

THE LAND OF SOCIALISM AND CAPITALIST BRITAIN

By HARRY POLLITT

TWENTY years ago, revolutionaries all over the world were thrilled to hear that the Social Revolution had actually happened in Russia.

Twenty years ago the war-weary peoples of the world received the news that the party of Lenin had won the fight for power and that a Workers' and Peasants' Government had been established.

Would it last? Could the new regime hold out? These were the anxious questions that besieged our minds. There was no doubt how the capitalist press regarded the epoch-making event—the way they dealt with the November Revolution was very different to their treatment of the March Revolution of 1917.

Not only the press reacted immediately—the workers of the world had only a little time to wait before they saw the forces of counter-revolution at work. And since 1917 the mobilisation of these forces has continued unceasingly.

In 1917, civil war and open counter-revolution; 1917-20, blockade; 1937, wrecking and espionage.

All these dastardly attempts to overthrow the power of the Soviets, the treacherous tactics of both open and concealed enemies of Socialism, have placed almost insuperable difficulties in the way of progress. For the construction of Socialism in one country is not a direct process. Manceuvrings, turns and zig-zags in policy have had to be carried through in accordance with changes in the relation of forces and conditions inside and outside the Soviet Union.

Yet despite the worst that their enemies could do, we can see now the millions of Soviet people and the best people in the capitalist world joyfully celebrating the 20th Anniversary. The anniversary of triumph, of success, of achievement of a mighty consolidation reflecting itself in the existence of the mighty Soviet Union.

Friend and enemy alike are compelled to recognise that the Soviet Union stands out as an everlasting proof that there is no difficulty that Bolsheviks cannot overcome. We have only to observe the staggering achievements in industry, agriculture, culture, aviation, Defence Forces, and work for world peace.

The people of "Asiatic minds", the "Bolshevik barbarians" (to quote the elegant phrases used by the Frank Hodges inside the Labour Party), have built the unconquerable and unshakable fortress of Socialism—built it not only for themselves, but for the workers of the whole world. For everything they have done has been done in the interests of the workers and all progressive mankind.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, have placed the Soviet Union where its dauntless aviators have placed the Red Banner of the Sickle and Hammer at the North Pole—on top of the world.

And their triumph—the greatest in world history, is the forerunner and guarantee of similar triumphs the world over.

While we rejoice in these glorious achievements and victories for Socialism—in the new life enjoyed by millions of Soviet citizens who are advancing with ever-quickening tempo towards the classless Socialist Society, we must ask ourselves sharply: How has it come about? What has made it possible?

These questions have a specially deep significance for us in Britain. We have the "oldest democracy in the world"; we have the oldest Labour Movement. In this country the people in the past have played a great part in heroic struggles for progress and freedom. We Communists do not forget the past, we are proud of our heritage and eager to carry forward the fight to-day, but we must consider the contrast be-

tween developments in Britain and the Soviet Union during the last twenty years.

Unemployment has been conquered in the Soviet Union and banished for ever. It is a social cancer that has no meaning for any Soviet citizen. Pause for a moment to think what life would be like in Britain now, if we could say the same!

For in Britain unemployment has been the principal feature of the internal situation in these last twenty years. The great industrial areas of South Wales, Lancashire, north-east coast and parts of Scotland—the areas on which the power of British imperialism has been built up—are politely referred to by some as "Depressed Areas"—by others, contemptuously, as "Derelict Areas". They are, indeed, graveyards of capitalism.

Hundreds of thousands of the finest craftsmen and skilled workmen—the aristocracy of Labour, who believed that their conditions were secure for all time—have seen their standards of living smashed right and left. They have had to succumb to the indignity of Poor Law Relief.

They have seen great factories, pits and shipyards closed down. While in the Soviet Union the workers have willingly sacrificed comfort to develop their own machine-building industry; the British workers have been faced with placards hung outside their factories, pits, ships: "In the hands of Thos. Ward, Scrap-Iron Merchants". They have seen priceless machinery smashed up; they have had to give up all hope that these places would ever open their gates again for employment.

Even now, when we are told "Britain rides on the crest of prosperity", there are two million unemployed, and despair and poverty is the lot of this army of forgotten men and women and their families.

The wages of industrial workers in the Soviet Union have doubled since 1932, and the national income, which is equitably shared by all Soviet citizens, has grown from 45.5 billion roubles in 1932 to 105.5 billion in 1937. Alongside this goes on a steady fall in prices.

But in Britain, in these last twenty years, millions of pounds have been taken from the workers in wage reductions. At the same time as the cost of living has constantly been at a higher figure than wages. Even now, in the period of prosperity, the cost of living is 55 points above the level of 1914, and in spite of wage increases forced by Trade Union action, wages are considerably lower than prices. Profits rise to unheard-of levels, the big capitalist combines and trusts are enjoying a glorious profiteers' holiday at the expense of the workers, farmers, professional people and small shopkeepers.

The facts about profits speak for themselves. In the first six months of 1937, 765 capitalist firms, after paying debenture interest and all overhead charges,

made net profits amounting to £100,690,626, an increase of £8 million pounds over the same period in 1936.

While this is going on, the rapid rise in prices of all necessities is hitting the working class, people with fixed salaries, hospitals and public institutions which have fixed budgets with which to feed their inmates. The rise in prices is also compelling the slowing down or cancellation of housing schemes all over Britain. "Guns, Not Butter!" is beginning to have a pregnant meaning for British as well as German people.

The steady fall in prices and rise in wages in the Soviet Union means an ever-increasing demand for all kinds of products, which Soviet factories work night and day to produce. Read the following facts taken from a recent official Soviet report:—

"Purchases of clothes, linen and boots by workers and office employees increased last year alone by 89.6 per cent., as compared with 1932. This year purchases continue to grow."

Consider another point; while in the Soviet Union, every conceivable precaution is taken to safeguard the lives of workers in industry; in Britain there has been an alarming increase in fatal and non-fatal accidents, due to lack of effective safety precautions and speed-up.

Since 1932, in Britain, speed-up has increased by 21 per cent., and the Chief Inspector of Factories reports that there was an increase of 18 per cent. in non-fatal accidents, and 9 per cent. in fatal accidents in 1936 as compared with 1935.

With regard to social services in the Soviet Union, the expenditure on all forms increases year by year, the following figures being eloquent testimony to this:—

Education: One billion roubles in 1928, but 19.3 billion in 1937. Health and Physical Culture: 400 million roubles in 1928, and 7.6 billion roubles in 1937. Rest Homes and Sanatoria: 25 million roubles in 1928, and 904 million roubles in 1937.

The social insurance budget, which is entirely made up of contributions by State factories and institutions, this year includes such items as 1.145 million roubles for providing benefits for pregnant women and those who have newly-born children. In 1928 there was an allotment for this purpose of 32,000,000 roubles.

In addition to these facts, it must be noted that the Soviet Trade Unions also play a great role in all forms of cultural development. For example, they spent 6.3 billion roubles in 1932 on such services, and 15.5 billion in 1936.

In Britain, the economic crisis and new rearmament has led to a strict curtailment of expenditure on social services. It has led to the imposition of the Means Test and a growth of sickness and malnutrition. The result is seen in the reports of doctors and scientists. Let us give their evidence.

"Four-and-a-half million people in this country spend on an average only four shillings per head on food." (Sir John Boyd Orr, February, 1936.)

"On the evidence so far available, it appears not improbable that nearly one-half of the population of England and Wales subsists to a greater or lesser extent below the safety line of nutrition." (Dr. McGonigle and Dr. Kerbey, "Food and Family Budgets".)

"The diet of half the population is not up to standard. The food of no fewer than 5,000,000 in the land is deficient in every way—and those 5,000,000 include 25 per cent. of all the children in the country. . . . The average family should be spending £1 a week on milk alone. No wonder that the mother so often looks prematurely old. Then we blame her for bad cooking."

In the Soviet Union the workers have the 7-hour day, and 6-hour day in dangerous trades, and holidays with pay. In Britain these are yet to be achieved.

If we turn to political progress, we find in the Soviet Union a series of progressive developments in democratising the Constitution, until in the new Stalin Constitution we are presented with a unique historical document, giving practical evidence of gigantic growth and strength.

The new Constitution represents for the peoples of the Soviet Union the permanency of all that has been already gained for them by their Communist Party.

Just at the moment, when Fascist race hatred darkens the world, while people in Spain and China are dying to save democracy, the Soviet Constitution raises the flag of internationalism and fraternity of all peoples and races.

In these last twenty years in Britain, the old capitalist boast about liberty broadening down from precedent to precedent, has been thrown overboard like so many other things which were thought to have permanence in British political life.

There have been more encroachments on the liberties of the people than in the last hundred years put together.

The Emergency Powers Act was applied during the General strike in 1926, and in many strikes and lock-outs since. The Incitement to Mutiny Act of 1797 has been used against leaders of the Communist Party and workers who dared advocate political rights and liberties for soldiers and sailors.

The Incitement to Disaffection Act of 1934 is meant general strike to be an illegal act, it threatens the finances of the trade unions in the event of large-scale strikes, and strikes a blow at the right of trade unionists to contribute to the funds of the Labour Party.

The Incitement to Dissecession Act of 1934 is meant to hinder all forms of anti-war propaganda. The Public Order Act, 1936, which arose out of the fight against Mosley's Blackshirts, is directed more against the working-class movement than the Fascists.

Thus we see the contrast between the "oldest democracy in the world" and the young Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union the people advance in

freedom, self-government and cultural development, and ever-greater extension of genuine democracy. In Britain, reaction strikes down rights and liberties won by generations of past struggles, and limits the forms of capitalist democracy.

The fact that to-day the Soviet Union stands out as the leader of the movement for world peace is not haphazard. The Soviet Union was born out of the struggle for peace in the last imperialist war.

The first act of Lenin in 1917 was to broadcast the proposal that "a general peace treaty should be signed at once on the basis of no indemnities and no annexations."

What a different world we would live in to-day if this proposal had been accepted—but it was refused by all the imperialist Powers, who vied with each other in their calumnies of what they described as the "Russian Bloodbath."

That simple message of peace made in November, 1917, has been the dominating motive of the policy of the Soviet Union ever since.

The concrete proposals made for Disarmament, for the abolition of bombing and chemical methods of warfare; the concrete proposals for common action to restrain fascist aggression; the powerful speeches of Comrade Litvinov at Geneva to strengthen the League of Nations, and the lead given by the Soviet Union to combat piracy in the Mediterranean, culminating in the Nyon Agreement—all these are the logical sequel to Lenin's message. The Soviet Union and its people have no interest in War. All they desire is Peace for themselves and the people of the whole world.

Peace has been the dominating aim of their foreign policy and it is for this reason that Europe has not been already plunged into war. It is quite certain that if the world Powers had followed the advice of the Soviet Union, Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain and China would not have to-day so pregnant a meaning.

But so many of the still remaining democratic Powers are divided in purpose; the working-class movement itself is split—is it to be wondered at that the dread lest peace cannot withstand the present tension tortures the minds of millions?

It is the policy of the National Government more than any other Government in Europe which is to blame for the international situation: it was responsible for supporting Japanese imperialism in Manchuria; for preventing the full force of the League of Nations from being used against Mussolini's bloody adventure in Abyssinia; for helping Nazi Germany to rearm and for starting a new world arms race.

It is the National Government that has struck the legally and democratically elected Spanish Government such dastardly blows. It failed to make any effective protest when its ships were sunk in the Mediterranean by Italy's submarines (what a different posi-

tion it would have adopted if these crimes had been perpetrated by the Spanish Government!) It has allowed its Ambassador in Shanghai to be shot by Japanese airmen.

Contrast this record with that of the Soviet Union, which renounced all the imperialist conquests of Czarist Russia and granted complete rights and complete freedom to all national minorities and Republics with the result that tremendous developments have taken place in all the autonomous Republics which voluntarily constitute the U.S.S.R.

British imperialism has consistently tightened its hold on all the colonial countries—Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, Palestine, India, even Newfoundland. All have felt its harsh and repressive hand.

It would not be difficult to quote many more examples of progress and the triumphant onward march to Socialism in the Soviet Union in contrast to the stagnation, decline and reaction in capitalist Britain during these last twenty years.

The achievements in the U.S.S.R. are the result of Soviet Power. The workers have won power and thrown off the yoke of the exploiters. They have followed the leadership of the Communist Party and fought and defeated their oppressors so that to-day they are free to build Socialism.

In Britain the existence of capitalist power is the reason why the people are menaced by misery and destitution, mass unemployment, the decay of industry and the growth of rotten parasitism.

The policy of Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union has brought triumph to the workers. The policy of reformism, whether carried on by MacDonald or Citrine, has led the British working-class movement to surrender and defeat.

And now, in these fateful hours when the destiny of civilisation is at stake, when Fascist aggression butchers the women and children of Spain and China, when the freedom of Czechoslovakia is in the balance, this policy strangles the growth of the unity of the whole working-class movement.

Let the British working-class movement, on the occasion of this magnificent Twentieth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution, ponder well over its political lessons. The story cannot be told too often.

Twenty years—historically a short time, but what a wealth of self-sacrifice and gloriously successful effort has been crowded into this period by the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union.

Socialist construction on a scale undreamt of is to-day an accomplished fact.

New Socialist cities proudly rear their towers to the sky in places that only a few years ago were barren. Giant industrial enterprises roar with the hum of Socialist machinery, and, guided by Socialist citizens, ceaselessly turn out their products.

Great collective farms have sprung up everywhere.

Every phase of educational and cultural activity grows breathlessly.

The Soviet Union stands out before the whole world as the strongest single Power, the Power whose sole aim is to be left in peace to win still greater victories for its population, and the workers of the world.

This Twenty years has not interpreted history—it has changed it.

Against the darkness and bestiality of Fascism, against the inability of the capitalist class in the democratic countries to solve unemployment, against the world drive to war—the Soviet Union stands out as a lighthouse, whose warm rays sweep round the whole world to guide the working class.

The Soviet Union proves that what the ruling class can never achieve, the workers can.

Against the Nuremberg maniacs and war plotters, the Soviet Union stands out like a giant thwarting all their plans and rallying round itself the support of all that is best in the forces of world democracy, peace and Socialism.

Against the foul treachery and wrecking of the counter-revolutionary Trotskyists, and the defeatism and doubts of waverers and capitulators; against spies and degenerates of all types, the Soviet Government has triumphed, has conquered. Is it casual? Is it accidental? Is it because of "Terror organised by the Kremlin"? Of course not. The advance of the Soviet Union has been made possible because the policy of Lenin and Stalin and the Communist Party has been correct. It won the support of the masses. Experience has proved it.

We have shown how much the workers of the world owe to the Soviet Government. For this reason they offer their undying gratitude for the way in which disruption has been fought in the U.S.S.R. and for the firm method of combating those who seek alliance with Fascism in order to destroy the achievements of twenty years' struggle and sacrifice.

Let us ask once again how it is that such great strides have been made in the Soviet Union.

In every other country in the world the workers are harassed, worried and cannot see clearly the end of the road. In the Soviet Union everything is different. Millions carry out their duty as conscious Socialist citizens, realising ever greater constructive victories.

What is the meaning of the difference? It is due to the fact that the workers and peasants supported the policy of the Communist Party, led by the mighty leaders, Lenin and Stalin. And the Communist Party believed in the workers, inspired them with that spirit of self-sacrifice, initiative and energy which alone can accomplish great things.

The Communist Party also gave the workers knowledge and the consciousness in their own power to

overcome difficulties—that unconquerable determination which neither capitalism nor reformism can ever inspire.

Thus the workers were able to survive the dark and bloody days of civil war; to beat back the enemy on eleven fronts; to beat them, though, like the Spanish people to-day, they fought with bare hands and sticks, in tattered rags.

And when the famine came, the workers survived again and later were well prepared to face it; it quickly enabled them to carry out the reconstruction of their country as the prelude to the successful achievement of the First Five-Year Plan.

The capitalist world greeted the plan with derision, but it has made the Soviet Union practically independent of all other countries, strong in its industrial power. And it has provided that defensive basis which will never allow a Fascist enemy to tread on one inch of Soviet soil.

Communism reacted on the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union so that they ignored the doubters and fainthearts in their own country; they smashed the Trotskyists and wiped out the counter-revolutionaries of all lands.

And to-day, proud millions of the Soviet population will surge into the centre of every Socialist city and village to celebrate the Twentieth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Millions of Socialist citizens will pledge themselves once more to defend their country and their Socialist conquests.

The Twentieth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution is an answer to the anxious questions of British people, now groping for release from the morass of poverty, the fear of reaction and war; the burning question—"Which way have we to go?"

The experience of the Soviet Union shows clearly that unity and revolutionary struggle alone can win power for the workers, the dictatorship of their own class and the destruction of their exploiters.

And along these lines the workers of the world must proceed—shunning all class co-operation and capitulation which leads directly to Fascism.

Only thus can they secure in every country the undivided domination of the Socialist system of economy, the steady growth of their productive forces, the abolition of economic crises and unemployment. Only thus can they secure the right of work, rest, education and culture for all.

From every corner of the Soviet Union on this Twentieth Anniversary will go out greetings to the

heroic Spanish and Chinese people now fighting the greatest struggle since 1917.

We may be sure, too, that in Spain and China to-day the people will be inspired by the fact that twenty years ago, against almost insuperable odds, the workers won that victory which we are confident our Spanish and Chinese comrades also will win.

From the Soviet Union will go forth that same urgent call for Peace as Lenin sent twenty years ago. To-day it will find a mighty response throughout the peace-loving forces of the whole world.

The times we live in are serious, the outlook is grave. But, the darker the night in Europe, the more brilliantly the Star of the Soviet Union shines.

The Socialist Fatherland of the world stands firmly on our side as the unconquerable ally of Peace, Democracy and Socialism.

The longer the workers suffer under the yoke of capitalist oppression, the greater the longing with which they gaze towards the Soviet Union, where it has been shown that Socialism can be established.

Let us therefore celebrate this Twentieth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution by a solemn vow that never will we allow the mad dogs of Fascism or the Tory reactionaries to attack the Soviet Union.

But let us also profit from the experiences of life by building up a powerful Communist Party in Britain, which can lead the British workers also to victory, and which in alliance with the Soviet Union could end for ever the menace of poverty, unemployment, oppression, Fascism and war.

For the stronger the Communist Party, the stronger the whole Labour Movement, and the sooner a united working class will be able to transform the present relation of forces nationally and internationally, and prepare the way for the defeat of the National Government.

Soviet Power will resuscitate industry in Britain, and put an end to unemployment by organising the work of all on a common plan for the needs of all.

Soviet Power will destroy the toll of landlords and capitalists, and bring abundance for all.

Soviet Power will bring freedom for the people of Britain and for the colonial peoples.

Soviet Power will conquer British imperialism, and the invincible unity of Soviet Britain with the Soviet Union and all peace-loving peoples will conquer war.

These are the thoughts which, on the occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution, the Communist Party of Great Britain will endeavour to drive home to millions of the British workers.