

CHAPTER XX

WHERE SOCIALISM ALREADY EXISTS

THE Soviet Union in 1917 inherited a country that was among the most backward in the world. It had been ruined by the imperialist war and was further harassed by hostile capitalist powers, who financed and supported the White-Guard counter-revolutionaries. But this backward and poverty-stricken country was raised up out of its catastrophic situation by the proletarian revolution, by Soviet power.

It is illuminating to contrast the course of the capitalist world and the course of the Soviet Union in the last two decades. Despite their wealth and productive forces, the capitalist countries have fallen into a deep crisis which brought with it starvation and fascist barbarism to millions of toilers. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, the ruined economy of the country was restored and the productive forces were developed at a rate unequaled in history. The revolution transformed the degraded masses into the rulers of the country; it raised their standards of living and created a new and wonderful life. In the Soviet Union a new kind of human being is being created, and there they are actually realizing the dream of all the best minds of history—socialism.

This gigantic achievement did not come like manna from heaven. It came as the fruit of constant battle, not only against the outside hostile capitalist world, but with the remnants of the old social order within the country. It was secured only at the price of an uncompromising struggle against all tend-

encies within the Communist Party itself to break away from the clear path blazed by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The victory of socialism in the Soviet Union is the fruit of the genius of Stalin, who led the Communist Party and all Soviet toilers to their great triumph.

The Soviet Union has astounded the whole world with its gigantic Five-Year Plans which laid down the basis for an industry which will soon overtake the most technically advanced capitalist countries. The speed of socialist construction has no precedent in capitalist history. During the First Five-Year Plan, the rate of increase in industrial production averaged 22 percent annually. In 1934, the rate of increase amounted to over 18 percent and in 1935 the latest figures indicate that there will be the same increase, if not more. This compares with the fastest rate of development in the United States which never went over 5 percent a year during the most feverish period of American capitalist development.

During the past five years, the Soviet Union increased its output of pig iron from five million tons to twelve million tons a year. Its proportion of the world's production of machinery, which was 4.2 percent in 1928, is rising so rapidly that it will reach 37.5 percent in 1937, at the end of the Second Five-Year Plan. Whole new industries have been developed: machine tool building, high-grade steels, a gigantic chemical industry, an aviation industry that compares favorably with the best in the world, electrical equipment, tractor production, buses and trucks, and the synthetic production of rubber on a commercial scale before it has been achieved in any other country. These are but a few random samples from an incredibly long list. In the production of iron and steel, machinery and tractors and oil, the Soviet Union is second only to the United States. From holding fifth place in world production in 1928, the Soviet Union has advanced to first place

among the European countries and is now only behind the United States.

The socialist offensive did not only storm the heights of industry; it transformed a country of small farms into a land of the most advanced mechanized agriculture, organized on the principles of socialism in collective farms. The question as to who would win in the battle that was being fought on every front has been settled finally and irrevocably in favor of socialism. The toilers in the Soviet Union responded enthusiastically to Stalin's plea that they consolidate socialism in their country, and thus make it impossible for the U.S.S.R. to lose its independence to the imperialists because of weak technique and cultural backwardness. They have truly verified his prediction that there are no fortresses which Bolsheviks cannot conquer. Whether it was the building of Dnieprostroy, Magnitogorsk, the White Sea Canal, the Great Turksib Railroad, the collectivization of agriculture with its subsequent increase in production, or the abolition of illiteracy, in every field socialist forms triumphed. The whole country was placed upon socialist rails upon which it can move quickly to material well-being, freedom and high culture. Stalin recently pointed out that these victories of socialism now make it possible for everyone to lead a secure, cultured and happy life. The great psychological problem of happiness is being solved by the collective efforts of millions of men and women who have seen socialism give them dignity and security, the first step toward solving this great human problem.

Contrast the happy life being developed in the Soviet Union with the dark picture in the United States—the very citadel of world capitalism. Since 1928 the number of workers employed in the United States has declined by more than ten million and the wages of the working class has dropped by a half. During the same period the number of workers has more

than doubled in the Soviet Union, and the wage total has been multiplied by five. In the United States, unemployment is greater than in any other capitalist country. At least one-fourth of the number of people who are normally gainfully employed are jobless, and at least one-third of the population is dependent upon private or public charity for existence. In the Soviet Union, unemployment is unknown. In the United States, production dropped 30 percent in the past six years, while in the Soviet Union it increased five-fold. Here in the United States where the need is greatest, social insurance is only a vague aspiration. But in the Soviet Union the social and health insurance funds have been multiplied seven-fold and totaled over six billion rubles in 1935.

The mass of farmers in the United States have been thrown into poverty, and a large part of them have escaped starvation only because the government pays them for destroying their crops. In the Soviet Union collectivized agriculture is bringing socialist prosperity and culture to the whole countryside. In the United States, one-third of the homes have been declared sub-standard, or unfit for use, by government experts; millions are forced to live in shacks, fire-traps, cellars. In the Soviet Union working class slums are disappearing. The workers are moving into large roomy modern apartment houses. The old cities are being rebuilt and new cities spring up all over the country.

In the United States thousands of schools are being closed and at least seven million children and young people are denied an adequate education. In the Soviet Union thousands of new schools are being opened and the number of children attending elementary and high schools now totals over 25,000,000. Universal elementary schooling is now compulsory, and by the end of the Second Five-Year Plan it is planned to introduce universal compulsory high-school education—for the

first time in the history of the world. In the United States workers' children roam the streets and countryside, because they can't find jobs. In the Soviet Union more than 1,300,000 working class students attend universities and technical schools, while over a million and a half former workers and workers' children occupy positions as teachers, scientists, technical directors and cultural workers.

These facts prove beyond question that it is the program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, of revolutionary socialism, which alone can lead humanity to a new and higher life. Capitalism, on the other hand, even in this country, which has half the wealth in the world, leads humanity only to destruction.

Let us draw a homelier comparison. President Roosevelt is very proud of Boulder Dam, a great technical achievement which has finally been finished after ten years of hard work. But when he praised this flower of capitalist achievement, there was little to say in the way of pointing out benefits that the great dam had brought or would bring to the people. A few thousand men had been given jobs during the period of its construction: he spoke vaguely of the possible influence of Boulder Dam forcing somewhat lower prices for the consumers from the power trusts. It is true that he spoke of the fact that the dam would provide water control for the rich fruit and vegetable producing areas of Imperial Valley. But this would save some crops from destruction by natural forces, only to have them destroyed later by the government itself to avoid over-production.

Roosevelt was silent, as is every capitalist spokesman, about the fact that every technical achievement in America, whether it is some great hydro-electric station or some new machine tool, is only utilized by capitalism to cut the wages of workers, to subject them to a more merciless speed-up, to swell the

army of the unemployed, and make more catastrophic the misery that is the daily life of millions. Capitalism frustrates and hamstring the great productive forces made available by modern science and technology; potential riches are destroyed because they threaten the rate of capitalist profit.

But how different is the situation in the Soviet Union. There every new scientific and technical achievement is immediately utilized; it is not buried in the patent files of some trust. And this higher technique is immediately reflected in the daily life of the country, in higher wages, in more and better food, in shorter working hours, in a higher culture.

It is true that in the United States we still have a higher technical development. In a technical sense, the Soviet Union is still relatively backward, compared to our industry, the greatest and finest in the world. Yet over there they are rising out of poverty to ever higher levels of well-being for every person. Here, we are sinking more deeply into swamps of hunger and misery, which seem to be created by the very wealth of the country: the greater the wealth, apparently, the greater the cost in human suffering. The cause of this enormous difference between the courses of the two countries, the one developing and rising, the other cracking up and declining, is a very simple one. It is merely that here in America all our productive forces are the private property of a tiny group of monopolists, who are the masters of our lives. The Soviet Union, relatively poor as it is in comparison with our country, is driving ahead with rapid strides because all the productive forces are the common property of the people, operated for the benefit of all. In other words, we suffer because we have capitalism; in the Soviet Union they prosper more and more because they have established socialism.

At this time an economic and social phenomenon is taking place in the Soviet Union which illuminates all the enor-

mous potentialities of socialism, and which is demonstrating its superiority over capitalism in the most decisive way. This is the Stakhanov movement, which is raising socialism to new levels by proving that it can give society more wealth than can the capitalist system. The Stakhanov movement was named after a Donbas coal miner who, early in 1935, demonstrated that by the development of more efficient methods of work, much higher quotas of production can be achieved with the present productive facilities.

Stakhanov's example was followed by thousands of other working men and women, who through their mastery of the new technique established new productive norms in every phase of industry and agriculture. In a historic speech to 3000 Stakhanovites on the significance of their movement, Stalin pointed out that it opened up a new page in the history of socialist construction. He said:

"This movement is breaking down the old views regarding technique, breaking down the old technical norms, the old planned capacities, the old plans of production, and is demanding the creation of new and higher technical norms, planned capacities, plans of production. Its purpose is to make a revolution in our industry. For this very reason, the Stakhanovite movement in its very essence is deeply revolutionary."

This revolution in production representing a higher socialist efficiency of labor is possible only with the new men bred by socialism and with the technical advance which socialism accelerates, and does not hamper in the manner that capitalism does. The Stakhanov movement is demonstrating that socialism can and inevitably will defeat the capitalist system of economy, because it can achieve a higher productivity of labor and thus a richer society. As Stalin said:

"It is a movement such as breaks down the old technical norms as being inadequate, surpasses the productivity of labor of the foremost capitalist countries in a number of cases, and thus opens up the practical possibility for the further consolidation of socialism in our country, the possibility of converting our country into the most well-to-do land."

It is significant that the Stakhanov movement came from below, from the workers themselves, and often had to develop against the opposition of the higher technical personnel. It is a movement that can only develop in a socialist country. The workers know that higher productivity means a richer life for them. They do not work for exploiters, but for society. These heroes of labor have made the first beginnings towards achieving that economic abundance which will enable society to develop towards a higher stage, from socialism to communism, where everyone will work according to his ability and receive in return everything for his needs. Stalin emphasized the significance of the Stakhanovite movement in preparing "the conditions for the transition from socialism to communism".

It is important to note that the Stakhanov movement has nothing in common with capitalist speed-up. The workers are not set norms that lead to their physical breakdown. The higher productivity of labor is closely connected with the improved condition of the workers, with their greater wealth, comfort and culture. Speed-up in the capitalist countries leads to unemployment, to lower wages, to working conditions that are humanly intolerable. The worker is speeded up to create more profits for his boss. In the Soviet Union the worker himself has come forward to create greater technical efficiency, to achieve higher productive norms, because in doing so he is raising socialism to higher levels and preparing the conditions which will bring a society so rich in material things and

culture, that we in the capitalist countries can hardly visualize it as yet.

The Stakhanov movement is only the latest indication of how socialism will inevitably defeat capitalism. We can cite other proofs. In the capitalist countries, fascism has either triumphed or is daily becoming more menacing. With this, goes the destruction of civil rights and democratic liberties. Contrast the destruction of democracy under capitalism, with the Soviet democracy developing in the U.S.S.R. Here a new kind of democracy, which is a hundred times more democratic than anything ever seen in a capitalist country, is being constantly broadened.* The victories of socialism and the defeat of the capitalist remnants in the U.S.S.R. have made it possible in 1935 to round out and complete the structure of Soviet democracy, through the equalization of city and country in Soviet representation, the use of the secret ballot, and direct elections to all offices. As capitalism descends more and more into the hell of the fascist dictatorship, the Soviet Union is climbing to the truest and greatest freedom ever enjoyed by the masses of people.

The flowering of this new socialist prosperity, the broadening of Soviet democracy, and the emergence of new human beings have enabled the Soviet Union to turn its attention to a new task. It is the organized care by society of human beings, of seeing that they develop all their capacities, and of cultivating every facet of the individual personality. This is the meaning of the new socialist humanism which has been proclaimed by Stalin, that people are more important than anything else in the world.

It is no wonder then that the oppressed toilers in every

* A further expression of the great advance in Soviet democracy is the new Soviet Constitution, the draft of which was published since this book was written.—*Ed.*

capitalist country can see through the fog of lies and slanders with which the capitalist press surrounds the achievements of the Soviet Union. They are able to see in the new socialist society the only searchlight of hope that cuts through the deep gloom of the capitalist world. It is no wonder that the best minds among the world's intellectuals are coming out openly in defense of the Soviet Union as the one land where all the hopes of mankind in terms of ideals and culture are being realized. It is no wonder that millions are ready to defend the Soviet Union, recognizing that it is indeed the fatherland of the toilers of all lands, the only beacon of hope in an otherwise bewildered, chaotic, self-destroying, starving world.