Coast : the Omanhene of Buem and the District Commissioner of Kpandu after a State Council meeting.

Since 1917 Russia has been trying to cram into one generation political changes which have taken three hundred years in Great Britain, and economic changes which have occupied the best part of two centuries. Olga Mishakova, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Young Communist League, put this point to a foreign journalist in 1944 :

Think how we have been living since the coming of the Soviet regime. We have always been in a hurry. We have had so much to do. We have worked day and night, night and day. We've had to neglect a lot of things. At the beginning of the third Five Year Plan we started to catch up. . . . Then the war came, and we have been in more of a hurry than ever.

All this has its effect on national psychology. The tempo in the U.S.S.R. is quite different ; there is a sense of urgency that is lacking in this country, which is accustomed to live on its hump and rely on muddling through. The U.S.S.R. has less accumulated fat. An almost Puritan morality of effort is officially encouraged. At the same time the achievements of the twenty-five years of Soviet rule have created a self-confidence that is new to the Russian people, and that is likely to increase in its assurance and poise after the triumphs of the war with Nazi Germany—achieved, as the Soviet people are painfully aware, mainly by their own efforts.



Local government in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic : peasants at a village meeting.

CONSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

Nowhere has the history of the two empires been more different than in the development of relations between their component parts. The non-Russian territories of the Tsarist Empire were annexed by force and governed direct from the Russian capital with little regard for national and religious peculiarities. Whereas the British Empire—though there has been plenty of violence in its history—started from the voluntary union of England and Scotland, with their different national Churches, and had early to cope (less successfully) with the more complex religious and national factor of Roman Catholic Ireland. All this helped to make for tolerance and compromise, in Great Britain and the Dominions at least.

The British Empire has moved, and is moving, slowly and gradually from centralized colonial imperialism to self-government. The impetus to this evolution came from the American revolt of the late eighteenth century, but since then the movement in the Dominions has been peaceful. Russia started as a conquering colonial Power, like Great Britain (Siberia was first colonized at the same time as North America, and with the same kind of people—political and religious refugees, criminals and pioneers); but centralized imperialism of the most oppressive type survived there despite frequent revolts until 1917, when it was suddenly and violently overthrown,



Indian contingent at the Coronation of H.M. King George VI. The British Commonwealth is united by the allegiance of all its members to the Crown.

and an abrupt advance was made to partnership of the old dominant nation with the recently oppressed peoples. The common problem of the British Empire and the Soviet Union to-day is to get rid of all vestiges of the previous relationship of exploitation between the Mother Country on the one hand—the industrial centre, long providing ruling personnel and capital—and the outposts on the other—the agricultural regions, offering raw materials and markets ; and to establish a balance which shall have regard to the needs of all the partner peoples, continuing to raise the economic, political, social and cultural level of development of the more backward nations. Under the old régime, for instance, Russians were introduced into Siberia and Central Asia as a governing element, and they paid little heed to the aspirations and needs of the local population. On principle, industrial development was confined to European Russia, and education to Russians in the Russian language. To-day Siberian industry is indispensable to the Soviet war-effort ; and in the U.S.S.R. as a whole the amount spent per head of the population on education and social services for the formerly backward peoples is more than for the formerly dominant Russians. Because of the recent decisive break in Russian constitutional history the legal structure of the U.S.S.R. is more uniform than that of the British Empire. The latter is composed of the United Kingdom, the five Dominions, together with India and the non-self-governing colonies, mandated territories and protectorates. What *The*



Parade on the twenty-first anniversary of the October Revolution, which ended Russian domination over the formerly subject peoples. Now they all serve in the Red Army.

Economist has called the "Soviet Commonwealth of Nations" comprises sixteen federated republics, the largest of which—the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic—is itself composed of numerous national units. The British Empire is knit together much more loosely than the U.S.S.R. In 1941 by a decision of the Central Government in Moscow all sixteen constituent republics of the Union (Union Republics) found themselves at war. Great Britain in September 1939 declared war on Germany on behalf of herself, the dependent colonies and India, but not on behalf of the Dominions. They declared (or, in the case of Eire, did not declare) war independently. Since the Statute of Westminster (1931) the Dominions have been in legal form all but sovereign States, with their own diplomatic representation, united to the Mother Country by the personal link of the Crown, by sentiment, and by the necessities of pooled defence. This position of virtual independence has been defined only recently; the Dominions were originally governed directly from this country, as the colonies still are to-day; and the non-self-governing regions of the Empire still contain over 80 per cent. of its population. Dominion Status is proclaimed as the ultimate goal for India; while, on the other hand, Newfoundland lost that status in 1934 as a result of financial insolvency, thus showing that in the last resort Great Britain retains a greater control than appears on paper. Most of the republics comprising the U.S.S.R. were, for a period after 1917,

independent states, who in 1923 and subsequently elected to associate themselves with the other states to compose the Union. The tendency from 1923 to 1944 was towards centralization, partly perhaps because geographically the U.S.S.R. is a single mass, but also because during these years the Soviet republics felt themselves in danger of attack, and wished to pool their economic and military resources. The Union Republics in consequence surrendered many of the attributes of sovereignty which the Dominions possess (although they always retained the right of secession, which has not yet been established for the Dominions, though Eire almost enjoys it *de facto*). On the other hand, they retained considerably more rights of self-government than the British colonies. By constitutional amendments of February 1, 1944, the Union Republics acquired again the right to diplomatic representation overseas and to organize national military units, though the main outlines of foreign and military policy continue to be determined by the Central Government of the U.S.S.R. This Government also controls internal security, economic planning, finance, foreign and internal trade, industry and agriculture, transport and communications, the admission of new republics ; the establishment of fundamental principles in education, public health, and labour legislation ; legislation governing the courts, criminal and civil codes. All other matters fall within the competence of the Union Republics. In case of conflict between the law of a republic and a law of the Union, the Union law prevails ; whereas under the Statute of Westminster British legislation applies to a Dominion only if re-enacted by that Dominion.

Therefore, while there is still a considerable degree of centralization in the U.S.S.R., the tendency now is in the direction of local self-government. The industrialization of the country under the Five Year Plans increased the power of the Central Government, which plans production and directs foreign policy and defence. But Soviet theory and Stalin personally have always strongly emphasized the rights of nationalities; one of the conspicuous successes of the Soviet Government has been the maintenance of friendly relations between the many component nations of the U.S.S.R., in obvious contrast to the failure of the Tsarist régime in the same sphere. An Irishman (Dr. E. J. Dillon) wrote of the U.S.S.R. in 1929 :

Their way of dealing with home rule and the nationalities is a masterpiece of ingenuity and elegance. None of the able statesmen of to-day in other lands has attempted to vie with them in their methods for satisfying the claims of minorities.

Fourteen years later an Australian (Professor Hancock) wrote :

I got the impression from Stalin's writing that he personally was fighting total war, not only against the constitutional, but also against the economic and social barriers which were impeding full and active partnership among the diverse races of the U.S.S.R. The policy of the British Empire has been in many respects milder and more humane than Russia's ; but I have never felt that it was inspired by the same passionate determination to lift up the lowly from their seat—and lift them up in the ordinary things of life.

According to the Constitution of 1936, the highest organ of State power in the U.S.S.R. is the Supreme Soviet, which roughly corresponds to our parliament. (The word 'Soviet' simply means 'council.') Like Parliament, the Supreme Soviet contains two chambers, the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities. Each of these

chambers is elected by direct and secret suffrage, the vote being enjoyed by all Soviet citizens of either sex who have reached the age of eighteen (except the insane and those deprived of electoral rights by the courts), including (unlike this country) men serving in the armed forces. There are no residential qualifications, no insistence on registration in a given neighbourhood as there are in Great Britain, and in consequence the Soviet electorate is a much greater proportion of the population (about 55 per cent.) than it is in this country (42 per cent.). Partly perhaps because of this, two-thirds of the members of the Supreme Soviet were in 1938 under forty years of age : a startling contrast to Parliament.

The Soviet of the Union is elected by geographical constituencies, with one representative for every 300,000 of the population. The Soviet of Nationalities represents the Union and Autonomous Republics, just as the Senate represents the 48 States in the U.S.A. In this chamber the Great Russians, the former ruling nation and still a majority of the population, have considerably fewer votes than the formerly subject peoples. Both chambers have equal rights, whereas in England the House of Commons can in the last resort always overrule the House of Lords. This equality is no doubt due to the fact that in the Soviet of Nationalities (unlike the House of Lords or the proposed Indian Chamber of Princes) there is no hereditary or nominated element. In case of conflict between the two chambers (which has not so far occurred) a commission equally representative of both considers the matter at issue ; if it is unable to find an agreeable solution the Supreme Soviet is dissolved, and new elections are held.

In England, the text-books tell us, sovereignty belongs to the King in Parliament. In fact, as we all know, a great deal of this supreme power is exercised by the Cabinet, whose actions are subsequently ratified by a Parliament in which it normally has a safe majority. A similar division of functions is formally recognized by the Soviet Constitution. When the Supreme Soviet assembles the two chambers meet in joint session and elect from their number a Presidium of thirty-seven members. This body has very considerable powers, though it remains accountable to the Supreme Soviet. The Presidium can convene sessions of the Supreme Soviet, and dissolve it ; it interprets laws and issues ordinances (although legislation is the exclusive business of the Supreme Soviet) ; it appoints and replaces the high command of the armed forces, declares war if the Supreme Soviet is not sitting, declares general or partial mobilization and martial law, ratifies treaties. In fact, this smaller body exercises many of the powers which in Great Britain belong to Parliament as a whole. The Supreme Soviet sits in full session for much shorter periods than Parliament does, and in the intervals its authority is wielded by the Presidium.

This arises from the nature of the single party system in the U.S.S.R. A great deal of time is taken up in Parliament by the cut and thrust of debate, the desire to score party points off the Government by asking awkward questions, and by answering them in carefully devised formulae which give the minimum of information compatible with the maintenance of the Government's prestige. A group of Soviet officers who were taken to the House of Commons recently were not impressed (as had been intended) but were profoundly shocked to find that in the middle of a great war the Prime Minister's time was regularly taken up by answering comparatively trivial questions. The object of question and answer, it would be fair to say,

is not always and only to elicit the truth and to ensure that government is carried on effectively. In the Supreme Soviet (whether or not we approve of the methods by which this is attained) there is always in fact general agreement on fundamentals of policy, and consequently no desire to score debating points. There is no formal Opposition, and all delegates are interested in government being carried on. Consequently they are prepared to entrust to their Presidium the task of day-to-day supervision of the executive, and themselves to meet in full session at longer intervals to hear the Presidium render account and to discuss general questions of policy. Anyone who has studied the debates of the Supreme Soviet, however, will agree that there is no lack of criticism and independence of viewpoint in the delegates when they do meet.

I have said that the Presidium supervises the executive, and although earlier I compared the Presidium to the British Cabinet in its (effective) legislative role, this was not a strictly accurate parallel. The equivalent of the Cabinet in its executive capacity is in the U.S.S.R. the Council of People's Commissars (*Sovnarkom*). This is composed of the heads of the People's Commissariats, the equivalent of our ministries, and of various commissions and committees, such as the State Planning Commission (*Gosplan*) and the State Bank. They are appointed by the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet in joint session, and are responsible for their actions to the Supreme Soviet, or to the Presidium in the intervals of sessions. The forty-four Soviet commissariats are more numerous than our ministries, largely because of the much more direct control of economic life by the government of the U.S.S.R. There are commissariats, for instance, for Cellulose and Paper Industry, Oil Industry, Rubber Industry, Electric Power Stations. Missing from *Sovnarkom*, as contrasted with the British Cabinet, are the Minister of Labour (whose functions are performed by the Trade Unions—see page 47), and offices such as those of the Lord Privy Seal, Lord President of the Council, which are in fact held by Ministers without Portfolio. Missing too are Dominions and Colonial Secretaries and Secretary of State for India (for the less civilized nations in the U.S.S.R. have their own Union or Autonomous Republics, and these Republics are so closely interlocked in the machinery of the Soviet State as not to need a liaison officer of Cabinet rank like the Dominions Secretary, any more than there is a Secretary for the States in the U.S.A.).

People's Commissariats of the Central Government of the U.S.S.R. are of two kinds—"All-Union" Commissariats and "Union-Republican" Commissariats. The former control *directly* the branches of State administration entrusted to them throughout the Union. The latter function in conjunction with like-named commissariats of Union and Autonomous Republics, which they direct by sending down delegates, frequently resident. The *Sovnarkoms* of the Union and Autonomous Republics are thus guided by the Central Government, and so local autonomy does not preclude a unified policy on essential matters throughout the Union.

To return to *Sovnarkom*. Its activities are defined in the Constitution as : to co-ordinate and direct the work of the commissariats and other economic and cultural institutions ; to carry out the national economic plan ; to secure public order and security and the rights of citizens ; to exercise general supervision over relations with foreign states ; to determine the annual contingents for conscription and direct the armed forces. *Sovnarkom* can issue, on the basis of existing laws, resolutions and

orders which are binding throughout the Soviet Union. These are rather like our Orders in Council. Individual commissars can issue similar orders in their respective spheres ; Cabinet Ministers in this country need statutory authorization to be able to do this. Here again the Soviet emphasis is on getting things done, overriding obstacles and inertia ; confidence in the good will of the Government is assumed. So far the Supreme Soviet has never shown any sign of lacking this general confidence. In the not very likely event of this occurring, the Supreme Soviet could under the Constitution dismiss Sovnarkom as a whole, or any individual commissar. Commissars have, in fact, been dismissed, though it does not appear that the initiative came from the Supreme Soviet. Such dismissal has been for incompetence rather than disagreement on policy.

Before leaving the Central Government to discuss local administration we may glance at one point which will already have struck the discerning reader. In the U.S.S.R. there is no separation of the powers, executive, legislative, and judicial, such as we in England have come to regard as so essential to liberty that we are apt at once to condemn those Constitutions in which it does not exist. It is therefore worth looking at the historical origin of this fixed English belief. Like so many of our political beliefs, it goes back to the seventeenth century, when the gentry and burghers of England were opposing a monarchy which aimed at dictatorship. One of the methods of controlling the royal government was to insist that there must be a strict distinction between the executive (the permanent Government) and the legislative (Parliament), which could not be in constant session because its members had their own business to attend to, but to which the executive must in the last resort be responsible. Above all the Central Government must not legislate or spend money without Parliament's consent. The administration of justice was also politically important ; he who interprets the laws can in fact make them, and Parliament insisted that judges must be responsible to them and not to the permanent Government. In local administration too the gentry and burgesses were most suspicious of the Government's attempts to extend its control by means of a civil service personally responsible to the Crown, and so established the quaint old English custom of a professional civil service controlled by an amateur legislature and magistracy. This system, with drastic modifications, has worked well enough in England, where—for various reasons at various times—Central Government and electorate have represented different interests. But there is nothing very sacrosanct about it, and it would be a cumbersome method of conducting business if the permanent officials did not think of themselves as something apart from and even alien to the governed. When the main object of the Government is to draw wider circles of the population into administration, the case is altered. There is nothing *necessarily* wrong in allowing the Government employee who administers local health (and therefore knows most about its problems) to have a share in formulating the policy he has to administer—provided always that he can be democratically controlled. Similarly there is no *necessary* reason why one body of men should decide what is to be done and another do it—and, in fact, Parliament does frequently approve retrospectively action already taken by the executive. Here again the essential is that things which public opinion recognizes as desirable should get done. For historical reasons the English Constitution is one of checks and balances : “set a thief to catch a thief” might be its rather gloomy motto. In British consti-

tutional theory Parliament controls the executive because it controls the purse, and could withhold money from a Government which lost its confidence (though of course the party dominant in the Government and Parliament would never let things reach this pass). Soviet democratic institutions have also a check on the Government by financial control, but the Government runs all industrial production and so is not dependent on the voting of taxes. The Soviet Constitution does not balance different interests, because in Soviet theory no conflict of interest can exist in a state where exploitation has been abolished ; but it does aspire at all levels to weave all points of view into a single whole at the stage of planning, of formulation of policy.

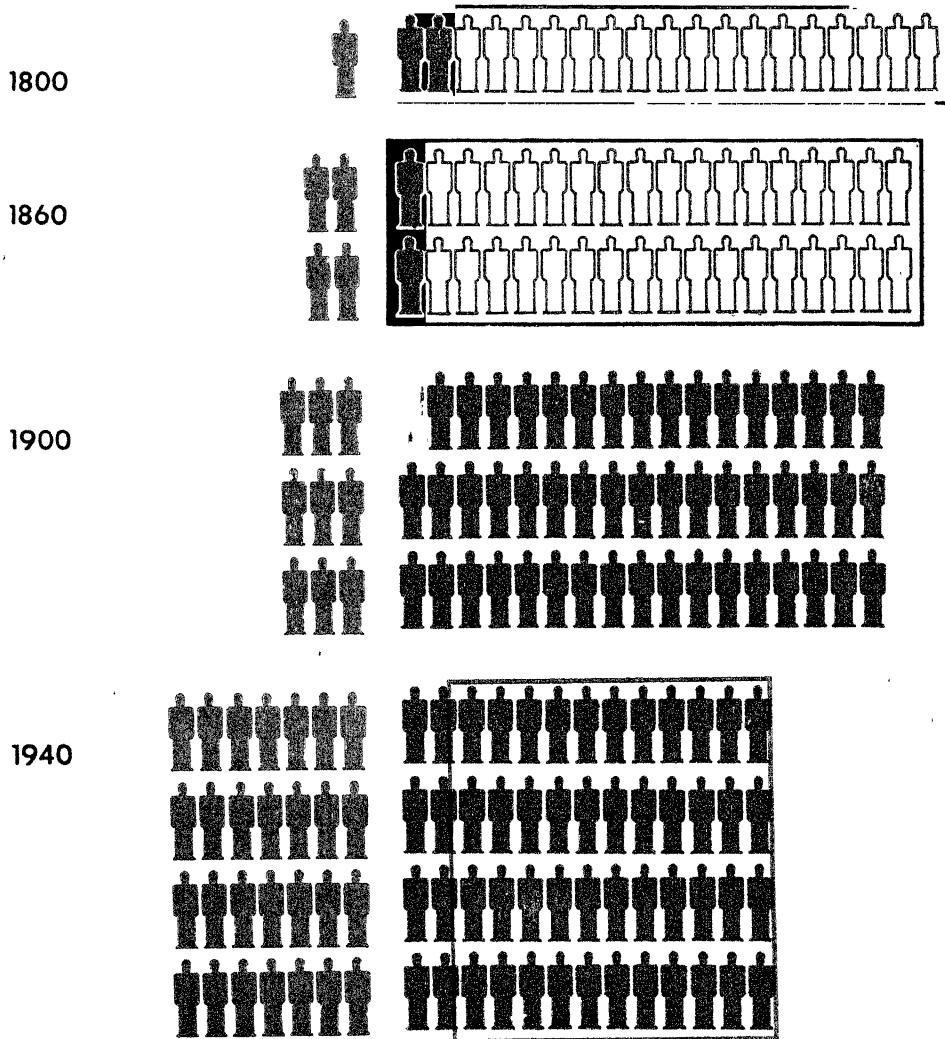
SOVIETS

Soviets first appeared in Russia in the revolution of 1905, that spontaneous revolt of the working class and peasantry against the corrupt and incompetent Government of Nicholas II, which foreshadowed the successful revolutions of 1917. The Soviet was something like a British Trades Council, a meeting of delegates from the factories of any area to concert plans of opposition to the Tsarist Government. Such plans in the conditions of 1905 were necessarily revolutionary plans, and the town Soviets soon found themselves organizing and leading the military revolt of the factory workers. The Soviets of Moscow and Petrograd passed from organization of revolt almost to the running of their respective cities. The keen eye of Lenin at once saw the possibilities of this new, spontaneous institution, which could be in succession the organizer of resistance, of revolt, and of administration after victory. He did everything in his power to popularize the idea of Soviets, and when they reappeared in the revolution of 1917 the Bolsheviks issued the slogan "All power to the Soviets." Soviets were extended from the factories to the villages and the army.

The advantage of Soviets from the point of view of the Bolsheviks was their direct contact with the masses of the people. Elections of delegates were made by a show of hands in open factory and village meetings or in meetings of the rank and file of the army : any candidate was personally known to the electors, and his qualifications could be argued about immediately in front of his face. Delegates once elected were liable to 'recall' should they cease to represent the views of their electorate. Since this electorate was a real entity, always in existence and discussing politics from day to day, it had a live and changing public opinion. Thus the will of his 'constituency' could easily, unmistakably and effectively be brought home to the delegate ; and it was equally easy for him to report back to his electors.

For these reasons the Soviets were retained as governmental organs after the victory of the Bolshevik revolution. In the early days they were organized in a pyramidal structure : workers in a factory elected delegates to their town Soviet, a village meeting elected its village Soviet, which elected delegates to the regional Soviet, town and regional Soviets elected delegates to the provincial Soviet, provincial Soviets sent delegates to the Soviet of the constituent republic, and the Soviets of the Union Republics sent delegates to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. In the new constitution of 1936 the pyramid remained the same, but the systems of election became direct instead of indirect. That is to say, a villager does not merely elect his village

Urbanization of Russia



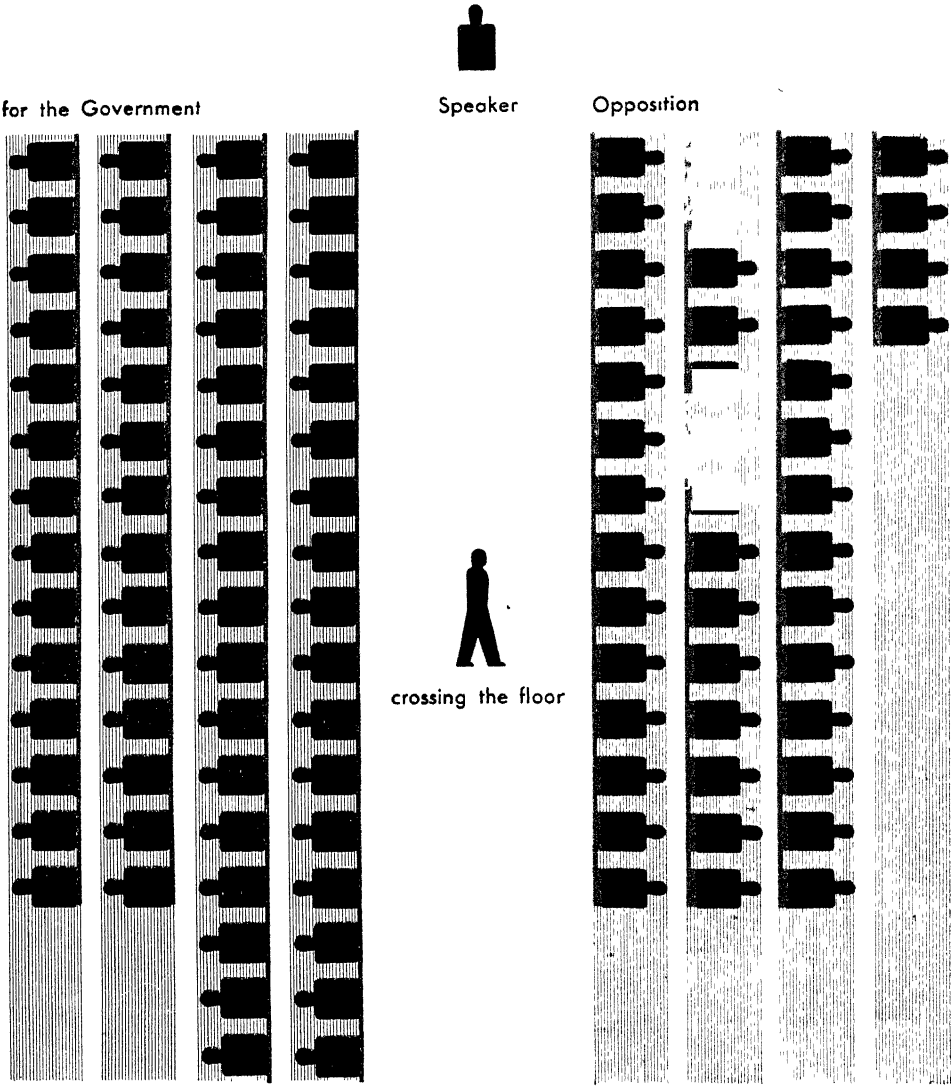
Each man symbol represents 2 million people

Red: urban green rural on black area, landowners

surrounded by black line serfs

surrounded by red line collective farmers

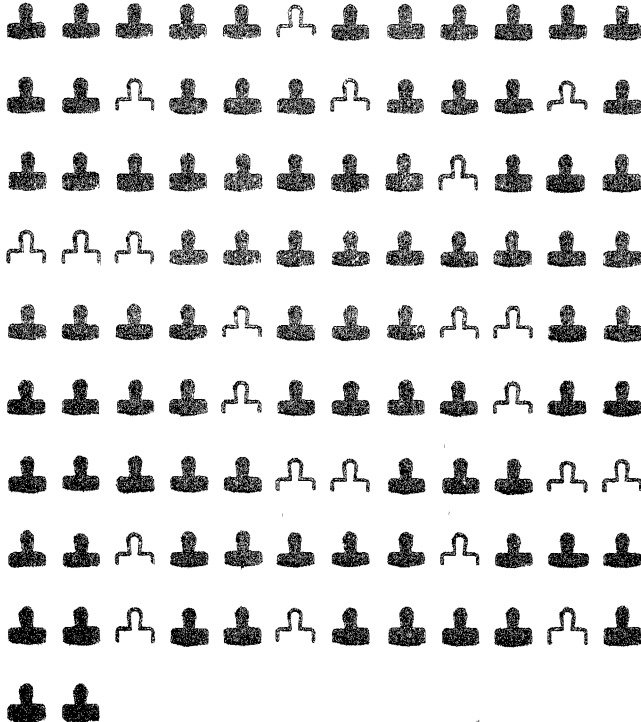
The House of Commons



The Supreme Soviet (Soviet of the Union)

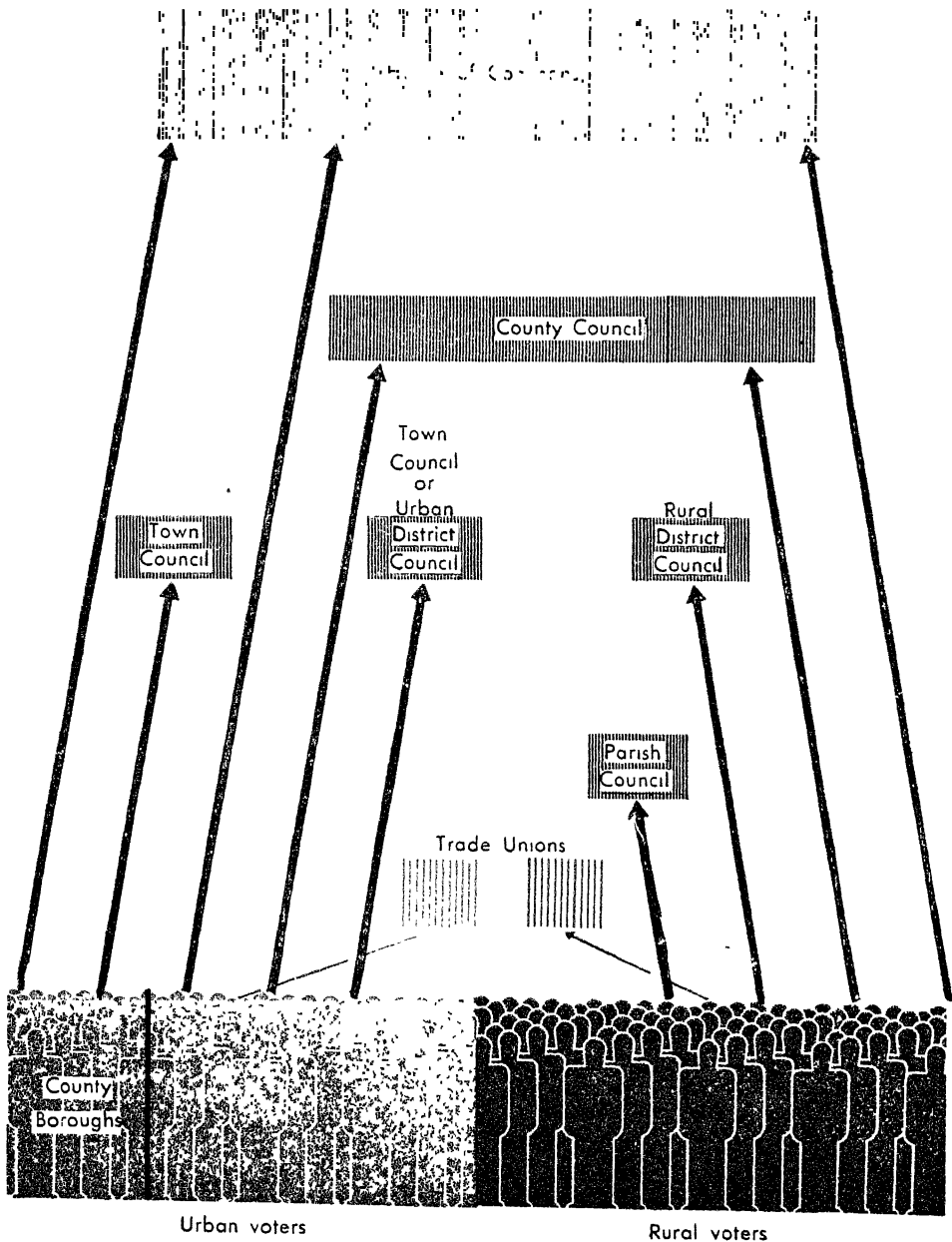


Commissars, etc.

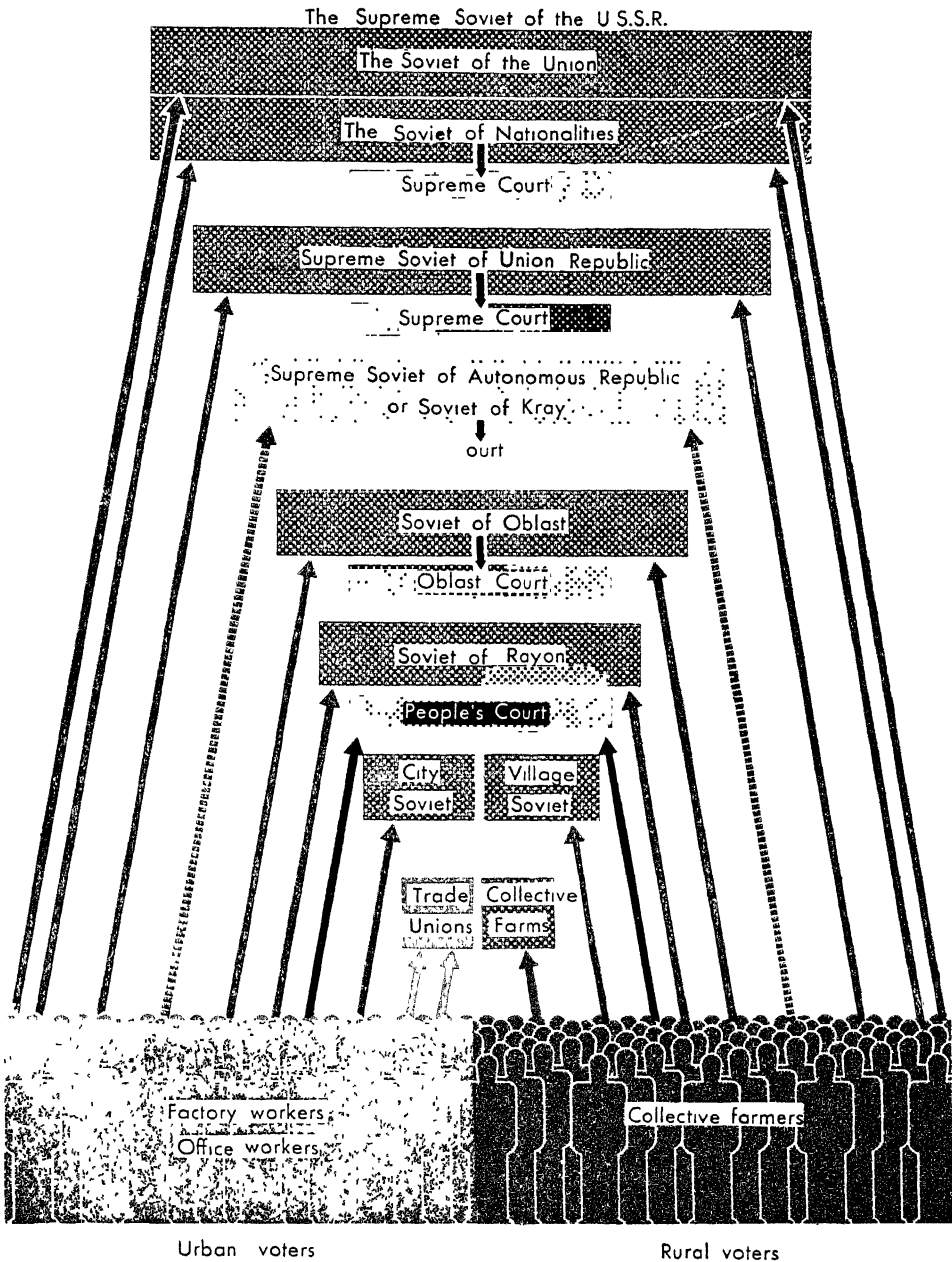


full red : party members
red outline : others

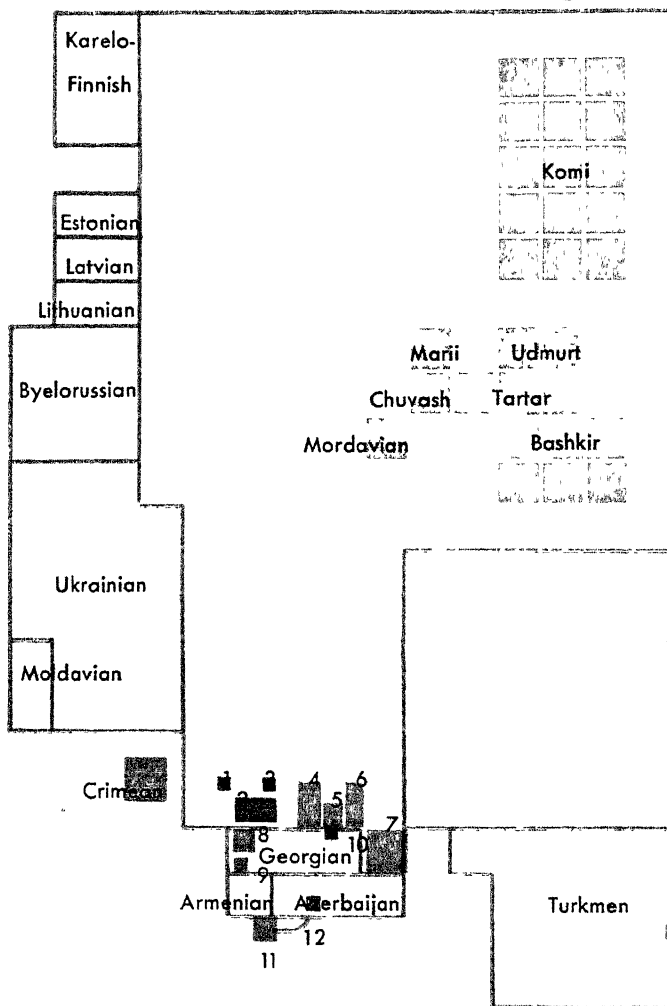
British Elections



Soviet Elections



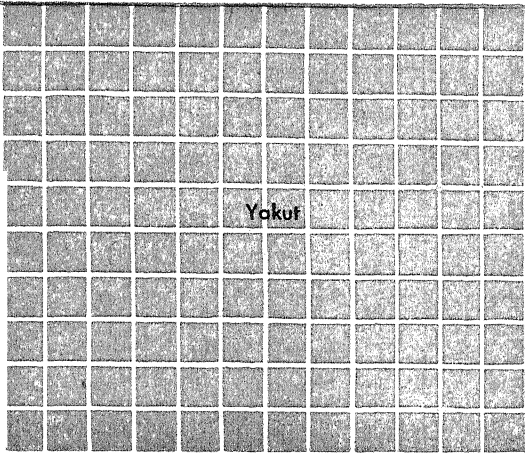
Main Administration Regions



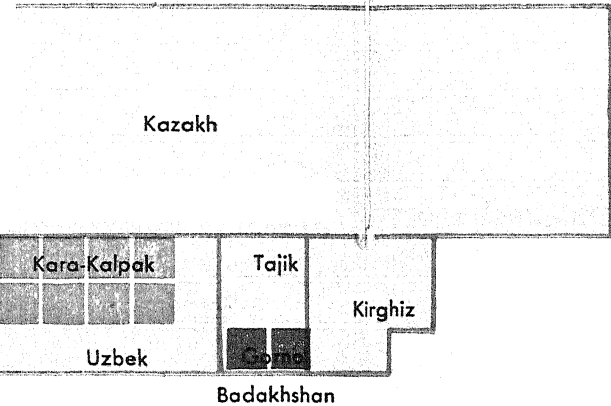
- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|----|------------------|
| 1 | Adygei | 8 | Abkhazian |
| 2 | Karachai | 9 | Adjar |
| 3 | Cherkess | 10 | South Ossetian |
| 4 | Kabardino-Balkarian | 11 | Nakhichevan |
| 5 | North Ossetian | 12 | Nagorno-Karabakh |
| 6 | Chechen-Ingush | | |
| 7 | Daghestan | | |

of the Soviet Union in 1944

Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic



Yakut



Kazakh

Kara-Kalpak

Tajik

Kirghiz

Uzbek

Badakhshan

Badakhshan



Oirat

Khakass



Buryat-

Mongolian



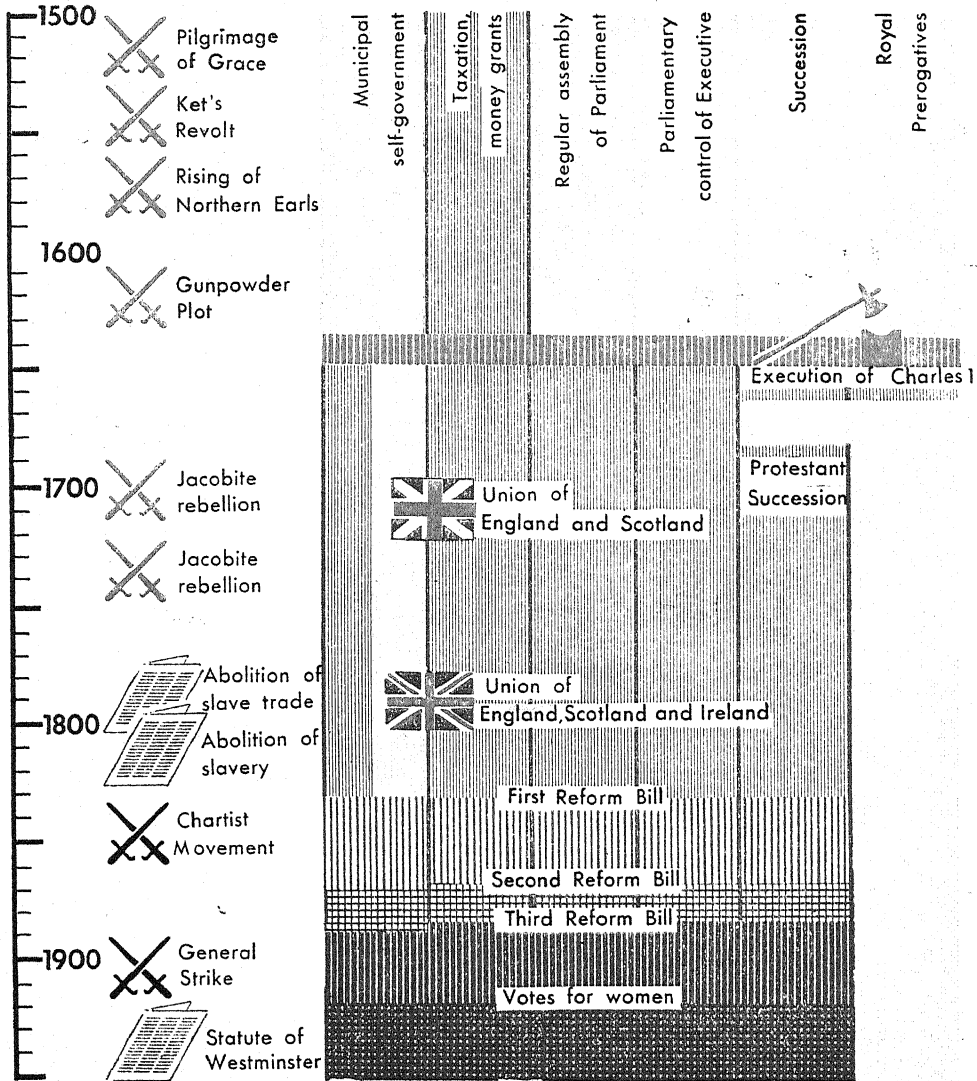
Tuva

Surrounded by red lines : S.S.R.(Union Republic)
green : A.S.S.R. (Autonomous Republic)
blue : Autonomous Oblast

Each square stands for 10,000 square miles

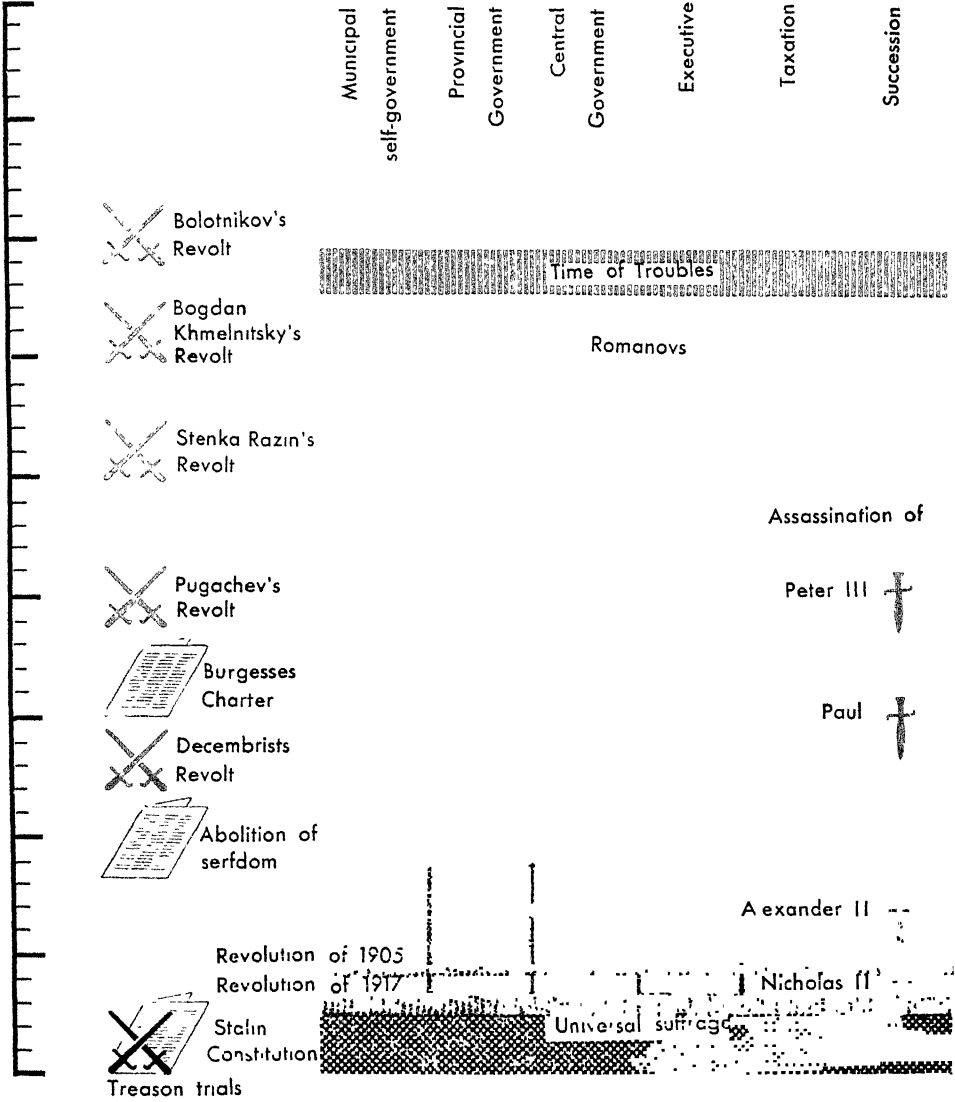
Reforms and Revolutions

Britain



blue: with popular control
grey: without popular control

Russia

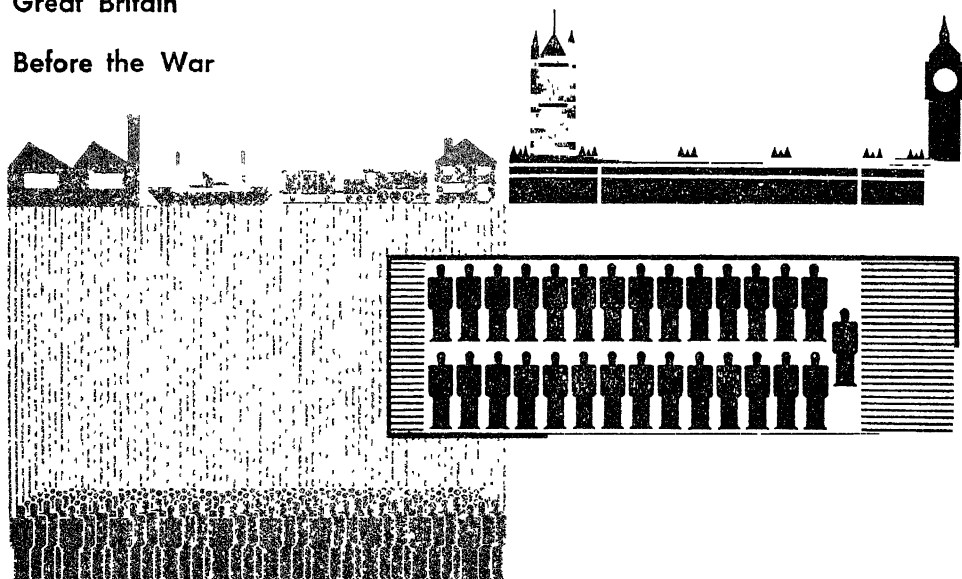


red: violent risings, etc.
black: non-violent

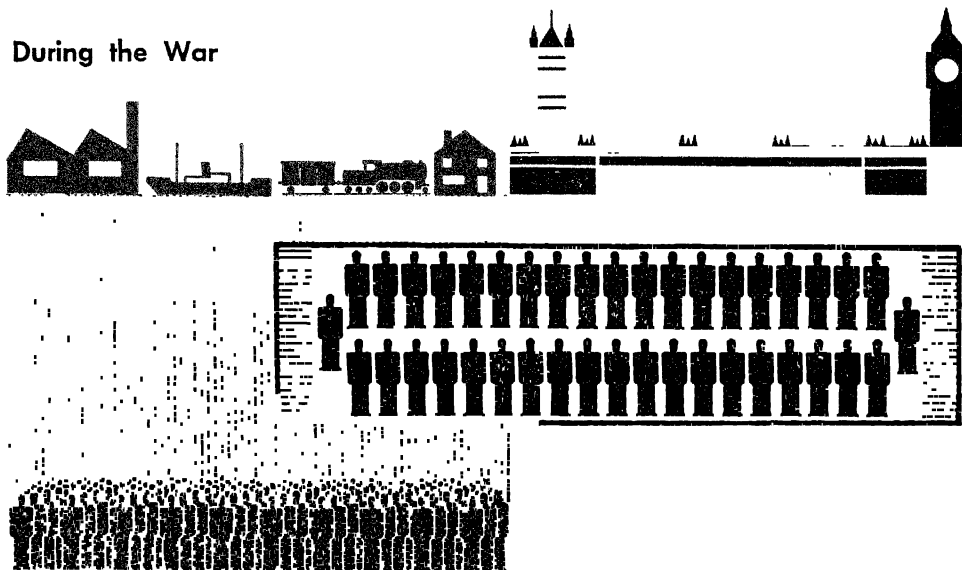
Government and the War

Great Britain

Before the War



During the War



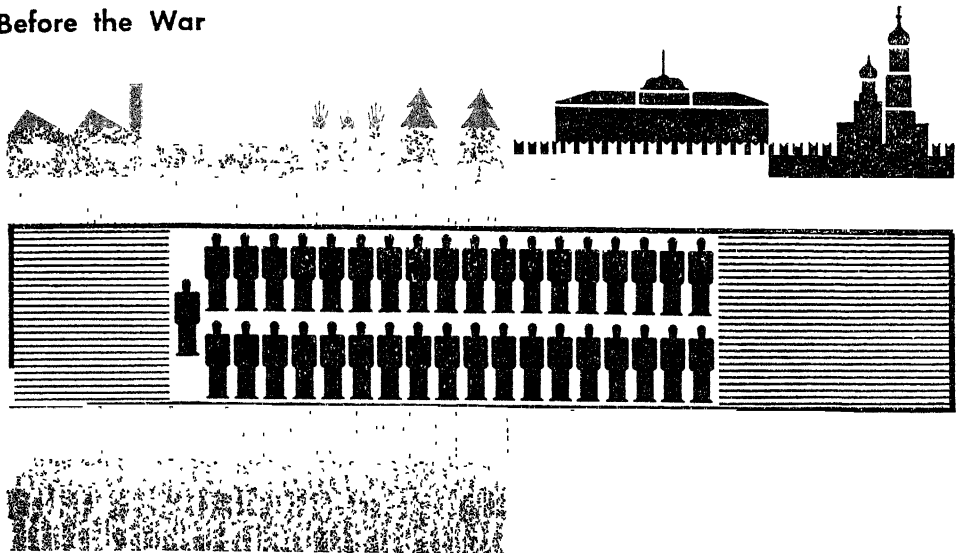
Blue: ministries

on red: dealing with production, consumption, transport, labour, building, etc.

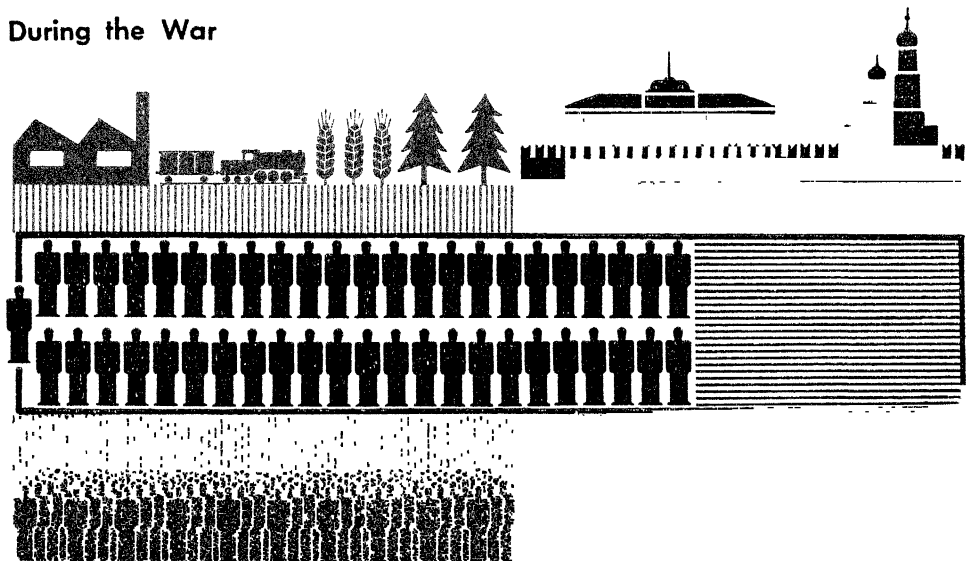
Government and the War

Soviet Union

Before the War



During the War



Blue : commissariats

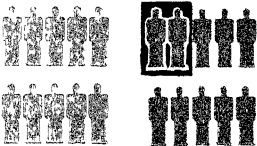
on red : dealing with production, consumption, transport, labour, building, etc.

Urbanization of Great Britain

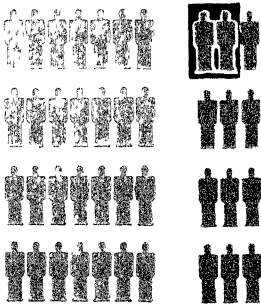
1800



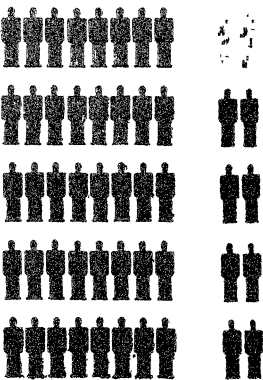
1850



1900



1940



Each man symbol represents 1 million people
Red: urban green: rural on black: owning land

Soviet ; he also participates in the election of delegates direct to regional, provincial, Union Republic and Supreme Soviets. The rough-and-ready system of election by show of hands, suitable to the largely illiterate masses of 1917, was replaced in 1936 by secret ballot. But though the system of election changed, the functions of the Soviets did not. These are sufficiently different from the workings of local government organs in this country to be worth considering in some detail. First, however, we may quote an English local government expert, Dr W. A. Robson, on a point of similarity. He speaks of "the lack of rigidity and legalism in the system despite a clear regularity of procedure," adding "the constitutional arrangements are highly flexible, and the organization depends for its successful working, as in England, on the unwritten law rather than the written."

Each Soviet is a reproduction of the Government of the U.S.S.R. in miniature. Almost every department of State, including defence, comes within the competence of the local authority at whatever level. But (to quote Dr Robson again) "it is incorrect to regard the local government of the U.S.S.R. as a thinly disguised form of centralism." Every Soviet has complete authority within its own area, *in so far as* it does not contravene the line of action laid down by its superiors in the pyramid. That is to say, the Soviet of a Union Republic can do anything which does not conflict with the policy laid down by the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., a provincial Soviet can do anything not conflicting with the policy of the Soviet of its Union Republic or the Supreme Soviet . . . and so on. Each Soviet is in fact simultaneously responsible *both* to its electors *and* to its superior in the hierarchy—except of course, the Supreme Soviet, which is responsible only to its electors, and itself controls the national plan into which the activities of all subordinate authorities are woven. The local Soviet (unlike the British local authority) has no legal rights on which it can insist against the will of a superior administrative authority. Dr Robson speaks approvingly of the consequent "entire absence of narrow parochialism, of debilitating conflict between the large city council and the district authority which has been the bane of London for decades." Even a village Soviet enjoys powers (though it may not always use them) which would make an English local government authority green with envy. It can prosecute and try petty offenders, run its own industry, levy an assessment on its population, build a new school or hospital or canteen, employ doctors and nurses, spend its share of local taxation as it chooses. Rather more than half the total expenditure of the Union Republics goes in financial grants to their subordinate local authorities, who in 1944 were authorized to spend nearly twice their incomes. Because they have not to raise their own revenue (and because all property is publicly owned anyway) the activities of local Soviets are not hamstrung by perpetual struggle between those who want to develop social services and those who want to keep the rates down. If the local Soviet oversteps lines laid down by higher authority its action may be summarily queried and perhaps reversed ; otherwise it has a very great say in running the day-to-day lives of the members of its community, who are much more aware of its existence and omnicompetence than the inhabitants of an English town are of the activities of their local authority. This decentralized self-sufficiency and the close contact between local government and the governed have helped to preserve State continuity in the territories of the U.S.S.R. occupied during the present war : the local Soviet reverts to its original role of underground organizer of the population

for resistance. The remarkable thing, in fact, about Soviet local government is the direct intercourse maintained between the community represented and its delegates. In an average local election 80-90 per cent. of the voters go to the polls—a figure beyond all comparison higher than that which we find in this country. And election is only the beginning. When they are chosen the delegates are given a list of instructions compiled by the voters, and the Constitution lays on them the obligation of reporting back at frequent intervals to convince their electors that these instructions are in fact being carried out. Unsatisfactory delegates are liable to recall by majority decision of the electorate: in Moscow in the thirties fifteen delegates were so recalled within four years. One or two instances of instructions to the delegates of Moscow Soviet may be given: to instal telephones and radios in every house; to build more theatres and cinemas, dining-rooms and cafés, on the outskirts of the city; to light the streets in the early morning when workmen are on their way to work; to bring into workable condition all the existing lifts in houses; to produce a larger assortment of toilet soaps. These instructions are taken from the list of 1936, in which recommendations from factories and other electoral organizations occupy 330 pages of text. Moscow is undoubtedly the most advanced local government unit in the U.S.S.R.; but the principles of the Soviet system are the same at all levels. In the days when Mr Herbert Morrison was still with the L.C.C. Sir Ernest Simon wrote, "It happens that all the things that Mr Morrison wants to do are also the things that the Moscow Soviet wants to do. But the difference is that Moscow Soviet is actually doing them," thanks to the absence of vested interests and the flexibility of the Soviet structure. From the top to the bottom of the pyramid, from the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. to the smallest village Soviet, the internal structural principle is the same. The full meeting (plenum) of the elected delegates chooses a president, where the plenum is a small number (as in a village Soviet), or a presidium, where the plenum is large (as in Moscow city Soviet). The president (or the presidium) has considerable independence of action, subject always to the control of the plenum, whose confidence the president (or presidium) must retain. The plenum is by no means a body of ciphers who exist only to register periodical approval or disapproval of the actions of the president or presidium. On the contrary, all these back-benchers can be brought into the day-to-day business of administration. As we have seen, the English distinction between those who think and those who act, between those who legislate (M.P.'s, town councillors) and those who administer (civil servants, local government officials) does not exist. In the U.S.S.R. there are fewer permanent civil servants and local government officials per inhabitant than in Great Britain, and much of the work carried on by the 'non-political' paid expert in this country is in the U.S.S.R. left to the rank and file members of a Soviet. A large Soviet divides itself into 'sections,' or committees dealing with the various matters within its administrative competence, and every member of the Soviet is expected to serve on at least one section. It also calls in the help of a great number of 'activists'—laymen interested in, say, health or educational problems. Public employees in the U.S.S.R. can serve on a city Soviet, and would normally act on the 'section' which dealt with their speciality—*e.g.*, a teacher would act on the education section. As different, you will see, from the English system as chalk from cheese. Soviet legislators themselves administer directly. The British ideal of an impartial civil servant, raised in some mysterious

way above the party passions of ordinary men, is totally alien to Marxist views on "the unity of theory and practice." The Soviet system aims at canalizing political passion along the line of fulfilling the Plan rather than allowing it to dissipate itself in party rivalries. Shocking, too, to English conceptions is the amateur 'activist' thrusting himself into all aspects of administration. This, however, has several great advantages from the Soviet point of view. In the first place, for the reasons given earlier, there has been a dearth of personnel of sufficient competence and reliability for all the business of administration to be entrusted to professional civil servants. The enthusiastic amateur, whatever defects he may have, is not likely to be corrupt (there are no contracts going), nor to suffer from the bureaucrat's disease of over-caution. If he proves his worth and his trustworthiness he may be drawn into the paid ranks of the administration. Secondly, and much more important from the point of view of the Soviet Government, administration by 'activists' gives them a splendid training in self-government, drawing literally millions of workers into the government of the State. It has been calculated that at any given moment fifty thousand citizens of Moscow are participating in its municipal administration, whilst the total membership of village Soviets (excluding activists) is well over a million. From the earliest days of the revolution Lenin emphasized the immense educational value in backward Russia of the "unpaid performance of State functions by each worker after his seven hours' task has been fulfilled."

In Soviet ethics 'social work' of one sort or another is valued highly. It is insisted on in party members. But whereas in this country 'social work' usually means private charity (except for those who become J.P.'s or hold unpaid posts in local government ; and these usually come from a restricted social class), in the U.S.S.R. the voluntary exertions of men and women of good will are harnessed to the purposes of the State, to the advantage of the latter and the education of individuals. In consequence, despite the absence of party rivalry, local government in the U.S.S.R. is far more alive than in Great Britain, for a far greater proportion of the population either is directly engaged in some aspect of it, or has friends who are. Professor Macmurray has pointed out that "the relative decay of local democracy in our time is due to the fact that at present . . . the means of changing and developing the conditions of local life" are not "effectively in the hands of the people." He quotes the U.S.S.R. as a contrast. To illustrate this point I cannot do better than to quote the greatest English authorities on local government—the Webbs. They write:

The universal electorate in the U.S.S.R. does a great deal more than elect. At its incessant meetings it debates and passes resolutions by the hundred thousand, in which it expresses its desires on great matters and on small, by way of instruction or suggestion to the 'deputies' whom it chooses and can recall, and who habitually take notice of these popular requirements, even when it is not found immediately practicable to carry them into effect. . . The working constitution of the U.S.S.R. . . . is rooted in an almost inconceivable amount of public discussion, in literally a million or two of small local meetings in the course of each year. Whether or not the vociferous debaters at these innumerable meetings get all the attention they desire, the political student will note, not only the amount of political education, but also the sense of continuous participation in public administration that such discussions create.

Government in the U.S.S.R. is a continuous process, which deliberately sets itself, the aim of drawing more and more people (mostly until recently illiterate) into its operations. Soviets have proved particularly useful for giving education in self-government to the most backward tribes of the U.S.S.R., for the village Soviet could adapt itself to the tribal community. After twenty years of self-administration in their own languages even these communities were able to take part in the national election to the Supreme Soviet—which the Webbs cite as “an example that might perhaps be borne in mind when self-government is introduced into English colonies.”

FREEDOM

A great number of the citizens both of Great Britain and of the U.S.S.R. think that the other country is not free. This applies not only to ignorant or doctrinaire arm-chair critics but also to citizens of the one country who have lived in the other. British subjects speak of G.P.U. surveillance, of the one-party system, of the fact that in the U.S.S.R. public advocacy of a restoration of capitalism is forbidden, as public advocacy of socialism is not in this country. Soviet citizens complain that in Britain it is not possible for ordinary workpeople to criticize the manager of their factory and, if the criticism proves justified, to get him sacked ; that (in peace-time) workers are never free from the fear of unemployment ; and that reforms like slum clearance on the necessity of which “every one” is agreed, are held up by vested interests.

It is clear from these examples that different things are meant by the word freedom. By freedom the Englishman means the right to say and do what he as an individual likes, provided he does not infringe the rights of other individuals. To this a Soviet critic would reply that the logical assumption involved is that all individuals ‘count’ equally, and that this is not true in England. Everybody is legally free to say what he likes, but it needs money to start up a newspaper in order to reach a wide audience ; and he will quote the hard saying that “British justice, like the doors of the Ritz hotel, is open to rich and poor alike.” In short he would argue that economic inequality nullifies political liberty. He would, moreover, draw attention to the fact that trial by jury does not apply to the majority of subjects of the British Empire, and that in many colonies trade unions are prohibited. When he says that his country is freer than England, still more than the British Empire, the Soviet citizen means that effective equality in his country is secured for the mass of the population of whatever colour by the elimination of private ownership of factories and large landed estates ; and that when public opinion decides that a thing is necessary it gets done. To the reply that this has been achieved at the cost of disregarding the wishes of a minority, sometimes (as in the period of collectivization) of a considerable minority, the Russian would shrug his shoulders and say he was building a new social order and you can’t have an omelette without breaking eggs. Nor should we forget the considered judgment of Sir John Maynard on one example of Soviet ruthlessness, the purge of the fifth column. “The Soviet Government did not lose the support of the masses by the drastic proceedings of 1936-38, for the masses believed that the punishments have been deserved : as—in general—they probably were.”

As a result of history the Englishman tends to regard the State as an enemy against

which the individual must be protected. Country gentlemen regarded their home as their castle, business-men thought Government interference bad for trade. In Russia, on the other hand, under the Tsarist régime service of the state was the highest duty of the ruling class ; whilst for the peasant and working classes since 1917 the State has been a great liberating force, a "hinderer of hindrances" to the good life. As we noted in discussing local government, nothing is *ultra vires* for a Soviet. There are no property rights to be protected except those of State property and the personal property of individuals. The rights of individuals are (again because of history) regarded as less important than getting things done in the interests of the community. The real roots of freedom in Russia are economic and go deep into the soil of the *mir* and the collective farm. The *mir* grew up to defend men through society against nature, and the collective farm has now taken its place (together with trade unions, co-operatives, Soviets, Communist Party) to defend men through society against exploitation. On collective farms, as we shall see, the real problem is not to prevent the collective exploiting the individual but the individual exploiting the collective. The Russian therefore thinks of liberty as something he wins by association. In England nature was tamed at an earlier period, and the primitive collaboration of the medieval manor was disintegrated by the business ethics of individualistic capitalism. For the last three centuries the political relationship of individuals to one another and to the State has been the scene of the struggle for liberty in England. The rights enjoyed under the British Constitution are mostly negative—no arbitrary arrest, no taxation without representation : liberty means being left alone. The Soviet constitution is unique in providing positive rights—the right to work, the right to leisure, the right to maintenance in sickness and old age, the right to unite in public organizations. It is also unique in insisting on certain complementary duties. It is the duty of Soviet citizens to work, to perform military service, to respect the law and socialist property.

These are in fact two different aims. Unrestricted freedom of action for the individual involves allowing those in possession to obstruct action possibly desired by a majority ; the aim of securing and broadening social equality involves disregarding the property and opinions of a not inconsiderable minority. The one is static, aiming at the maximum of freedom compatible with the *status quo* ; the other is dynamic, aiming at extending freedom in depth by ruthlessly overcoming obstacles to it. Which type of freedom you prefer—freedom to sack your boss or to agitate for a change of Government—probably depends on the income group you belong to. The Webbs pointed out that rationing is regarded as a restraint on their freedom by persons of means, whereas it ensures for the poorest class the opportunity to purchase goods which they would otherwise lack. Each conception is in itself incomplete, though we each of us are likely to identify freedom with what we have most conspicuously lacked in the past. We can learn from each other. The mutual tolerance of divergent views which has grown up in Great Britain and the Dominions during many centuries of political stability offers something for the Soviet Union to work towards ; we, in our turn, can learn from the Soviet system what are the effective limitations on freedom of action in this country and the dependent Empire. On August 24, 1943, Mr A. V. Alexander declared, "No man in Britain, the Dominions, or the United States need fear his politics, his religion, or his neighbour. After real peace we must add the fourth



Judges attending the opening of Parliament. Formality and traditional ceremonies, deeply rooted in our history, are characteristic of English law.

and last—freedom from want. The misery springing from want was the indelible disgrace of the two decades before the war. To deal with the problem will mean hard work and sacrifice.” It cost the Soviet people hard work and sacrifice to establish this freedom, but its existence certainly adds to their tenacity in defending their heritage. Some time ago a Sunday newspaper drew attention to the fact that most people in this country refer to actions of the Government by saying “they” have done such and such, never “we” have done it. The writer urged that it was most important that this rift in the social structure should somehow be bridged, that rank-and-file citizens should come to feel a personal ownership in and responsibility for their Government. The average Soviet citizen would speak of his Government’s actions as “our” actions. *The Economist*, on September 4, 1943, said :

Rightly or wrongly, there is a widespread impression in this country that this element of actual participation, this measure of control, over the daily round and common task, is one important difference between British and Soviet régimes. “It’s their own show,” people say ; and in this way they explain, naively no doubt, but significantly, the achievements and endurance of the Russian people since June 1941.

This, of course, is the result of deliberate Government policy in the U.S.S.R. I have attempted throughout this book to show how the Soviet Government has tried to draw rank-and-file citizens into “the daily round and common task” of administration.



The manager of a store is accused of theft in a Moscow police court. The young Soviet legal system still remains somewhat informal.

"Every housewife must learn to run the Government," Lenin proclaimed. In the U.S.S.R. there is much more effective day-to-day participation of the masses of citizens in the government of their country than there is in Great Britain. The feeling of common ownership—*e.g.*, of the Dnieper Dam—has an incalculable effect on morale in war-time by preparing citizens to accept common sacrifices. The censorship in the U.S.S.R. does not allow public controversy as to the relative merits of capitalism and socialism, any more than it allows descriptions of crimes of violence and suicide; but in the columns of the 'wall-newspaper' of a factory or collective farm, in the local or national Press, there are countless letters criticizing and asking for explanation, and getting it. A charge of inefficiency or corruption against a factory manager, made either to *Pravda* or in a party meeting, has to be investigated, and if substantiated will lead to the sacking of the manager. There is no law of libel: the greater the truth, the more likelihood of getting a sentence. No doubt in many cases these letters are inspired from 'on top'; no doubt the critic whose political hostility is too transparent gets short shrift; but the point is that the calling to account is done in public, that the machinery for genuine criticism (even if only in non-fundamentals) exists, and that the humble peasant of the previous generation is encouraged to use it. Democracy at the higher levels can only be learnt by a long period of trial and error in the handling of such comparatively lowly instruments.



Harvest festival. Nonconformists won toleration in the seventeenth century, Roman Catholics in 1829, but the Church of England is still the State Church.

PARTY SYSTEMS

The party systems of the two countries create misunderstandings similar to those which arise in regard to liberty. There is a curious belief in England that we have always had a two-party system, and that this is somehow normal and natural. Actually for the last century and more there have almost always been at least three major parties in the House of Commons (the Irish in the nineteenth century, the Labour Party after their disappearance). And in time of war, or of crisis like that in 1931, something very like a single-party system always emerges.

Nevertheless, when all is said, we have only to read the Soviet Constitution to grasp the very real differences between the two systems.

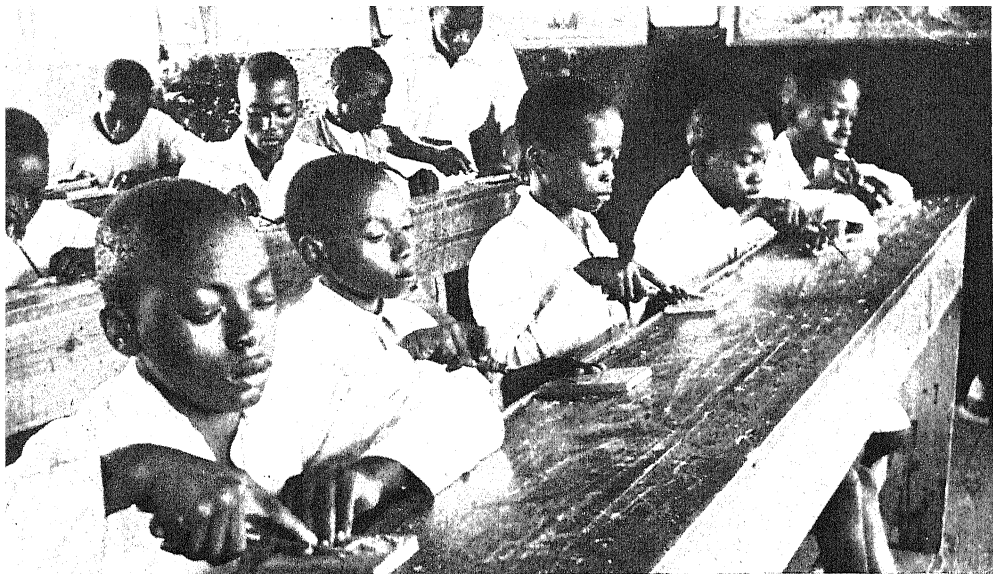
In accordance with the interests of the working people, and for the purpose of developing the organized self-expression and political activity of the masses of the people, citizens of the U.S.S.R. are ensured the right to unite in public organizations—trade unions, co-operative associations, youth organizations, sport and defence organisations, cultural, technical, and scientific societies; and the most active and politically conscious citizens from the ranks of the working class and other strata of the working people unite in the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks), which is the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to strengthen and develop the socialist system, and which represents the leading nucleus of all organizations of the working people, both social and State.



Easter Service in Moscow. Once the Russian Orthodox Church was almost co-extensive with the State; during the war it has played a great patriotic role.

This, as Mrs Webb puts it, gives us a "stop in the mind." Let us try to overcome that and look more closely. What is the Communist Party?

In the first place, it is not at all what we understand by a political party. You cannot just go along to the nearest party headquarters, lay down a subscription, and take out a party card. Membership is restricted; new members are carefully scrutinized and have to be vouched for. They then have to go through a probationary period of one year. (During the war this period has been reduced to three months for front line soldiers.) Once you have acquired your party card you cannot then sit back, pay your dues, vote the right way at elections, and do nothing else. Being a party member is a full-time occupation. There are five million of them, and they are all expected to be outstanding workers at their jobs, an example to others; to participate in all party activity, including discussions on policy; and, once a party decision has been taken, to accept that decision; to understand and be able to explain the party's policy at any given time; and to take part in voluntary social work. If you are a party member the party decides where it is most useful for the country that you should work, and at what. Mr Willkie asked a superintendent of production at a Soviet factory, "Can you leave and get a job in some other factory?" He replied, "Most workers could, but as a party member I must stay where the party thinks I can do the most good." "But suppose you should prefer to work at a different kind of job. Can you change your job?" "That's for those in authority to say." Until



Woodwork lesson at a school in Lagos, Nigeria. Vast tasks face us in raising standards of education in the Colonial Empire.

very recently there was an upper limit to what a party member could earn, based on the wages of a good factory worker ; and although the worker to whom Mr Willkie spoke was described as getting ten times the wages of a skilled labourer, expensive living in a party member would be strongly disapproved of. In war-time there is a convention that prizes and premiums won for good work are handed over *in toto* to the Defence Fund. If you are a party member, moreover, you are expected to conform to a fairly rigid moral code, not to drink to excess, not to be sexually irresponsible. Periodically your private and public life is exposed to the criticism of your party and non-party fellow-workers in a public "party cleansing." (There have been several occasions on which the strength of the party was drastically reduced by a 'wholesale "purge," though Stalin declared in 1939 that mass purges would not be needed in future.) All these voluntary obligations taken upon himself by the party member show that something quite different is understood from the easy-going acceptance of a political label in this country. The Webbs called the Communist Party "a vocation of leadership," and compared its voluntary obligations of poverty and obedience with those of a religious order. The party is, indeed, no place for the frivolous. "Special privileges for the ordinary rank and file of the party," says Mr Hubbard (not a friendly witness), "... now scarcely exist."

What, then, are the inducements to join the party? In the first place, since its function is *leadership*, those who wish to lead will try to make their way into the party. There will be the most diverse reasons for this : patriotism, lust for power, efficiency, drive, organizational ability, racketeering, a belief in the desirability of communism, an acceptance of the established order. There are good and bad reasons for joining the



First-year class at a school in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. The fathers of these children were illiterate.

party, and with so vast an organization many inspired by unworthy motives pass through the strict entrance. But party life is exacting: great responsibilities are laid on the party member, much is expected of him. Mr Scott, who worked for many years in the new city of Magnitogorsk, in the Urals, testifies, "If something went wrong and the brigade [team of workers] spoiled a job, a worker who was a party member was held as much or more responsible than the non-party" leader of the team. On the whole it is undoubtedly true that party members are conspicuous among the population for their efficiency, and every attempt is made to attract outstanding workers and men of ability—or, in war-time, Red Army men of exceptional courage and skill—into the party. This gives us a further clue to the *raison d'être* of the party. "Communists in front" is the order when troops are going into the attack, just as in the Civil War it was communist workers from the factories who were the Bolshevik's shock troops. During the years of peace communists were expected to be exemplary workers, enthusiasts for production. When the success of the collectivization of agriculture hung in the balance in the early thirties, some 25,000 picked party volunteers were sent into the country districts to convince and lead the peasantry, and organize agricultural work: thanks to their efforts the collective farms succeeded. The party member's job is to *lead* the stolid and slow-moving Russian masses; and though his position is one of power and prestige, it is also one of responsibility and risk.

It is difficult to see how without some organization like the Communist Party the Soviet Union could have achieved the triumphs of industrialization and organization which have stood her in such good stead during the war with the Axis. In 1917 the Russian people were medieval in their backwardness; and if the U.S.S.R. was to



The London Police Force was established a hundred years ago by Sir Robert Peel (hence the name "Bobby"). This one is assisting children to cross the road.

be transformed into a modern industrial state within a generation they had to be strongly and decisively led. "The party was the source of initiative and energy which drove the work forward," wrote Mr Scott on the basis of his own experience in Magnitogorsk. "The party sometimes blundered, often made trouble with its unnecessary intriguing and heresy-hunting, but, by and large, Magnitogorsk would not have been built as quickly or as well without it." The Russian people have an infinite capacity for theoretical disagreement and abstract argument on any subject, which, in the typical pre-revolutionary 'intellectual' of the type satirized by Chekhov, resulted in an incapacity for action of any sort. The party to a certain extent panders to this passion for theory by allowing full inner-party discussion until a final decision is reached ; then—*slam* ! the door is closed, all members accept the decision. So is produced a sledge-hammer, a powerful weapon for getting things done. In particular the party, which is open to all classes and nationalities, is a great unifying force. The British Empire is united by the symbol of the Crown ; the Soviet Commonwealth is united by the very real presence of the ubiquitous party, with its inner discipline and outward unanimity ; with its virtual monopoly alike of ability and propaganda. Yet the party does not merely dictate : in order to accomplish its colossal task of transformation it has to have the active support and co-operation of almost every family in the land ; and it is the duty of the party member to work for this co-operation by continuous daily persuasion, organization and example in the state of life in which he finds himself. "Among the people," said Lenin twenty-five years ago, "we are as



The man on point-duty is called a militia man. The name 'policeman' is banned because the Tsarist police before 1917 were so hated.

a drop in the ocean, and we can administer only when we properly express what the people are conscious of." (In quoting these words Stalin emphasized the final clause with special approval.) Only 10 per cent. of trade unionists, for instance, are party members, and less than 20 per cent. of the members of village Soviets ; yet these are undoubtedly the dominating personalities. But they have to proceed by persuasion : they cannot give orders as party members, though, no doubt, the knowledge that the power of the party stands behind them adds to their persuasiveness. At the same time the party, extending to all walks of life and all parts of the country, is continuously surveying, assessing and reporting on public opinion and advising the Government, whose actions are adjusted accordingly. This permanent " Gallup poll " carried out by the party registers trends of opinion in the U.S.S.R. more rapidly and effectively than the ballot-box. Internally the party has a pyramidal structure similar to that of the Soviets, and is organized on democratic lines : its rules say "free and positive discussion of questions of party policy in individual organs of the party, or in the party as a whole, is the inalienable right of every member of the party." At the same time it is highly centralized ; and in between party congresses the central committee of about seventy members elected by them, and its Politburo (political bureau), have a very great deal of authority in the party and in the State. For many years before he accepted Government office in 1941 such influence as Stalin wielded was through his position as secretary of the party's central committee, yet he was recognized as the most important man in the country. The Communist Party is not thought of as

separate from the State, nor is its influence regarded as something sinister and backstairs. Its position as the leading nucleus is recognized and proclaimed.

This party is thus very different from anything that we have known in England since the eighteenth century, when for a couple of generations after the Tory Party had become suspect of association with counter-revolution the Whigs had a virtual monopoly of power—though they owed their influence to wealth and rank rather than to discipline and organization. The pressing political and social problems in England at the present day are *not* those of industrializing a backward country, of drawing a recently illiterate population into active politics, of inspiring timid and fatalistic intellectuals with a powerful sense of purpose and achievement. And so we have not adopted the Russian political technique altogether, although in some ways we are approaching it. “The English think themselves free because they have a choice between two party lists,” a wag has said. “The Russians think themselves free because they are consulted in the compilation of a single list.” On the subject of elections the Soviet Constitution is perfectly clear: “Elections of deputies to all the Soviets . . . shall be . . . on the basis of universal, equal, and direct suffrage by secret ballot.” It therefore came as rather a shock to Western liberal observers to learn that in the elections of 1937 there was in the overwhelming majority of constituencies only a single candidate—not necessarily a communist, but still an unopposed candidate. On the face of it, it looked suspiciously like the farcical plebiscites called elections in Nazi Germany. And this apparent similarity did nothing to improve the reputation of the U.S.S.R. in this country. Now that our mutual opposition to the Nazi system has brought us into twenty years’ alliance with the U.S.S.R. it is important that we should get these points quite clear in our minds. What is the Soviet electoral process? I cannot do better than begin by quoting from an article in *Soviet War News* of March 24, 1942. Three thousand collective farmers and guerillas, in two German-occupied regions near Leningrad, sent a column of food wagons through the German lines into the besieged city. “The question arose—who shall drive? There were more volunteers than were required. The best men were selected by meetings. These were our delegates, the most esteemed people of our two regions.” In this case the ‘electorate’ was united in a common purpose—to get the food through to Leningrad. It had a single problem—to choose the best people to do the job. A trade union in this country elects its delegates on the same principle: its common purpose is to further the interests of its members, and for this “the best men are selected by meetings.” The U.S.S.R. is not yet completely united, as the treason trials of 1937-38 showed. Nevertheless the war with Nazi Germany, and the absence of Quislings, has demonstrated the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Soviet peoples support the present regime. There is no tradition of two- or multi-party Government in the U.S.S.R., and the Bolsheviks did nothing to create it. “Even if the Bolsheviks had been enthusiastic believers in Western liberalism,” wrote the Webbs, “. . . such a political Constitution was plainly impracticable for the vast heterogeneous hordes with which they had to deal.” Stalin discussed the reasons for the single-party system in 1936, in the debate on the new Constitution:

I must admit that the draft of the new Constitution does preserve the régime of the dictatorship of the working class, just as it also preserves unchanged the present leading position of the Communist Party. . . . Several parties and, consequently,

freedom for parties, can exist only in a society in which there are antagonistic classes whose interests are mutually hostile and irreconcilable—in which there are, say, capitalists and workers, landlords and peasants, kulaks and poor peasants, etc. . . . In the U.S.S.R. there are only two classes, workers and peasants, whose interests—far from being mutually hostile—are, on the contrary, friendly. Hence there is no ground in the U.S.S.R. for the existence of several parties, and, consequently, for freedom for these parties.

The truth behind this statement, which is frequently obscured, is that the mass of the population has only been raised to the level of political discussion by the Communist Party, and that the only issue on which it could be deeply divided would be the question of reversion to capitalism, or maintenance of the existing system. That was the one question that the Government would not allow to be raised. Freedom of speech and Press were to be exercised “in conformity with the interests of the toilers.” The approach to politics in which this newly political generation was to be brought up was “functional,” and was to grow up from the deep roots of the small-scale democracies of the village and factory meeting. Representatives were to be elected on their merits, for what they were and had done, not for their labels or their professed intentions. When I suggested the parallel of the election of trade union delegates in this country it must have occurred to many readers that the two cases were not identical, because any number of candidates are put forward at such an election. But so they were in the Soviet elections. Very many names were put forward in all constituencies, by “trade unions, co-operatives, youth organization cultural societies” (as laid down by the Constitution), and their relative merits were hotly canvassed in innumerable meetings, but with the passion for unanimity referred to above (p. 11) in most cases all but one of the candidates were withdrawn by mutual agreement, just as in this country (with its passion for the party system) all but two or three candidates will normally withdraw in a trade union election.

So the Soviet system of elections is not a denial of Parliamentary democracy on a wide suffrage formerly established, as the Nazi system was in Germany; it is not a mere party dictatorship imposed from on top. It is an attempt to skip the stage of liberal democracy in politics, and to pass on to a society in which there shall be no deep conflicts of interests, no fundamental divergences of opinion on political questions and so no need for a multiplicity of political parties.

In Soviet constitutional development questions of State security have hitherto predominated; a “general will,” such as Rousseau dreamed of in a free society, has not yet emerged as the result of completely free discussion, because the Soviet leaders calculated that their politically immature population, still governed by the vested ideas of the past and surrounded by external foes anxious to take advantage of internal divisions, could not be allowed to call in question anything as fundamental as the structure of society set up by the revolution. Article 2 of an Act on the judicial system, passed in 1938, begins, “It is the task of justice in the U.S.S.R. to protect from any and every encroachment the organization of society and of the State of the U.S.S.R., the socialist system of economy and socialist property established by the Constitution . . .” One could argue endlessly whether a Government can continue to suppress ‘counter-revolutionary’ aspirations for a restoration of capitalism, without, at the same time, cramping the freedom of thought of its citizens. Can people

think freely without wanting to be capitalists? Some would answer "You can't change human nature." Others, and the Soviet leaders among them, believe that you can. But the question will, I think, soon become otiose. Victory in the war against Nazi Germany will at once remove the threat to the Soviet régime from foreign enemies and the need for political tutelage at home. The majority of adult Soviet citizens have known no other régime. Those who remember the pre-revolutionary period will recall military disaster and internal disunion that can have few attractions now. Once the external danger has been overcome, the Soviet system has nothing to fear from the most unrestricted liberty of discussion at home. The people of the U.S.S.R. have found themselves in and through the régime set up after the revolution of 1917, which has now justified itself by its stability and triumph against Nazi aggression.

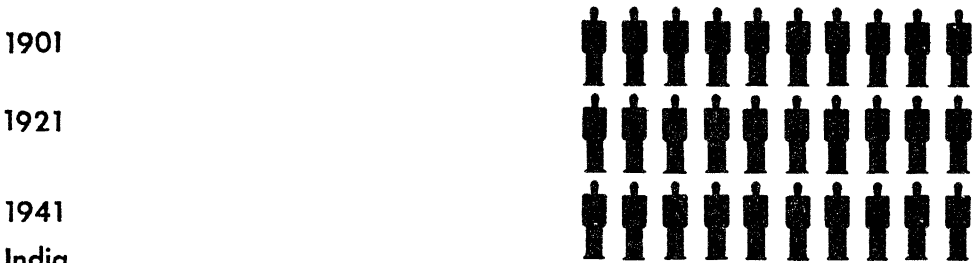
BUREAUCRACY

In criticisms of the workings of the Soviet system, whether in the U.S.S.R. or abroad, the word met with perhaps most frequently is 'bureaucracy.' In Soviet parlance it is a term of abuse: a bureaucrat is an official devoid of initiative and flexibility, a rigid and pedantic observer of the letter rather than the spirit of the law, who appears to wish to hinder rather than to help those who have dealings with the Governmental machine, whose attitude verges on obstruction and may conceal sabotage. The Englishman in the U.S.S.R. will comment on the slowness and excessive caution with which routine official business is conducted, on red-tape regulations and a fear of committing mistakes, an exaggeration of the common civil service tendency to shuffle out of responsibility by the magic words "passed to you, please." All this is true. I did not like standing in queues at a bank to cash a cheque, the more so as I had an unerring instinct for choosing the wrong queue. The difficulties and delays in obtaining a visa to let you into the U.S.S.R. are only equalled by the delays and difficulties in obtaining a visa to get out again. I am not by nature sympathetic to the civil service mentality, even in this country. Yet the longer I lived in the U.S.S.R. the more I came to thank God for the bureaucracy. Let me explain myself by telling a story. It was in a village bus in the Caucasus. The bus had filled up, the conductress had collected fares, and we were ready to start, when an old peasant climbed in, dumped a sack on a seat, and asked how much the fare was. "Sixty kopeks." "Far too much," said the old man, "I'll give you forty." "The fare is sixty kopeks, comrade," returned the conductress doggedly. A desultory argument began, in which other passengers and the driver became interested—and meanwhile the bus did not start. For a long time the conductress maintained her ground without flinching. "It's an absurd price," continued the peasant, ". . . and you're being very bureaucratic about it all. Why, with my old pony . . ." The conductress hesitated—hesitated, and was lost. "But this bus is run on petrol," she exploded, "and there are my wages and the driver's, and the upkeep of the bus." At once pandemonium reigned. All the passengers joined in. The relative prices of oats and petrol—whether the driver's wages were too high—the effects of an unrepaired stretch of road on the bus's tyres—all these were thrown open for general debate. It was half an hour before majority opinion swung round to the view that the old peasant must pay the authorized fare or leave

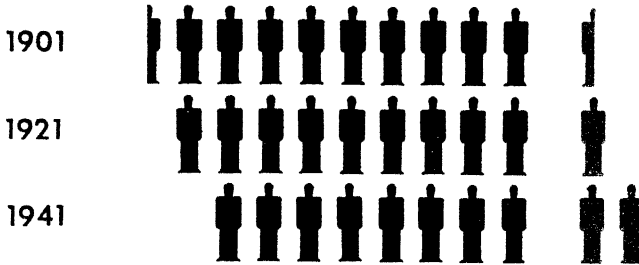
Illiterates and Literates



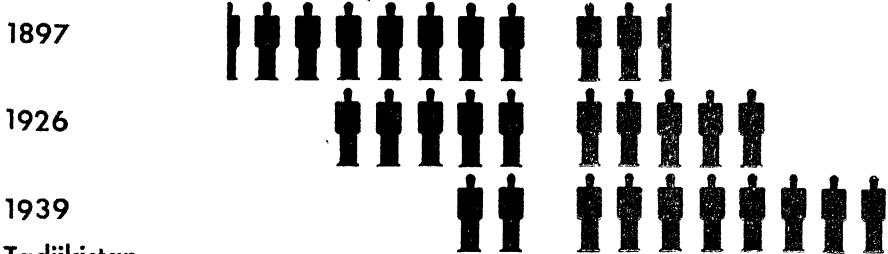
Great Britain



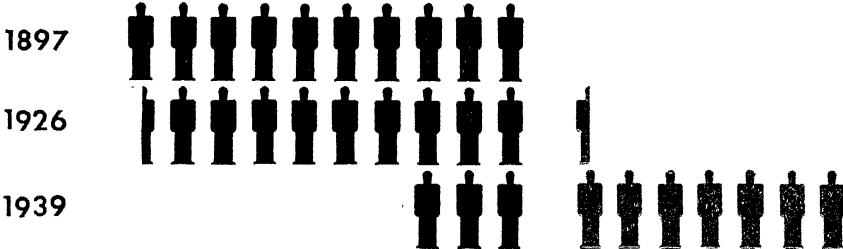
India



Soviet Union

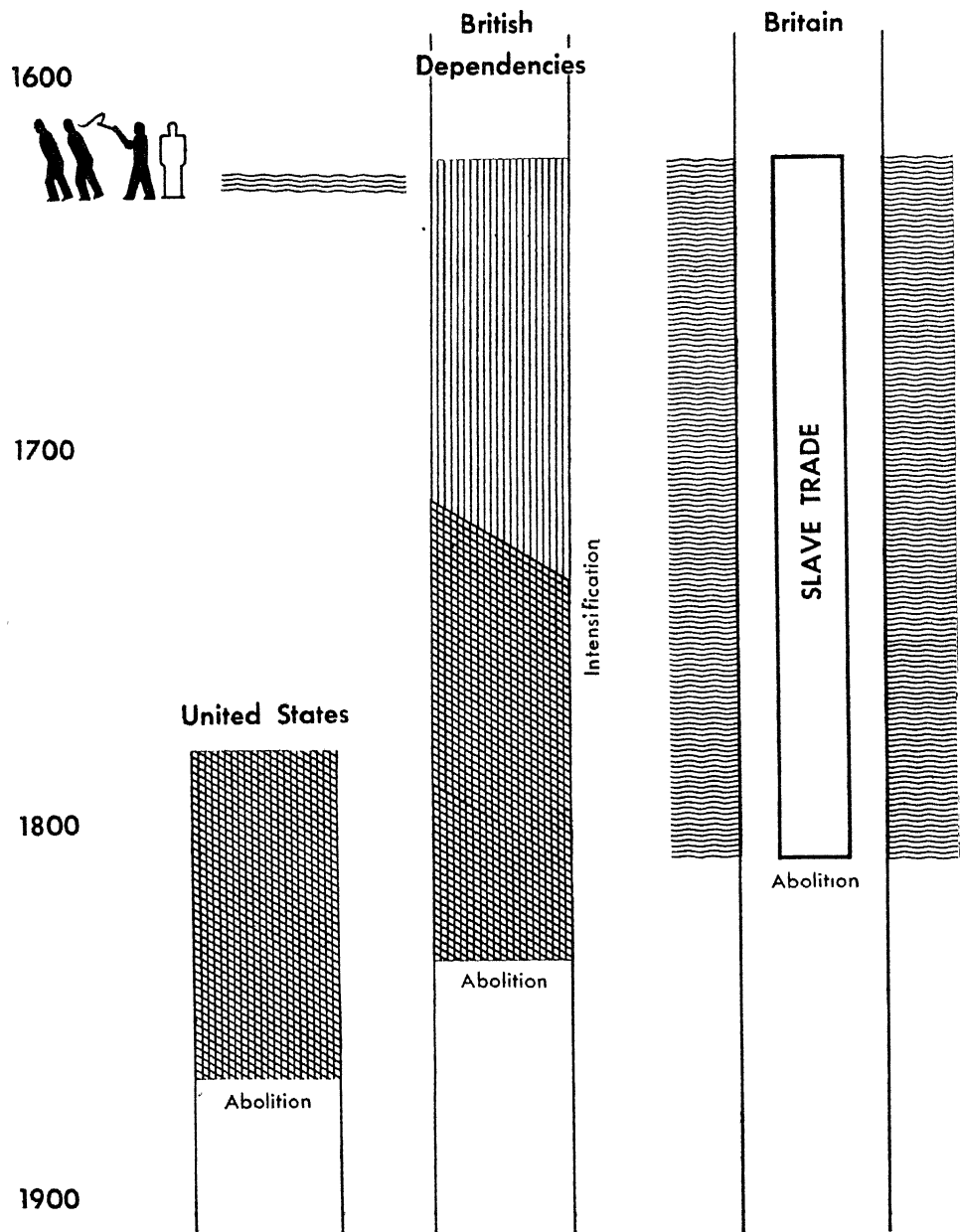


Tadjikistan



Each symbol represents 10 per cent. of population over 9 years of age

Abolition of Slavery and Serfdom

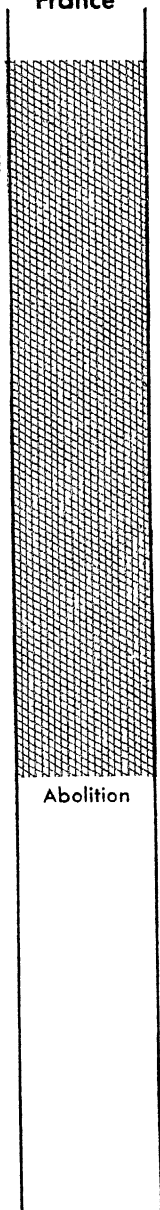


black: slavery

black line and blue wave: slave trade

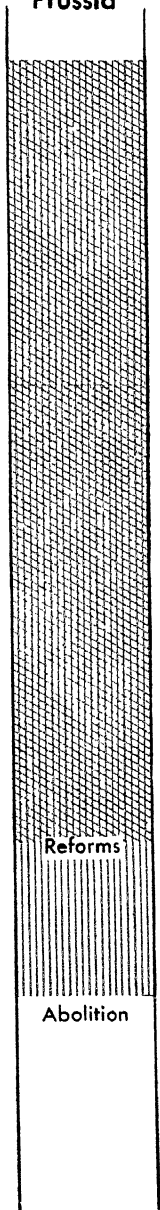


France



Abolition

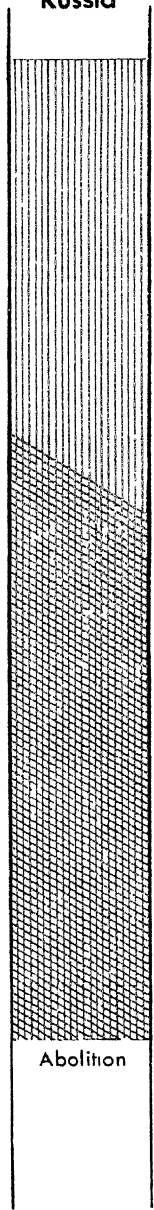
Prussia



Reforms

Abolition

Russia

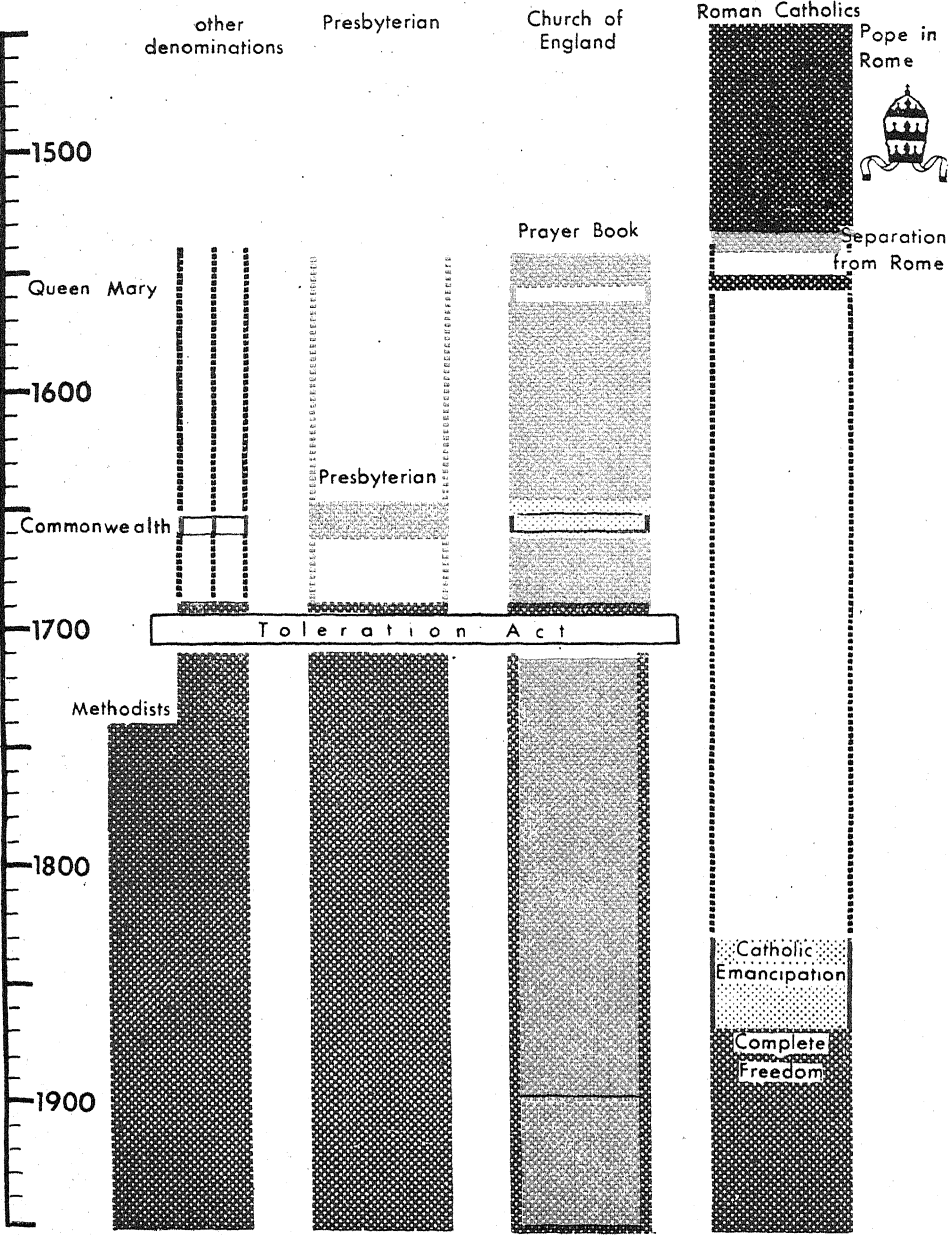


Abolition

Intensification

green: serfdom

The Christian Churches in England

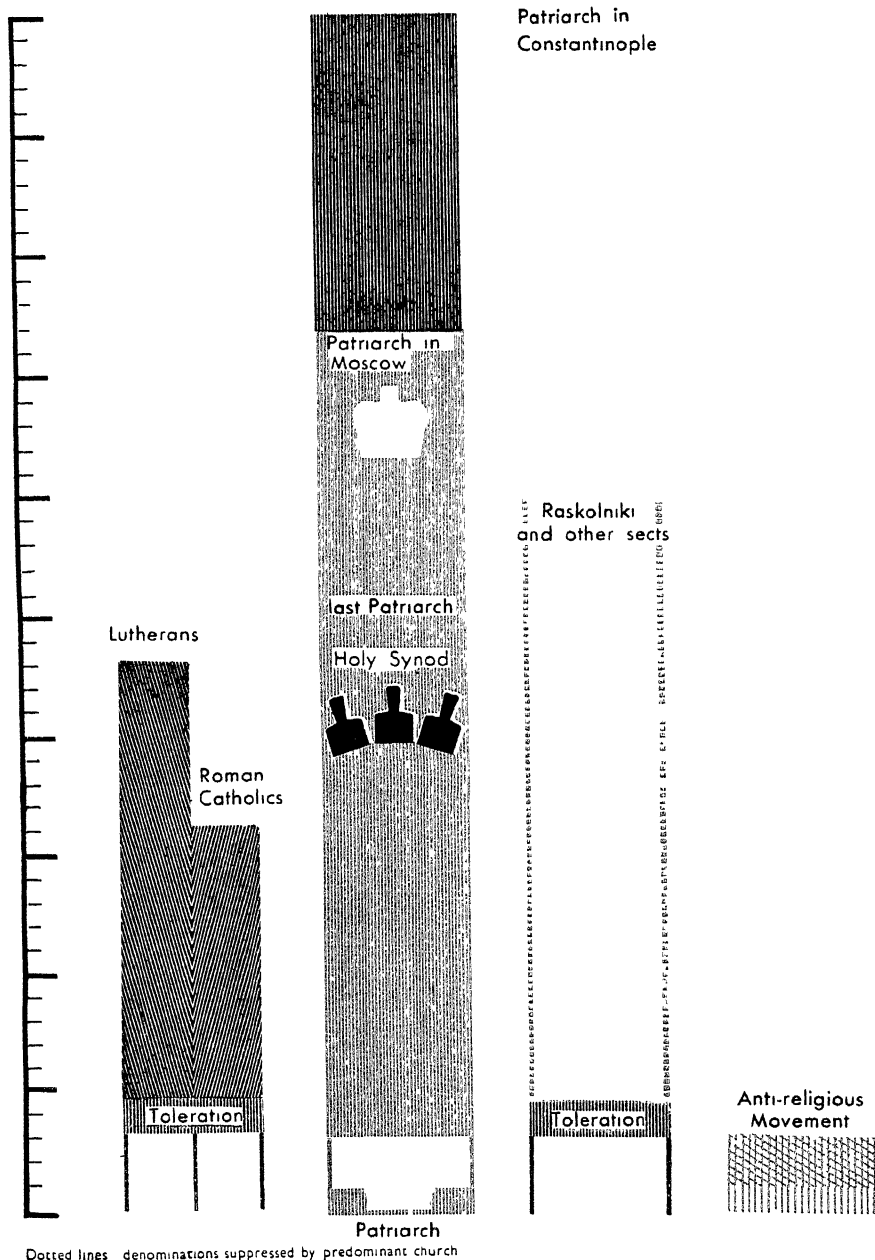


Red: exclusive national churches

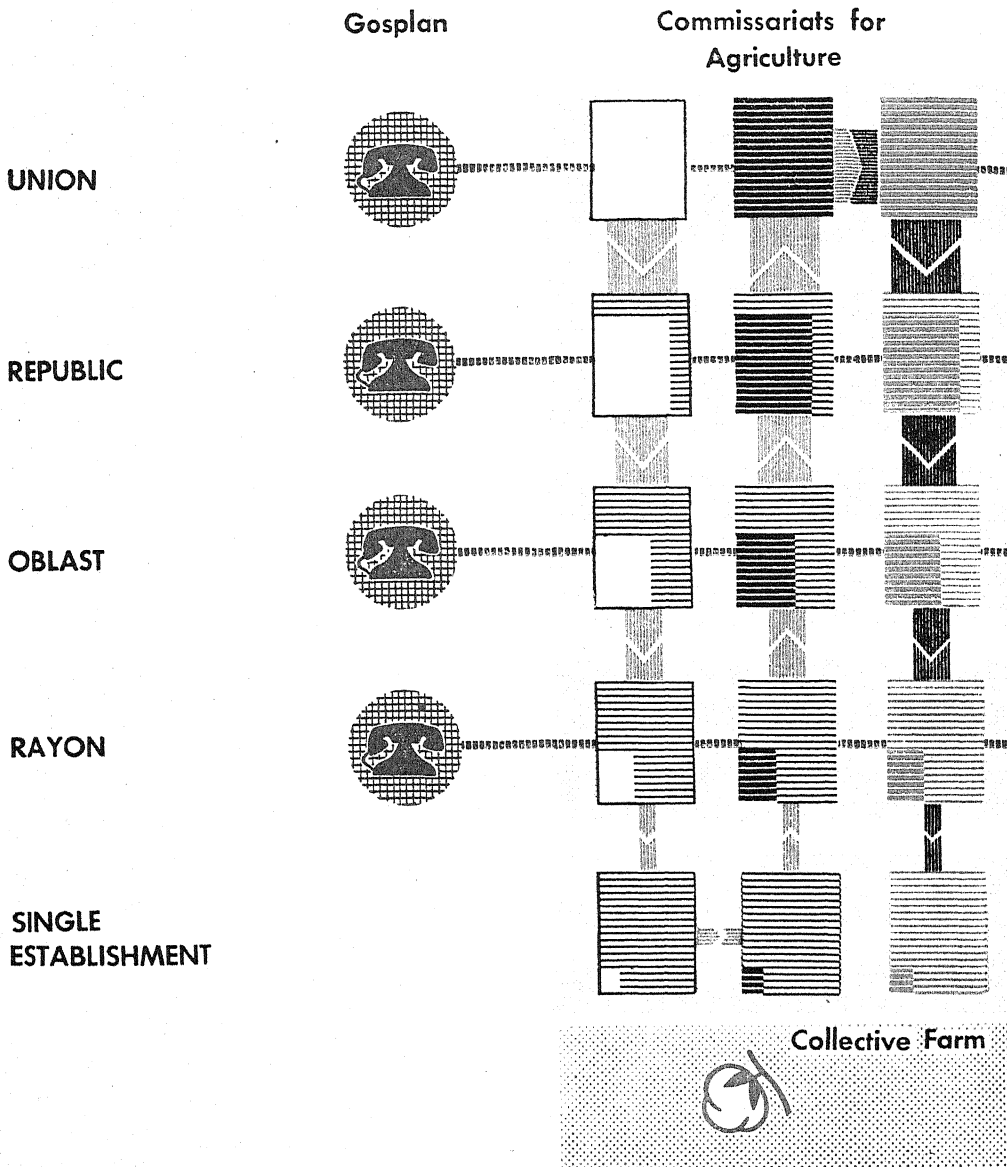
Blue: toleration

Black: predominant church with allegiance to international centre

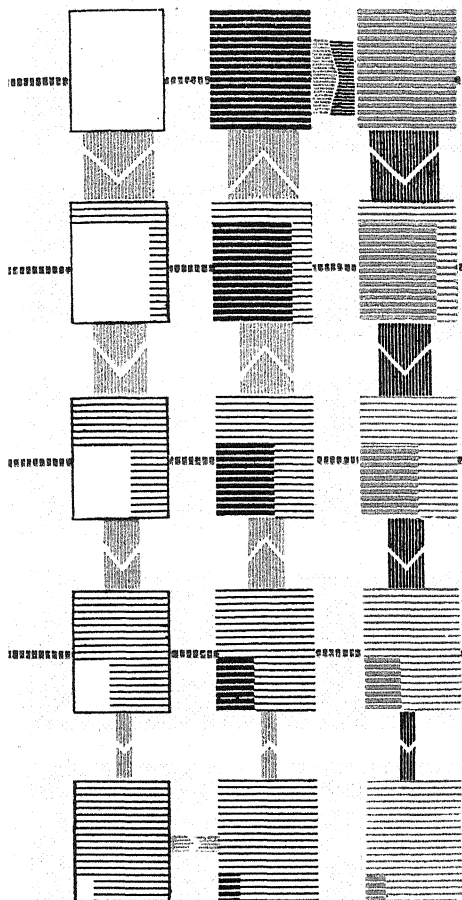
The Christian Churches in Russia



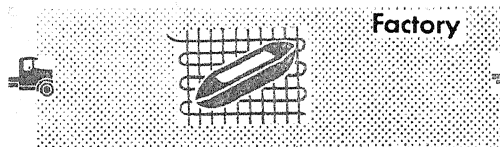
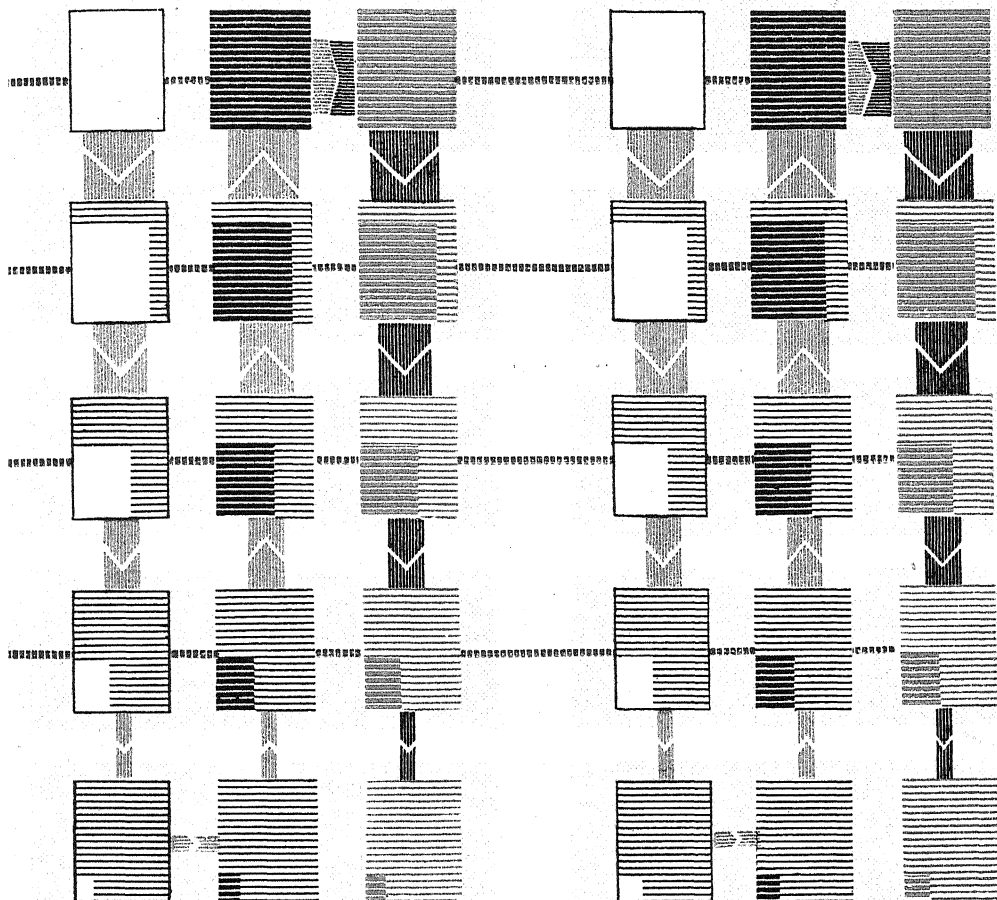
Planning for Cotton



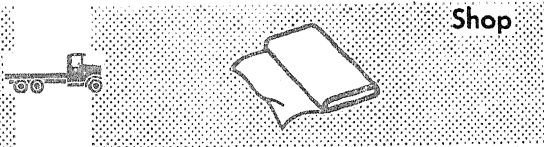
Commissariats for
Industry



Commissariats for
Internal Trade



Factory



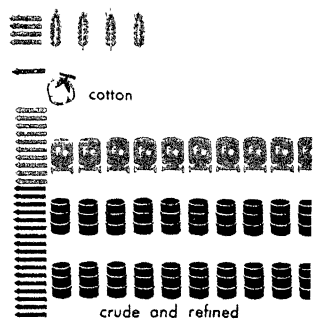
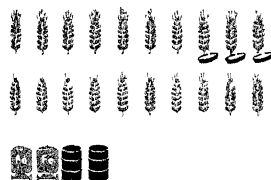
Shop

Some Raw Materials in the British Commonwealth

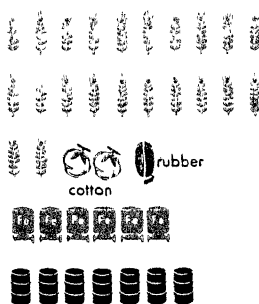
Canada, Newfoundland

Great Britain

Great Britain's
Imports from foreign countries



refined



West Indies, Africa,

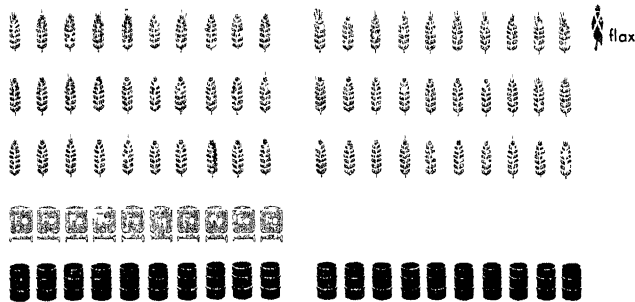
India, Malaya, etc

Australia, New Zealand

Each symbol represents 500,000 tons
green wheat red iron-ore black oil blue fibres and rubber
on black ship, exported to Great Britain

in the Soviet Union

RSFSR

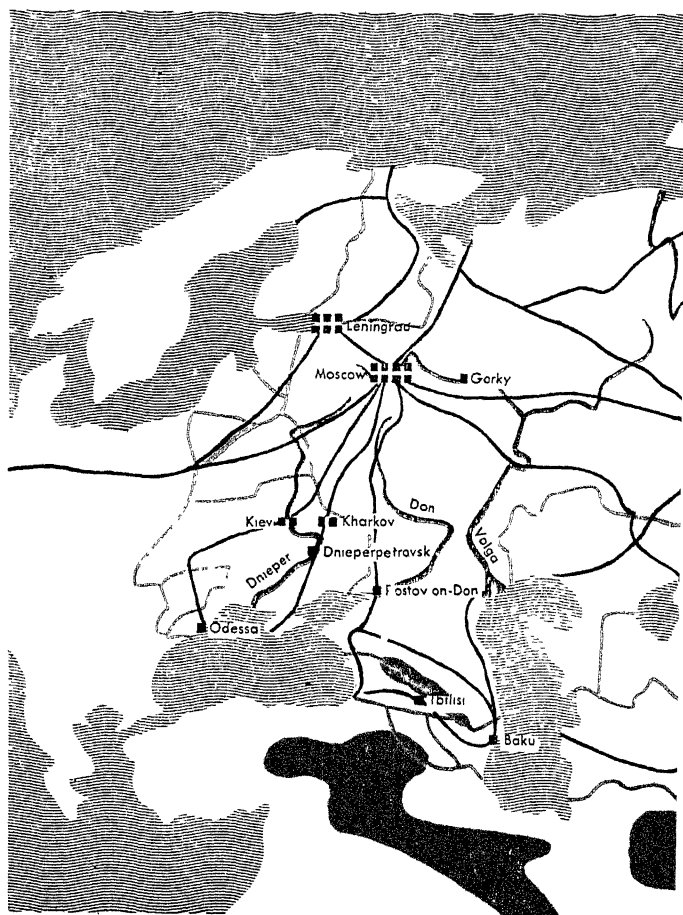


Ukraine

Baku

Rest of the U.S.S.R

Soviet Union in 1944



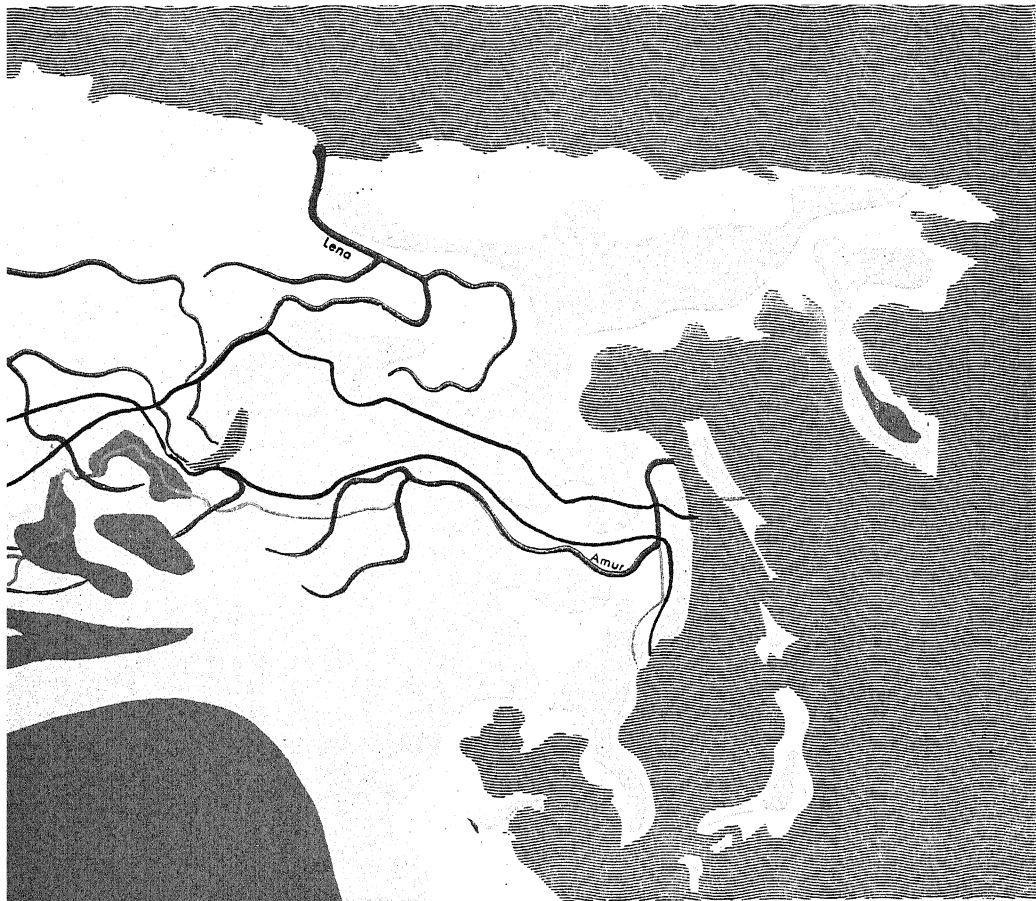
mountain area

1200 to 6000 feet

above 6000 feet

red lines: frontiers of the Union Republics

black lines: railways



000 inhabitants and over
500,000 inhabitants

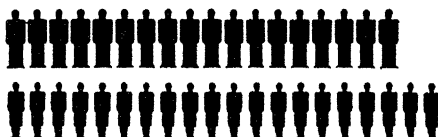
Development of the Franchise in Britain

of 20 men or women over 21
these had the right to vote

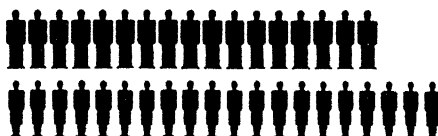


these had not the right to vote for Parliament

Before
1832



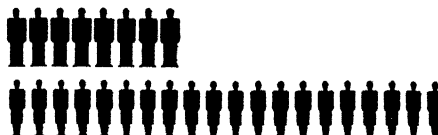
1832



1867



1884



1918



1928



the bus ; and at length we started—without him. You see what had happened ? For a long time the conductress had been 'bureaucratic' ; unbending and ruthless in her application of an arbitrary law. If only she had stuck to her guns, the bus would have left on time. But she weakened : instead of merely repeating her instructions, she tried to defend them, entering into a discussion of general principles and their particular application. At once, with relish and delight, all the passengers indulged in an orgy of argument—still the favourite Russian pastime.

It is all a matter of history. The fact is that conventions which we accept unquestioningly are much less deeply established in Russia. You and I, and our fathers before us, have grown accustomed to taking the voice of the conductor as the voice of God. It is pusillanimous and unenterprising, no doubt, but it saves time. "Time is money" is not a Russian proverb. The idea of a fixed market price is also a novelty over vast areas of the U.S.S.R. The conviction that public servants can be either influenced (in public) or bribed (in private) dies hard. Mental arithmetic has not yet replaced the abacus. To take a simple instance, in 1930 Stalin wrote a "Reply to collective farm comrades" for *Pravda*, because, out of a number of letters he had received containing queries, more than half of the writers had forgotten to give their addresses. A letter is still a comparatively rare event for a Soviet peasant. It is against this background that we must set the 'bureaucracy.' A vast country was being modernized, introduced to the civilization of the return ticket and the telephone. In terms of human material, this means that all over the Union jobs had to be held down by men and women not quite good enough for them. They were training hard for the jobs, they were, in most cases no doubt, honest (though old traditions linger on) ; but they lacked the background, the experience, the flexibility, to be allowed much initiative. So hard-and-fast rules and regulations had to be laid down, and maintained as a minimum code of conduct. As the conventions become accepted, as the 'bureaucrats' become more at home in their work, so the rigidity can be alleviated ; the campaign against 'bureaucracy' in the late nineteen-thirties was evidence that this was in fact taking place. But bureaucracy modified by public criticism was essential to a country being introduced to the niceties of mental arithmetic and book-keeping, where human fallibility was no less than elsewhere, and the number of competent inspectors far less. The bus left at last, and the established price was vindicated : no doubt many of the passengers drew the correct conclusion—that much time and energy might have been saved. But, as Keats said somewhere, maxims in philosophy are not true for us until we feel them on our pulses. Innumerable lessons of this sort have to be learnt in many out-of-the-way corners of the U.S.S.R. before the bureaucracy can begin to wither away.

COLLECTIVE FARMS

There are no collective farms in England or the British Empire, and in England agriculture itself is of secondary importance (except in war-time). But nearly half the population of the U.S.S.R. works in collective farms, so it is clearly necessary to understand what they are. First, however, we must endure a little history. Before 1928 the mass of the population of Russia consisted of small peasants, each cultivating

his little plot of land ; most of them were miserably poor, and could not afford up-to-date farming equipment, fertilizers, etc. Famine in the old Russia was a frequent and apparently unavoidable event. As in England before the Agricultural Revolution of the eighteenth century, when there was similarly a large population of small peasant proprietors, the system cried out for consolidation of holdings, capital investment in machinery and stock-breeding. In England this rationalization took the form of "enclosures"—that is, the bringing of small holdings together into the hands of big private owners, and the eviction (sometimes by agreement, often by force or fraud) of the small occupier. This was a long process, lasting from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, though most rapid in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the earlier period the dispossessed became beggars and vagabonds ; in the later period poor peasants either drifted into towns, where they were swallowed up by the rapidly expanding factories, or remained in the villages as landless agricultural labourers. The independent peasant proprietor is now almost extinct in England ; and those who till the land rarely own it themselves. The very word 'farmer' originally meant one who leases land.

In the U.S.S.R. the process was different. There the shift of population from country to town under the Soviet régime called for a reorganization and improvement of agricultural technique, so that food for the industrial population could be guaranteed. After long and fierce political controversy in the nineteen-twenties it was decided at Stalin's instance that a process which had already begun should be accelerated, and the hundred and twenty millions of Soviet peasants should be formed into collective farms, by pooling all the land and major farm equipment within a given village.

This was in effect a second revolution—the real agrarian revolution. Rich peasants who opposed collectivization and sabotaged production (kulaks) were evicted and driven away into exile or forced labour, just as the 'able-bodied poor' in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England were sent to workhouses, or supplied industrial labour in the towns.

Collectivization guaranteed Russia's food supply for the first time in her history. The food surplus was no longer in the hands of rich peasants, potentially hostile to the Soviet régime. Replacing the scattered dwarf homesteads, the collective farms form natural storage dumps and distributing centres. Their role in the U.S.S.R. is similar to that of shipping for the British Empire. In the war of 1914-18, before collectivization, there was a breakdown in Russia's food distribution comparable only with what would have happened to us if the U-boats had got the upper hand of our shipping. We depend for our food on the colonies and dominions, and the Empire is united by its traders and its shipping ; the single land unit of the U.S.S.R. is held together by political rather than economic ties, by the harmonious relations between town and country established since industrialization and collectivization, and by the friendships of its peoples created by Stalin's national policy. Without them it must have perished as surely as Great Britain must if her gallant merchant marine had been vanquished. The land of the collective farm is granted in perpetuity and is cultivated in common. Agricultural machinery, tractors, pedigree sires, seed, fertilizers, are hired or provided by the Government. In return for these services the collective farm makes over to the State at a fairly nominal rate of payment certain fixed deliveries of its produce. The remainder of the produce is at the disposal of the farmers, and is

either divided among them, or sold on the open market and the proceeds distributed. Within the framework of the national plan (to which each collective farm contributes in the same way that each factory meeting does) the farm manages its own affairs, drawing on the rich tradition of village self-government left by the *mir*. In the earlier institution, however, only heads of households had a vote, whereas the collective farm has enfranchised all women and men over the age of sixteen. The farm meeting assembles at least once a fortnight, and determines by majority vote (with not less than two-thirds of the members present) how much of its produce shall be distributed as 'dividend' after deliveries to the State have been completed, and how much shall be put into capital investment or cultural amenities—a club, a library, a crèche. In the Timiryazev collective farm, Gorky Province, the following items appeared on the agenda of the collective farm meeting during 1941 and the first six months of 1942 :

Rates of payment of members	fifteen times
Day-to-day organization of work on the farm	fourteen times
Personal needs of collective farmers and supply problems	thirteen times
Raising labour discipline	twelve times
Stock-breeding and fodder	twelve times
Training and appointments	eleven times
Acceptance of new members	eight times
Long-term planning of work, contracts with State organizations	seven times
Checking up on fulfilment of Government orders	six times
Protection of crops and collective farm property	five times
Finance and book-keeping	five times
By-industries and building	five times
Sheep-rearing	twice
Cultural work	twice
Miscellaneous	six times

There are nearly 250,000 collective farms in the U.S.S.R. ; and even if in some of them effective decisions are often taken by the president of the collective farm and his immediate advisers on the (elected) board of management, the fact that all come up for approval before fortnightly meetings of the collective farmers is yet another instance of "the sense of continuous participation in public administration" on which the Webbs have already been quoted.

The farm meeting allots work among its members. Payment is made on lines as similar as possible to the piece-work system that prevails in most factories. The basis of this system is the 'labour-day.' This consists of a certain job of work—milking so many cows, hoeing or ploughing so much land, etc. The local definition of a labour-day is agreed by the farm meeting and forms the standard of payment for that farm. A good worker may be able to perform two or even more labour-days in a single working day : he will be paid accordingly. An idle or unskilled worker may find a labour-day a comfortable day's work. The 'norm' expected from a worker in a single day is often valued at more than one labour-day : this is in fact the way in which skilled or specially urgent work is differentiated. Thus, for instance, in the Timiryazev farm the day's norm for weeding corn counts as one and a quarter labour-days ; the same operation for flax counts as two. The labour-day is also used for an

internal credit system. A collective farmer can obtain building materials, repairs, the use of a horse, the services of the local craftsman, and the cost is subtracted from the amount due to him for work done when the annual dividend is shared out. This is one of the many ways in which actual cash is losing its significance in the U.S.S.R. ; the collective farmer, so to speak, draws a cheque on his account with the farm instead. There is a statutory minimum number of labour-days whose performance is obligatory, varying from a hundred to a hundred and fifty a year according to regions. In fact this figure is usually greatly exceeded.

This all sounds very different from England, with its small farmers and agricultural labourers. There are comparatively few remaining 'independent' peasants in the U.S.S.R. ; yet in the collective farm there is as much individual ownership as is compatible with large-scale production : each collective farmer is responsible for the implements he works with, for the animals he tends, for the land whose cultivation is allotted to him by his team. And each collective farm household owns its own plot of land, up to one and a quarter acres, two or three cows and pigs, together with poultry and other small livestock. Two-thirds of the cattle and more than half the pigs and sheep in the country are owned and tended by individuals. After performing his legal minimum of labour-days a collective farmer may spend as much of his own and his family's time and energy on his plot as he and they choose, but he may not employ wage-labour. He may consume all that he produces ; more probably he sells it, either on the open market himself or (at a rather lower but guaranteed price) to the local co-operative. There has been evidence lately that collective farmers tend to devote rather more time to their private plots than the Government approves of, to the detriment of the productivity of the farm ; and the minimum of labour-days has been raised accordingly to stop individuals taking advantage of communal facilities without pulling their weight in the collective.

Collectivization has increased productivity, reduced disease, made possible the growing of specialized 'technical crops.' In the first year of collectivization about fifty million acres of hitherto waste-land were brought under cultivation. There is still room for further improvement, for the productivity per acre, even of the famous "Black Earth" region, was astonishingly low before collectivization. As time goes on, however, with increased mechanization of agriculture, a steady flow of recruits into industry can still be maintained without causing pressure on the food supply. Before the revolution two million workers from central Russia used to pour into the southern Ukraine each year to help with the harvest ; now, thanks to the mechanization of agriculture, the Ukrainian collective farmers can dispense with this extra labour. In the old Russia, in fact, as in all East European countries hitherto, the vast agricultural population was chronically under-employed because there was only the most rudimentary division of labour. There is no doubt that collectivization has come to stay, and that it has established its economic advantages in the minds of the peasants. If Germany had attacked the U.S.S.R. in 1931 the slogan of "back to private property in land" might have attracted a considerable section of the peasantry. In 1941 it most conspicuously failed, and even the Germans had to keep most of the collective farms going because of their greater efficiency.

Collectivization has had other social consequences. It is altering the habits of the peasant. He no longer pinches and starves to buy a horse or a plough, or to provide

for his old age. He can eat more, wear better clothes, go to cinemas, ride a bicycle. If the farm meeting wishes, it can arrange for the maintenance from common funds of the sick, the disabled, and the aged. In each village there are such representatives of modern civilization as agricultural experts, book-keepers, fitters and mechanics. The result is a gradual transformation in peasant psychology. Collectivization has been especially popular among women and the young, whom it has freed from the age-old tyranny of the head of the family. A wife and children of working age were often almost the only capital equipment a Russian peasant had ; and he used them accordingly—slightly worse than his cow, since they were easier to replace. Now their earnings are their own, and—since almost all collective farms have crèches—women frequently earn as much as men. The liberating effects of the Soviet attitude towards women, reinforced by collectivization, have been particularly striking in the Moslem East, where the veil has been thrown off, and women drawn into economic activity and administration. This community of interests between the women of the U.S.S.R. and the Soviet Government has been of the greatest importance in stimulating the magnificent achievements of the Soviet rear in war-time.

TRADE UNIONS

In the U.S.S.R. there were in 1940 about thirty million wage or salary earners, over twenty-five million of whom were organized in trade unions. British trade unions, with an organized membership of nearly seven million, cover about 50 per cent. of the eligible workers. Soviet trade unions are organized on an industrial, not a craft basis—*i.e.*, all the employees of a given factory, from the most skilled engineer to the lowliest odd-job boy, belong to a single union. The functions of trade unions in the two countries are as different as their structure.

Perhaps the quickest way to grasp the difference is to reflect on the fact that whilst Soviet trade unionists are shocked at the existence of strikes in war-time, British and American business-men, not hitherto conspicuously friendly to either trade unionism or the U.S.S.R., have expressed admiration for the discipline of Soviet workers, and for their understanding of the importance of national unity in face of a common foe. Why is this?

The reason is that in the U.S.S.R. all industry is owned by the socialist State ; trade unionists, under the dominant leadership of the Communist Party, do not feel any conflict of interest between themselves and the State—which is also under the dominant influence of the Communist Party—or between themselves and managements who are ultimately responsible to the Soviet Government. Trade unions in the U.S.S.R., as in this country, regard the defence of the material interests of their members as their first concern. But in the absence of a class of owners, and given a national plan of production, defence of the interests of trade unionists does not necessarily always demand a struggle for higher wages in each particular concern. For the increase in wages would come not out of the pocket of a factory owner, but out of the State exchequer. It would mean either so much education less, so much butter or so many guns less, or so much lower wages for some other workers. There is no enemy party, in fact, as a Soviet trade unionist expressed it to the Webbs. Nor,



Labour problems : depression over England brought about one of the most distressing periods of unemployment. This deserted shipyard reminds us of the tragedies of unemployment in England between the wars.

on the other hand, is there any possibility of an agreement between trade unionists and employees in a given industry to keep prices high. So trade unions do what they could not do in this country : they recognize that there is at any given time an upper limit to the total wage fund available. The Central Council of Trade Unions (the equivalent of our T.U.C.) negotiates with the Government the wage pool for each industry, and its distribution within the factory is negotiated by that factory's trade union committee. It is rather like sharing out a dividend. What bargaining there is takes place at an earlier stage when the draft plan comes down to the factory, when trade unionists have the opportunity of criticizing the allocation to the wages fund. As Soviet trade unions see it, the way to improve the standard of living of their members is by increasing productivity; so we get the position which seems so paradoxical to trade union leaders in this country, of Soviet trade unionists actually co-operating with Government and managements in a production drive and economy campaign. Such behaviour has become more comprehensible to us in war-time, however, and it is worth recalling that for the first five years of its existence the Soviet State was almost continuously at war, that it fore-



Labour problems : the White Sea Canal was built by political prisoners, who are here holding a meeting to celebrate its formal opening.

saw the danger from Nazi aggression much earlier than we did, and that (fortunately for us) it retained a war tempo in the years between the wars. To increase productivity has always been a patriotic duty, a matter of self-defence.

The factory committee supervises and controls managerial costs, as well as looking after the conditions of work of its members and inspecting workshops for safety and hygiene. But its most important job is again one that seems odd to British trade unionists—the administration of social services. There is no Ministry of Labour or of National Insurance in the U.S.S.R. All labour legislation is drawn up in consultation with the trade unions. Sick relief, insurance, free holidays, maternity and funeral benefits, crèches, canteens, cheap theatre tickets—all these are administered by trade unions for their members. You are badly off if you are not a member of a trade union or some other voluntary organization.

Under this super-Beveridge Plan administered by the trade unions old age pensions are granted at sixty years of age to male workers who have been in employment for twenty-five years, and at fifty-five to women who have worked for twenty years. These pensions amount to 50-60 per cent. of previous average earnings. Workers who do not wish to retire at the pensionable age do not thereby forfeit their pension. There is no means test. Sickness benefit during absence from work is 100 per cent. of average earnings, unless the worker is declared totally incapacitated, in which case (whether or not the disablement was caused by his occupation) he receives a pension calculated as a proportion of his previous wages (half-rates for non-unionists).



Professor Fleming, the man who first saw the possibilities of penicillin. He was knighted for this great service to the community.

Medical treatment is free for all. There is no unemployment benefit, as since 1930 there has been no permanent unemployment.

All these benefits are non-contributory, in the sense that (apart from the small trade union dues) no direct payment is made by the worker such as is paid in England. The State Social Insurance Fund is financed by contributions from the managements of factories, on the basis of a percentage (varying from 4 to 10 per cent.) of the wages fund. It may of course be argued that, in the last resort, the workers do contribute to this fund, since if it did not exist their wages might be increased. But the social services should be taken into account when attempting to compare Russian and English wages: the money value of the former is in some cases almost doubled by the free services. It is also to the credit of the trade unions that before the outbreak of war the standard working day was seven hours—six hours in certain dangerous and exhausting jobs, and for workers under eighteen years of age. The industrial employment of children under fourteen was forbidden; children of fourteen to

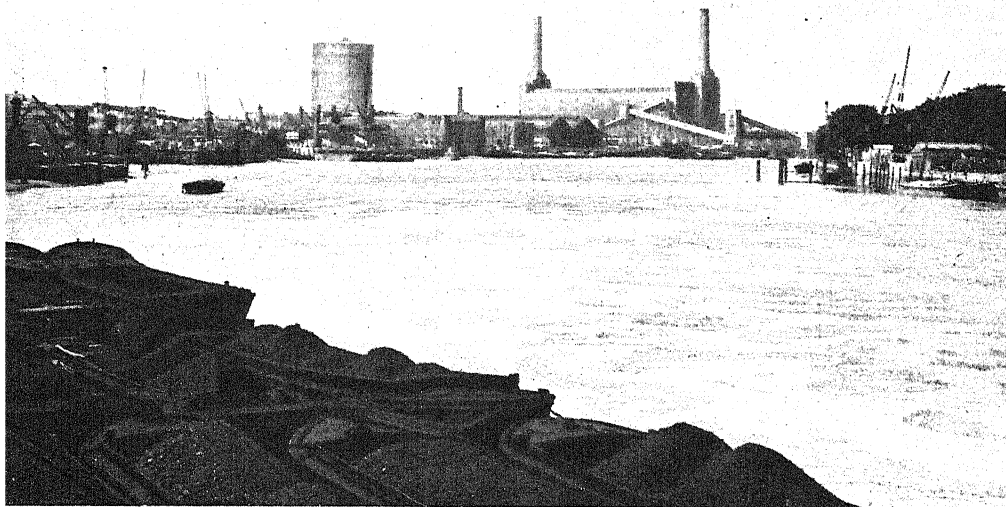


Maria Demchenko and Marina Gnatenka, girls who perfected technical processes on collective farms. They were awarded high Soviet decoration.

sixteen were restricted to four hours a day, and of sixteen to eighteen to six hours.

Until 1940 there was a six-day week, with five working days and every sixth day off. These regulations have gone by the board in war-time, when eight hours is the minimum and up to three hours overtime may be added. The achievements of the days of peace are the more remarkable when we recollect the relatively low general standard of living, and that all the time Soviet industry was working under pressure of the desperate need to expand before being overtaken by the storm of war.

The factory is the centre of the Soviet worker's life to a much greater extent than in this country, and more is expected of managements. The factory may provide (mostly at the expense of the management, though administered by the trade union) the worker's dwelling-place, his transport, his canteen, his library, his club, his adult education and technical classes, his Home Guard training and Civil Defence, his theatre tickets, holidays and excursions on free days, his children's crèche and kinder-



Power by coal : Battersea Power-station and coal barges. The Germans missed this target during the raids.

garten. In war-time it provides him with an allotment of land on which to grow his own food.

The trade unions also help in the general Soviet task of educating the population in self-government. The Webbs calculated that, apart from paid and unpaid officers, at least 15 per cent. of trade union members (*i.e.*, nearly four million persons) are actively engaged on committee work. This provides a useful pool of trained executive personnel. On occasion the unions take in hand administrative tasks which in England would fall to the regular civil service, if undertaken at all—as, for instance, organizing the evacuation of industries in the early days of the German onslaught. I quote from the first-hand account of Mr Scott for yet another semi-governmental and educational function :

The trade union exercised at intervals a certain actual disciplinary power by the use of 'comradely courts.' . . . The decisions of these comradely courts had no formal legal status. The maximum sentence was fifty roubles' fine, to be given to the cultural fund by the convicted defendant, or a recommendation to the administration that the defendant be fined. The propaganda value, however, was very great. Often, after such a comradely trial, a heavy drinker, who was prone to let his excesses disorganize work in the mill, would change his ways to a greater extent than he would have after serving ten days at hard labour.

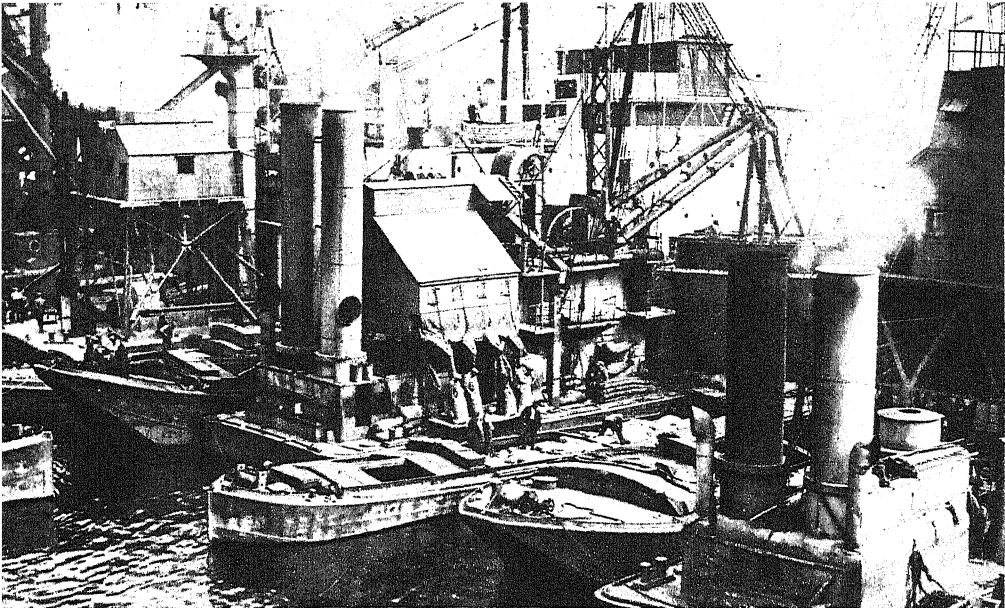


Power by water : the Dnieper Dam. The Russians blew this up when retreating in 1941 and are now reconstructing it.

PLANNING

The word 'planning' has contributed not a little to misunderstanding between our two countries. The Englishman, with his traditional individualism, tends to associate planning with regimentation, and to glory in 'muddling through,' in acquiring a vast empire "in a fit of absence of mind." The Russian, on the other hand, is extremely proud of his Five Year Plans, his planned industry and agriculture, and boasts of being 'organized.' There is here a good deal of bluff on both sides. The English are a disciplined people, who, through long habit, have come to accept certain conditions of planned living together without ever questioning them. The Russians, on the other hand, are a less disciplined people—anarchical peasants : the tendency of labour to 'flit' from job to job, notwithstanding all the efforts of the Government to pin it down, has been a permanent handicap to Soviet production, enhanced by the abolition of unemployment and the chance of getting another job at the same wage anywhere in the country.

What does planning mean, anyway? Any well-run business has a plan, and the bigger the business the more important the plan. The main differences are, first, that in the U.S.S.R. *all* business is State-controlled, and consequently the Soviet planning organization, Gosplan, works on an inconceivably vaster scale than even I.C.I. or



Grain elevators at the Victoria Dock. The life of Britain depends on her imports and exports, carried over the world by the Mercantile Marine.

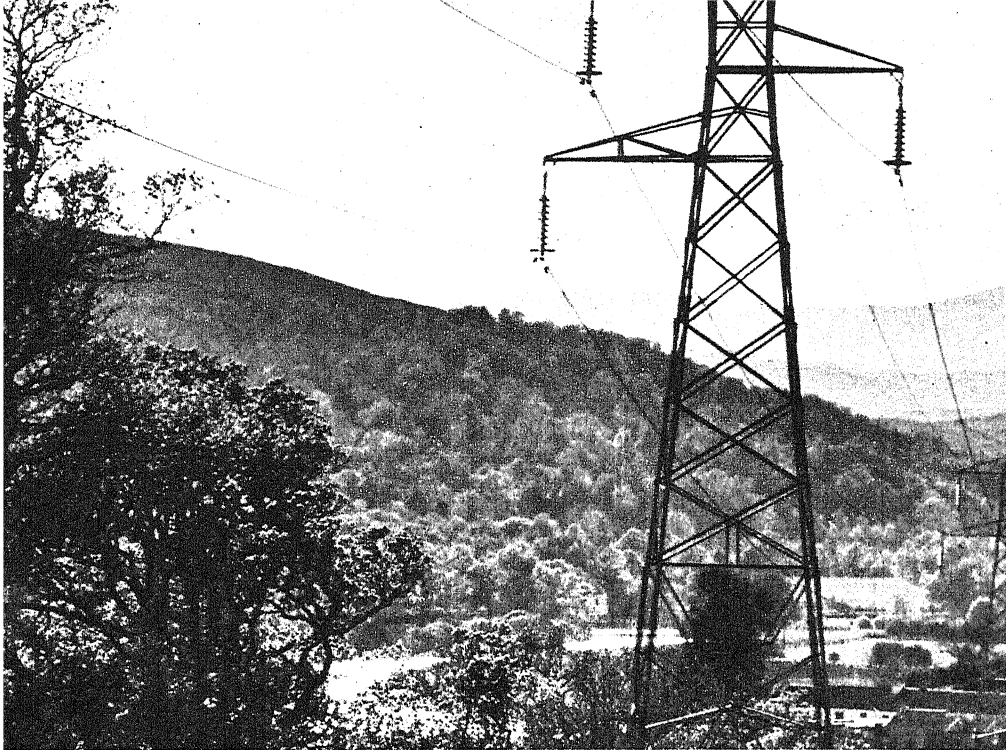
Mr Ford ; secondly, since *all* production is planned, and the profits of individuals are not involved, the State can plan *consumption* as well as production, and can regulate prices ; thirdly, because of the co-operative attitude of trade unions, the absence of an 'enemy class' and the absence of competition between rival concerns, planning can be decentralized as well as centralized—*i.e.*, rank-and-file workers and factory managers can be brought into the process of planning.

How does planning in fact work ? Let us take a Five Year Plan. First of all the Soviet Government decides the outline of the plan : whether the main emphasis is to be on production of goods for immediate consumption, or on capital investment for future production ; whether the international situation demands tanks or allows tractors. Then Gosplan works out, in consultation with the appropriate Commissariats and with the Central Council of Trade Unions, a plan of economic activity for the given period, assigning quotas to be produced by each industry, and by each factory within the industry, or by each collective farm. These provisional plans are sent down the Soviet administrative ladder, through provincial and regional capitals right down to the primary productive unit—factory or collective farm. All the way down the hierarchy suggestions and criticisms of a constructive nature are accruing from the specific point of view of each unit. Finally the plan is considered at the lowest level by meetings of factory workers or collective farmers, and returns up the ladder again. Gosplan then takes account of all the various suggestions made, fuses them together, and issues the final plan. In certain cases the initiative in planning may come from below. Thus an enterprising local Soviet may wish to build new schools,



Tadjik collective farmers bringing cotton to warehouses in Stanlinabad. Soviet economy is based on collective farms and land transport.

develop a local industry ; and these proposals will be incorporated in the national plan, provided they do not conflict with general State policy. Within the Five Year Plans there are annual plans, similarly drawn up on the basis of suggestions from below co-ordinated by Gosplan. Inside a factory the annual plan is split up into quarterly and monthly plans. The State plan determines what will be consumed as well as what will be produced ; it fixes the total wage fund, prices, and the total currency issue. Once the proportion in which resources shall be allocated has been determined, wages and prices are a book-keeping device for ensuring distribution of the total surplus available for consumption in such a way as best to stimulate further production. That is by no means the end of the business, however. It is Gosplan's job to see that the plan is fulfilled. It has branches all over the country, and these must continually check up on production in their area and report back to the centre if anything is going amiss. This is essential, as a deficiency in one commodity may upset many branches of production. Control is also exercised under Gosplan by the banks, which are entitled to issue credit only to finance activity sanctioned by the plan. Such credits are normally short-term, to cover a concern's expenses and wages bill during a brief period of turnover, and will not be renewed unless that turnover is completed within the planned time. There is thus an automatic self-adjusting check on the punctual fulfilment of the plan by local bodies. In the last resort, if a concern were consistently unable to fulfil its plan its bank would refuse to renew credit ; but, in fact, higher organs within the industry would intervene to put the concern on its feet or to liquidate it long before the stage of bankruptcy was reached.



Pylons bring light and power to country villages in the remotest areas of Britain. These are part of a hydro-electric scheme in Scotland.

All this sounds formidable, and is cumbrous in the description ; but it is less complex in its working out. A factory has its own rhythm of production ; it keeps daily charts to show how performance compares with the plan, and if it lags behind there will be a great drive inside the factory "to fulfil the plan." Since however, this plan was based on the factory's past achievements, and was drawn up in consultation with the workers and management, it will not normally make excessive demands. Production is being stepped up ; but mechanization is increasing, and the new workers being introduced into the factories are steadily increasing in technical skill.

One point that has disturbed orthodox British economists a good deal is that Soviet authorities are pleased when the plan is over-fulfilled. "If the whole of Soviet economy works on a single plan," they argue, "over-production is as unsatisfactory as under-production: it will produce a surplus, throw the whole plan out of gear." This however, is to look upon the plan in far too static a light. I do not suppose Mr Ford is unduly depressed if he discovers that, owing to an error in calculation, one of his factories produces more cars in a given year than he expected it to produce: he will proceed to dispose of them. That is Gosplan's job. Its branches all over the country do not discourage excess production, but do report it early, in order that the plan may



Electric light comes to the daughter of Uzbek nomads. Shamsaya Khabikova, woman shock worker, turns on an electric light in her apartment.

be revised. In addition to their regular quarterly check-up on fulfilment of the plan, trade unions call periodic production conferences of workers and management to revise—usually in an upward direction—planned production. Heads of trusts must see that reserves of materials and means of transport are available if required. The plan, in fact, is extremely flexible, and is in continual process of reintegration. At the present stage of Soviet development, at any rate, there is no difficulty in disposing of any surplus. Consumers' goods can be got rid of on the market almost immediately; capital goods will keep until a new factory is built to utilize them. Gosplan sees that they are utilized. As factual knowledge and experience is accumulated the margin of error in planning decreases; and as reserve stocks accumulate the significance even of this margin declines. As Stalin put it, "The drawing up of the plan is only the *beginning of planning*. Genuine leadership in planning is developed only after the plan has been drawn up, after it has been tested on the spot, in the process of executing and correcting the plan, and making it more accurate." In 1931 the American, Mr Rukeyser, saw the plan for the asbestos industry change at least five times in under five months, with the result that the planned production for the coming year was increased by nearly 25 per cent.

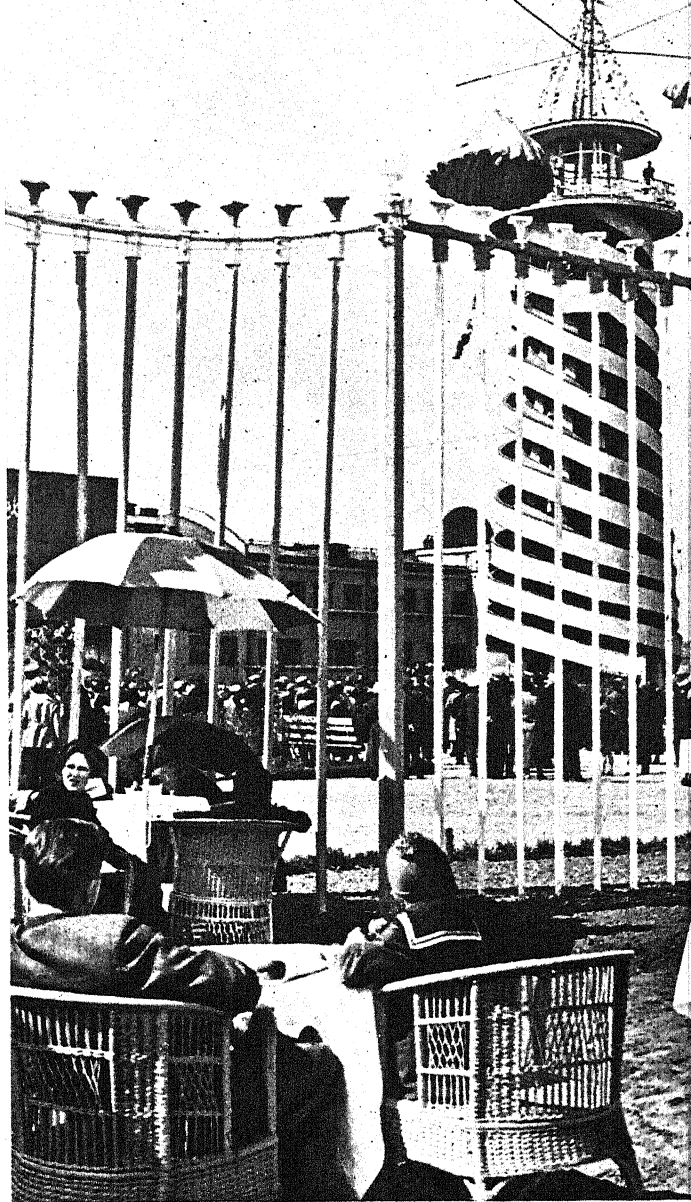


Kew Gardens on a Sunday in spring. A wonderful place for town-weary Londoners. If time and money forbid long journeys you can always find relaxation and plenty of fresh air in London's beautiful parks; they are one of our most valuable public properties.

So the Soviet worker is encouraged to regard the plan as a minimum production requirement, and is helped along with praise and pecuniary rewards if he exceeds it. The association of workers in the original drafting of the plan, and the working up of competitive 'sporting' feelings, all combine in a great production drive. Factory competes against factory, region against region, to fulfil and overfulfil the plan. This is especially true in war-time. In 1943 one ordnance plant received suggestions for improvements from 3500 workers in a single month; ten million roubles were saved as a result of their application. If the evidence of a recent book, *War Factory*, is any thing to go by, British factories might in war-time take a lesson from socialist competition in the U.S.S.R. This book states that the main concern of factory workers in England is to pass the long hours of labour: there is no interest in productivity, no feeling that they are working for the front, such as is genuinely engendered by the propaganda and competitive atmosphere of Russian factories. The plan is not an oppressive strait-jacket, nor a parade-ground sergeant-major. To change the metaphor, it is like Bogey to a keen golfer: a level of achievement that one feels pride in exceeding.

The Soviet Budget or financial plan is a part, and not the most important part, of the general plan, which covers total

industrial investment and wages, as well as social services and national defence. The total Budget is increasing steadily with the expanding wealth of the country, and even the rapid rise in Soviet armaments expenditure in the years immediately before and during the war with Nazi Germany was not accompanied by a cut in social services. On the contrary, expenditure on these has actually increased too. Unlike this country, a comparatively small proportion of the Soviet Budget comes from taxes and loans (even in war-time); for wages and salaries are almost the sole form of income. Even in 1944 less than 9 per cent. of the Soviet Budget came from subscription loans, as contrasted with 49 per cent. of the English Budget for 1943-44. The main sources of revenue in the U.S.S.R. are deductions from the profits of State enterprises and—most important of all—the turnover tax on the sale of most goods, which produced nearly 60 per cent. of the revenue in 1940. So the real question affecting the average citizen in the U.S.S.R. is not "What is the rate of income tax?" or "How much is the duty on beer?" but "What proportion of the national income is allotted to consumption and what proportion is reinvested in new production?" During the first three Five Year Plans the Soviet Government (very correctly, as anyone can see now) decided that in the interests of national defence an exceptionally high



The Park of Rest and Culture in Moscow. Here the Soviet citizen finds recreation and amusement. The "right to leisure" is guaranteed in the Soviet Constitution, as well as the "right to work." Only a healthy nation will be an efficient one.



The battle of London in 1940 was the first great turning-point of the war. Now town-planners prepare blueprints for the rebuilding of the capital.

proportion of the national income must be reinvested. "Of course," said Stalin, "we could have imported raw materials and increased production of goods for mass consumption . . . But then we should have had no metallurgy, no machine industry, no tractors and motors, no aeroplanes and tanks. We would have been unarmed in face of our enemies." Or as Mr Hubbard, one of those economists who are not quite happy about Soviet planning, cautiously expressed it in 1938, "Time will show whether the Soviet Government planned wisely or not."

As a consequence of this deliberate policy, the level of consumption has been low during the last fifteen years, according to our standards, although by Russian standards it has risen considerably. But there is nothing inherent in the planning system to necessitate a low standard. On the contrary: given international security and the restoration of the shattered industries of the Ukraine, the U.S.S.R. will be able very considerably to relax the tempo of investment and construction, and will have a correspondingly greater proportion of its resources to distribute for direct consumption. That will mean a sharp rise in the standard of living, and a subsequent steady, if slower, improvement. The Soviet Budget already allots more to cultural services than to national investment, even in war-time.

The Soviet Plan is therefore not merely concerned with the taxation of existing resources for the financing of current expenditure ; it is building up the total resources



The battle of Stalingrad was the war's second great turning-point. Now volunteers for the reconstruction of the city have to camp in its devastated streets.

of the country, in the directions which it thinks necessary for strategic or social reasons. It brings within a single compass what in England are the multitudinous plans of private investors looking for profits; and whether we approve or not of the purposes to which the Soviet Government devotes its resources, there is no denying the fact that a common purpose does run through the unified Plan. This is a most important ingredient in Soviet morale in war-time. Each Soviet worker feels himself to be a member of a team devoting its energies to a single purpose (of which at the moment the mass of the population undoubtedly approves); the opinions of himself and his fellows have contributed to shape the unified plan which represents the war effort in his daily life. In the U.S.S.R. social planning of production proceeds from the base upward. In Britain, notably in war-time, the State gradually reaches downwards to control economic activity. State control is something of a strait-jacket in England, because it is imposed from on top, on to free capitalist production. The workers and even the smaller factories are 'controlled'; for good or for ill, they do not themselves contribute to the thinking that forms the plan. We in Great Britain will only approach the Soviet sense of purpose if after the war we are able not only to preserve controls over the minority in the interests of the majority, but also to make sure that the controllers are themselves controlled democratically from below.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND TENDENCIES

In the first section of this book I drew attention to the sense of urgency, of haste, that has always dominated Soviet life, and tried to give some historical reasons for it. Unlike England (but like India and the Colonial Empire), Russia in 1917 was rich in natural resources and population, but poor in skilled labour and technicians. Just over ten years before the German attack on the U.S.S.R. Stalin announced, "One feature of the history of old Russia was the continual beatings she received for her falling behind, for her backwardness. . . . We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us." They did it; and those words give a clue to much that has happened in the U.S.S.R. in the last twenty-five years.

To increase the power and wealth of the country demanded a systematic study and organization of its vast resources. And where all productive enterprise is socialized this could only be stimulated by the direct influence and encouragement of the State. The total Soviet budget for science is 1 per cent. of the national income, whereas that of Great Britain is 0.1 per cent. But the endowment of scientific research is only half the problem. Soviet scientists have seen visions and drafted blue prints, but the natural wealth of a country even as rich as the U.S.S.R. needs personnel to exploit it. England's war-time problems in training youths and women new to industry give us some idea of Soviet difficulties, but in England there are always vast reserves of labour which, if not skilled, are at least used to handling machines, can read and write, add, subtract, and multiply. But in 1917 general standards of education in Russia were nearly as low as in India to-day. As much as 67 per cent. of the population was illiterate. The plans of the scientists would have remained Utopian dreams if they had not been accompanied by a rapid all-round improvement in education.

Illiteracy, it is claimed, has now been all but liquidated. Universal compulsory free education has been provided up to the age of fifteen, and the declared intention of the Government is to raise the age to eighteen as soon as possible: though it would have taken some years, even in time of peace, merely to build school accommodation and train the necessary teachers, of whom nevertheless more than a quarter of a million have been trained in the last decade. Education is always a principal item in the Soviet Budget. As late as 1937, with re-armament in full swing, its allocation was 20 per cent. of the total. Education is administered independently in each Union Republic, its general principles only being decided by the Government of the U.S.S.R. In the R.S.F.S.R. alone, where Russian is naturally the predominant language, three million children of forty-three different nationalities study in their own languages. In some regions of the U.S.S.R., before education in the local language could be established, it was first necessary to devise alphabets for these languages and print the books which had never hitherto existed. In its proclaimed policy that secondary education is to be free and equal for all nations and classes, and that access to higher and university education is to be open, free of charge, to all who reach the required standard, the U.S.S.R. is in advance of the British Empire, although the general level of its teaching still inevitably falls short of the standard of the better schools in this country and the Dominions. If, however, we compare (as we more

properly should) education in the U.S.S.R. with education in India there is no doubt that the U.S.S.R. is ahead in achievement as well as in promise.

To the schools we must add the vast educational machine of the Red Army, taking in about one-third of the young males of the country every year in time of peace and giving them a superior general and political education for two or three years before throwing them back into circulation again. In the smallest village there will be at least half a dozen such men, better educated than their fellows, better disciplined, in touch with the political ideas of the cities. They form the administrative nucleus of the collective farms and village Soviets, and bring a knowledge of the outside world and the plans of the Bolsheviks to the cognizance of the villagers, hitherto for centuries isolated and self-absorbed; and, as members themselves of the village community, their words have an educational and stimulating effect that no eloquent professional propagandist from outside could rival. The endowment of scientific research and the provision of universal education were, however, only a partial solution to the problem of backwardness. It was also necessary to raise the productivity of labour, to make the unskilled peasants and nomads who flocked into the new towns and collective farms machine-minded. Everything possible is done in the U.S.S.R. to enhance the dignity of labour, especially of skilled labour. Industrial training is provided free for all who wish to avail themselves of it. Wages are mostly paid on a piece-rate system, with bonuses and other inducements to good output. Above all, honour and glory are showered on those who squeeze the maximum production possible out of their machines. They are known as Stakhanovites, after Alexei Stakhanov, a Donbas miner who, by organizing division of labour within his team of workmates, and by rationalising their technical processes and use of tools, enormously increased output. Stakhanov's achievement was popularized with all the resources of the Soviet State, and it produced a flood of imitators in all branches of production. This attitude towards labour, symbolized by the introduction of orders such as that entitled "Hero of Socialist Labour," has the support of Soviet trade unions, but has aroused criticism in trade union circles elsewhere, principally because of the sharp differentiation in wage rates between skilled and unskilled labour. If you ask a Soviet theoretician whether he does not think differential wage rates will lead to a new class society, pointing to the obvious fact that some Soviet citizens are better dressed and more expensively fed than others, he will answer that such outward differences are not essential to what he means by a class; that so long as additional wealth gives no control over the means of production (by private ownership of land or factories), there is no possibility of the reappearance of a two-class system in the Marxist sense; that money is much less important in the U.S.S.R. than in England; that communists are not egalitarians, and wish socially valuable achievements to be rewarded; that it takes a long time to change human psychology, but that the party is plugging away at it all the time, particularly in its efforts to draw all workers into unpaid social work; and that no one will ever be convinced of the virtues of their system—and so nobody's psychology will change—unless that system delivers the goods. Men must be coaxed along the road to communism. An increase in productivity does not create unemployment, as it too often does in this country, because there is a continuously expanding market in the U.S.S.R. On the far-distant day when the market ceases to expand the working day can be shortened.

Two considerations are important in assessing these arguments. First, how far is there *genuine* equality of opportunity in the U.S.S.R.? That is to say, how far do all citizens start equal, and so how far do higher wages recognize greater individual skill and effort, rather than inherited advantages? Secondly, how far are opportunities for technical training open to unskilled workers? We pride ourselves on equality of opportunity in this country, but we all know that for certain of the better-paid professions it is a decided advantage to have been educated at a public school, which means (in nine cases out of ten) to have been born of parents with an income above the average. The educational system in the U.S.S.R. is everywhere run on the same lines. It is free at all stages (though in 1940 as a war-time measure fees were introduced in secondary schools to divert pupils into industrial training schools). Access to higher education is based on proficiency in the lower grades. Thus everything that legislation can do has been done to equalize education, though it probably remains true that the town-bred boy receives a better education than the country-bred boy, simply because of the greater facilities in the towns.

Among workers great efforts are made to equalize the position of women—partly because of the great demand for labour of all types, but also on principle. Legislation in favour of women dates from immediately after the revolution, before unemployment had been abolished. Women receive equal pay for equal work. They are given time off on full pay before and after childbirth, and (like all Soviet citizens) free medical treatment. Crèches are provided in almost all factories and collective farms, where children can be deposited during working hours. Nursing mothers are given time off for feeding them.

The third factor making for equality of opportunity is the universal provision of technical education and the encouragement of all to take advantage of this. All foreign workers in the U.S.S.R. comment on the extremely high proportion of Soviet workers who attend night schools in the effort to improve their qualifications and obtain a better-paid job. It is regarded as incumbent on Stakhanovites to train less skilled workers in their special methods, though the enthusiasm with which examples of such help are praised suggests that the practice is not yet universal.

I said that in the U.S.S.R. money is less important than it is in England. With us it will be generally agreed that—other things being equal—money helps you to win friends and influence people. But in the U.S.S.R. money cannot buy shares in companies or newspapers, or a peerage, or even a better education for your children. It can buy consumption goods, but there is a limit to the amount of food one can eat and fur coats one's wife can wear, even to the number of vodkas one can put down. A Russian friend hit the nail on the head when he said to me once, "In your country you can do everything with money; here you need an organization behind you." Luxuries, prestige, influence, and, ultimately, political power are won in the U.S.S.R. by gaining the approval of your fellows in your organization. If you are an outstanding worker in your factory you get the best living accommodation; you will be given a wireless as a premium, a free holiday at a rest home. You may be given the use of a car. You will be elected to your local Soviet. Eventually you may be asked to join the party. You may be called away to managerial posts. If you produce results you may rise up the administrative ladder till you reach the level of your abilities. You may be elected to the Supreme Soviet. All the time you will have to

work hard, under great pressure ; and too many mistakes will not be forgiven you. You would not be thought well of if you wanted to retire, whatever your bank balance, before the pensionable age. And the influence you wield, such as it is, will not be as an individual holding commanding positions, but as a member of the team organized and led by the Communist Party, which is powerful because it is united, because it sinks individual differences and ambitions in face of what it believes to be the needs of the country. You will not get very far, however able you are, if your views do not roughly coincide with those of this driving machine.

CONCLUSION

The great social transformations which I have been describing have naturally had their influence on national psychology and morale. The patriotism of the Red Army is no longer the dogged attachment to the soil of the Russian troops who withstood the German onslaught in 1914-18. Nor is it the revolutionary *élan* of the fierce army which reached the gates of Warsaw in 1920. The Red Army is a highly trained and superbly equipped army of peace-loving civilians, who believe that they have constructed a mode of life well worth defending against the mere destruction and racial oppression of the Nazis. In the early days of the Bolshevik régime its leaders expected an early outbreak of world revolution, and a revolutionary war would have been widely popular. As the chances of world revolution receded into the background, however, Stalin's slogan of building socialism in one country and influencing other countries by the propaganda of example was vindicated over the more desperate and gambling projects of Trotsky. The building of socialism in the U.S.S.R. necessarily involved a policy of peace. Hence the Soviet Government's consistent support of collective security during the nineteen-thirties until and after its breakdown at Munich. The Red Army man no longer thinks of himself as the torch-bearer of world revolution. He may consider that other countries would be well advised to adopt a socialist system ; but that is their affair. His job has been to clear the hated Germans out of the country, guarantee that they will not return, and then get back to the tremendous tasks awaiting him at home. Merely to repair the damage done by the invaders will take years ; and after that there are boundless vistas of constructive work to be undertaken. But he passionately believes in his own country and system. That is proved by every fact we possess—the absence of Quislings, the extraordinarily effective partisan movements in all occupied regions of the U.S.S.R., the solidarity of all the nations in the Union. This patriotism is partly Russian nationalism, looking back to the heroes of the past—Alexander Nevsky, Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Suvorov, Kutuzov—and partly a friendly interest in the welfare of the other Slav peoples under the Nazi yoke ; but it is also a specifically *Soviet* patriotism, based on the economic achievements of the Soviet régime and the political and national equality which it has established, on the average man's feeling of 'owning' his country. An English communist three hundred years ago, whose works have attracted attention in the U.S.S.R., wrote, "Wheresoever there is a people united by common community of livelihood into oneness it will be the strongest land in the world, for there they will be as one man to defend their inheritance." (Gerrard Winstanley.)

In England the war has improved our understanding of the U.S.S.R., because it has caused us to approach many of the Soviet techniques. The question, "Does it help the war effort?" has brought something of the Soviet sense of purpose into our lives, something, too, of their impatience of hindrances and humbug. It is a regrettable fact that the U.S.S.R. had to establish itself on the field of battle before many Englishmen were prepared to study its peaceful achievements seriously; but now it is clear that they cannot be ignored. It is to be hoped that in the working out of the twenty years' treaty of alliance between our two countries, in the closer personal contacts which will exist in the post-war world, the friendships which there have always been between individual Englishmen and individual Russians will be developed. Both sides have so much to gain from mutual understanding and exchange of ideas. Nor is the Soviet people going to be left unchanged after its ordeal. There will be a new self-confidence, based on a new pride in people and institutions that have stood up to the most severe of all tests. Soviet citizens have never lacked confidence in themselves and pride in what they were doing; but now this self-respect will be quieter and more assured, beyond the need of any assertion, because it has proved itself; and it will extend to all ranks of the population, irrespective of their political beliefs. The glories of Leningrad and Stalingrad, the heroism of the partisans, are the achievements of the Soviet people. Leadership and organization made them possible, but the people carried them out. There is likely to be a tremendous re-assertion of the independence and freedom of the Soviet peoples now the war has been won.

The energies of these people will for many years to come be absorbed in internal reconstruction, and, in any case, after the stresses of three Five Year Plans, followed by the strain of four years' war, there must be a relaxation of the tempo of effort. Moreover, with the defeat of Fascism in Europe, and (it is now safe to assume) completely friendly relations with Great Britain and the U.S.A. established, there will no longer be the pressing military need for devoting all the energies of the country to capital construction. It will be possible to satisfy the great and growing demand for consumers' goods by a more rapid raising of the standard of living all round. And to this process there is no visible end.

But for the last four years the Soviet people have shown little interest in pipe-dreams of a happy and expansive future. All their energies have been devoted to defeating the Nazi aggressor, and to liberating their tortured countrymen and the oppressed in all Fascist-occupied countries. It is only now that they can begin to think of converting their tanks into tractors again. Victory over the German invaders has been won; and the endless adventure of building a better society within the secure frontiers of the U.S.S.R. can be resumed. The people of these islands, who owe the Red Army and the Soviet people so much, can help them in many material ways; but—most important of all—we can try to understand what they are aiming at, what their difficulties are, and by what standards they should be judged.