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# THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION

SYLLABUS FOR SIX LECTURES  
ON THE HISTORY OF THE C.P.S.U.

WITH NOTES ON READING

(August 1942)

FOURPENCE

## NOTE

**T**HE continuous study of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* is essential for all Communists. Covering as it does the whole period from the formation of the Bolshevik Party to the passing of the Stalin Constitution in 1936, it is an encyclopædia of Marxist-Leninist theory and practice. By studying how the Bolshevik Party under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin tackled the hundred and one problems that confronted them, we can master the *method* of solving our own problems. But to do this effectively we must be familiar with the *History*, and know how to find our way about it.

It is the aim of this Syllabus to provide such a guide. It is divided into six lessons which cover the main points dealt with in the *History*: but it should be understood that study of the Syllabus is only an introduction and can in no way replace careful reading of the *History* itself.

Moreover, it is of the utmost importance for the tutor to link up the *History* with more recent events, showing the vital part that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is playing in the organisation of the Red Army and Navy and the workers of the U.S.S.R. for victory in the present war of liberation. Material for this will be found in Stalin's speech at the 18th Congress of the Communist Party, March, 1939, and in other speeches by Stalin and Molotov since, as well as in the files of *Soviet War News*. (See also *Organisation for Victory*, Lawrence and Wishart.)

Tutors, when using the Syllabus as a basis for discussion classes, should think out further questions in addition to those at the end of each lesson, which will help the class to relate the experiences of the Bolsheviks to the history and problems of the British working-class movement.

## FIRST LECTURE

# THE STRUGGLE FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

### Background

Capitalism developed much later in Russia than in other European countries. Serfdom was not abolished until 1861 and it was only in the last quarter of the 19th century that there was any considerable development of industrial capitalism. In the '90's there was a marked increase in large-scale industry, largely financed by French and British capital, mainly concentrated in the Petersburg, Moscow and Donbas districts; and at the same time there was an extension of the railway system, though this remained the most backward in Europe. But these industrial areas remained islands in a vast agricultural country. Five-sixths of the population were peasants, illiterate and superstitious, farming their land by out-of-date methods under conditions of extreme poverty.

The form of government at this time was the Tsarist autocracy, the most reactionary in Europe, especially with regard to the many colonial peoples subjected by the Empire. Its power was based on the support of the big landlords and the church, backed up by swarms of government officials, secret police and a large conscript army. Thus inevitably the country was seething with unrest and revolt, of which the main current was the *Narodnik* (Populist) movement. This was a romantic movement of petty-bourgeois revolt against tsarist oppression. It saw the peasantry as the chief revolutionary force; it stressed the role of outstanding individuals, who should arouse and inflame the masses by melodramatic, "heroic" acts; it planned to by-pass capitalism and to use the primitive communism that survived (so it was thought) in village institutions as a foundation for a new society. Their chief method was individual terrorism—acts of violence and assassination against the Tsar and his leading officials.

### The Struggle for Marxism

Towards the end of the 19th century, however, the teachings of Marx were beginning to affect the revolu-

ionary movement. This was largely due to the efforts of Plekhanov who, by founding the Emancipation of Labour Group, played an important part in spreading Marxism and planting the seeds of a Social-Democratic movement in Russia. This work was carried much further by Lenin, who, arriving in Petersburg in 1893, succeeded two years later in uniting the various small Marxist circles in that city into one organization called the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class.

It was not, however, possible to proceed at once to found a revolutionary party of the working class. It was necessary first to prove, both in theory and practice, the falseness of certain existing tendencies in the revolutionary movement. The *first struggle*, therefore, that Lenin had to carry through was against the Narodniks, whom he opposed for the following reasons:—

1. The Narodniks ignored the fact that capitalism was *already developing* in Russia, and with it a proletariat; that capitalism was not something “accidental,” but an inevitable, and a “progressive,” development.

2. They belittled the role of the working class, in favour of the peasantry, thereby holding back the development of working-class consciousness.

3. Their method of individual terrorism diverted attention from the task of working-class organization, and had a demoralising and disorganizing effect.

4. They held a quite unreal view of the way history developed. They saw history as being made by outstanding individuals or “heroes,” followed blindly by the masses or the “mob,” and not as a product of classes and the struggle of classes.

The *second struggle* carried on by Lenin was against the so-called “*legal Marxists*.” These were camp-followers of Marxism among bourgeois intellectuals who had played a certain role in spreading a knowledge of Marxism in wide circles. Lenin for a time entered into alliance with them in the fight against the Narodniks (e.g., joint publication of articles, etc.). But they saw the opposition to Tsarism as mainly a middle-class movement, and they ignored (in practice, at least) the working class and the tasks of working-class agitation and organization. Lenin attacked their liberal bourgeois character and their tendency to water-down Marxism and the class struggle

Lenin insisted, at this time on the need for *combining propaganda with agitation* (“propaganda gives a number of ideas to a small circle; in agitation a single idea seizes hold of the masses,” Plekhanov had said); the need for revolutionary work to strike deep roots among the workers in the factories (which could only be done by developing broad organizations of working-class struggle, e.g., trade unions); and by fusing together the loosely-knit study-groups and circles that then existed into a unified party acting under central leadership, and in turn leading agitational work in the broad organizations of working-class struggle.

The *third struggle* carried on by Lenin was against the so-called “*Economists*”: a tendency inside the ranks of the Social Democrats that wanted to confine revolutionary work to the economic struggle (i.e., trade union work), and emphasised agitation on immediate issues in the factory to the exclusion of Socialist propaganda and general political campaigns (e.g., the campaign against Tsardom for democratic rights, free speech, etc.). The political struggle, they argued, did not interest the workers and could be left to the middle class and the liberals. Lenin argued against the “*Economists*”:—

- (1) That in over-emphasising the “spontaneity” of the masses in economic activity (and hence their “spontaneous” political development), they belittled the role of political education and leadership of economic struggles by the politically-conscious vanguard of the working class (the Party).
- (2) This produced a tendency for the leadership to adjust itself to the level of the average, or even the more backward sections of the workers; and so to follow the working class instead of leading it (Khvostism, or “Tailism”).
- (3) They tended to confuse the broad (mass) organization with the narrow (revolutionary) one. Confining themselves to the level of “trade union consciousness” and sectional struggles, the “*Economists*” would inevitably have made the Party one of “social reform” inside capitalism, and not a party of social revolution. By belittling the importance of political theory and political ideas, they were leaving the workers a prey to *bourgeois* ideas.
- (4) They neglected the need for the working class to seek allies among *all sections* of the people, and

for a revolutionary party to lead the struggle of all these sections against political and economic oppression.

It was largely in order to carry on the fight against the Economists that Lenin now realised the need for an All-Russian Marxist newspaper. Such a paper was *Iskra*, published abroad by Lenin and his followers and smuggled illegally into Russia. But *Iskra* was much more than a propaganda organ for achieving ideological clarity in the working-class movement. It placed before the workers the need for a Party "of an entirely new type"; a highly disciplined Party, based on the revolutionary teachings of Marxism and capable of leading the entire working class in action. Moreover, as a result of its network of agents and readers throughout Russia, *Iskra* was able to lay the foundations of such a Party. It therefore served a dual purpose: both as a propagandist and as an organiser.

### The Party of a New Type

The real foundation Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party was held in July, 1903, in secret in Brussels, and later in London. (Nominally this was the Second Congress; but the First, in 1898, was attended by only 9 delegates, and launched the Party in name only.) It adopted a Programme which was in two parts, a Maximum Programme and a Minimum. The former dealt with the ultimate aims of a working-class party: the overthrow of capitalist power by means of the socialist revolution and the establishment of working-class power ("dictatorship of the proletariat"). The latter was a programme of *immediate demands*, on the basis of which the working class and its principal ally, the peasantry, could be rallied in the immediate struggle against tsarism. It included:

- (a) the overthrow of tsarist autocracy and the establishment of a democratic republic;
- (b) the 8-hour working day;
- (c) abolition of all survivals of serfdom in the countryside and restoration to peasants of land of which they had been robbed by the landlords (the *Otrazki*). (This demand was later replaced by the Bolsheviks with the demand for confiscation and transfer to peasants of all landed estates.)

On these matters there had been disagreements, especially over the dictatorship of the proletariat and the inclusion of peasants' demands in the Minimum Programme. But the sharpest disagreement came over a clause in the Rules of the Party. The section of opinion led by Martov wanted to make it sufficient for a member to accept the Programme and pay Party dues. Lenin insisted that a member should be required also to *work in an organized group of the Party*. Here was summed up the whole difference between a loosely-knit party of propaganda and a party of action, and hence a party of "democratic centralism." Lenin's standpoint on this issue was defeated; but when the struggle was renewed on the question of elections to the Central Committee and to the Editorial Board of *Iskra*, Lenin and his supporters won a majority of the votes; whence the terms Bolshevik (majority) and Menshevik (minority).

Thus, though the Congress created the Social-Democratic Party and adopted rules and programme, it also revealed sharp differences on a number of fundamental points between the two sections of the Party. For some years the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks remained within the same Party, but the differences between them grew sharper, and eventually, in 1912, at the Prague Conference, the Bolsheviks set up their own independent leadership.

**Reading :** *History of C.P.S.U.(B)*, Chaps. 1 and 2. For the Narodniks: Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, Parts 1 and 2; and for the Economists: Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, *What is to be done?* (Also published separately: *Little Lenin Library*: No. 4.) For the Party of a New Type, see especially: Stalin, *Foundations of Marxism*, Chap. 8.

### Suggested Questions to follow Lecture One

1. *Is there a peasantry in England?*
2. *Among which sections of the population should the working class seek allies in England?*
3. *Can you give examples of Economism in the work of your own factory group?*
4. *What are the main differences between the Labour Party and the Communist Party?*

## THE REVOLUTION OF 1905 AND AFTER (1905-1914)

### The Revolutionary Upsurge

In Tsarist Russia the masses were oppressed, not only by the yoke of a developing capitalism, but by the yoke of a semi-medieval autocracy (Tsarism). Not only the workers but the whole people suffered from a complete lack of all political, democratic rights. The peasants, moreover, suffered from insufficient land and from feudal survivals and bondage to a reactionary landlord class. The various subject nationalities of the Russian Empire were denied all political rights and were economically exploited. This was the basis of the *bourgeois-democratic revolution* of 1905, which was not yet a socialist revolution, but a democratic revolution of the whole people against Tsarism.

The economic crisis of 1900-3 spread mass discontent. The Russo-Japanese War, with its defeat for the Russian armies and its showing-up of the corruption and incompetence of the government bureaucracy, fanned discontent into a flame. The storm broke in January, 1905, with a strike movement in the leading factories of St. Petersburg. A procession of workers to petition the Tsar in the Winter Palace was fired upon, over 1,000 being killed ("Bloody Sunday"). The slogan of the strike movement, which now became general and spread to other towns, was: "Down with Autocracy." Economic strikes became political strikes, demonstrations and in places armed resistance to Tsarist troops followed on the heels of the strikes. Councils of Workers' Delegates, or Soviets, were formed in a number of towns. In the countryside in the spring a peasant movement to seize land and the landlords' grain stores developed. In June a mutiny broke out in the "Potemkin," the leading ship of the Black Sea Fleet.

Forced to make concessions by the popular rising, the Tsar called a *Duma* (or Parliament) on a restricted franchise. The liberal bourgeoisie welcomed this concession and were willing to make a compromise. The Bolsheviks called for a boycott of the so-called Bulygin Duma, as being a move to distract the masses from carrying the

revolution further (the Mensheviks, on the other hand, agreed to take part in the Duma).

### Two Tactics in the Revolution

The *Mensheviks* held at this time: (a) that since the revolution was only a bourgeois one, it must be led by the liberal bourgeoisie, and the part of the workers must be confined to acting as a sort of "ginger group" in the background, pressing for concessions here and there; (b) the workers must not play too prominent a role for fear of scaring the liberals and causing them to desert the revolution; (c) if a new government were to be formed, since this would not be a socialist government, Socialists could not take part in it; (d) Socialists must content themselves with attending to purely wage-workers' interests and bringing "pressure" to bear upon any popular assembly or parliament that might be formed.

By contrast the *Bolsheviks* held that: (a) the working class must become *leader* of the revolution, not in order to advance socialist demands, but in order to complete the overthrow of Tsarism and achieve complete democracy; this being the means "of bringing Socialism nearer"; (b) to this end a firm alliance was necessary with the peasantry, in order thereby to isolate the liberal bourgeoisie and take the leadership out of the latter's hands; (c) to overthrow Tsarism required the development of the strike movement into mass political strikes and an armed uprising of the whole people; (d) in place of the Tsarist government there should be set up a Provisional Revolutionary Government: a government in which the Social-Democratic Party should take part, for the effective crushing of the counter-revolution and the carrying out of the Minimum Programme of the Party, and to ensure a transition from the democratic to the socialist revolution as soon as possible.

In the winter of 1905 the wave of revolt advanced again. There were political strikes and armed uprisings in the larger industrial centres, in which the Bolsheviks took a leading part. But this armed action took the form of disconnected uprisings in separate districts; and in many districts it failed to pass from defensive to offensive action. They were crushed by Tsarist troops, and there were wholesale arrests of Bolsheviks in Moscow and elsewhere, and hangings and jailings everywhere. The Mensheviks condemned the resort to arms as a mistake. Lenin retorted: "On the contrary, we should have taken to arms more resolutely, energetically and aggressively."

## The Lessons of Retreat.

A period of reaction followed: for the revolutionary forces a period of retreat. Tsarist policy focussed on repression, on the one hand, and on encouraging the growth of a kulak class or small capitalist farming in the village (Stolypin policy). In 1906 the Tsar announced the summoning of a New Duma, the Witte Duma, but it was not docile enough, and was dispersed. The Bolsheviks decided to boycott this Duma. Lenin afterwards showed this to have been a mistake. A second Duma was summoned in the summer of the same year, and this time, in the changed situation, Lenin insisted on the need to take part in the Duma elections. In the period of savage repression against the working class which followed, it was necessary to use every means, both legal and illegal, to forward the interests of the revolution.

As regards the tactics to be pursued in the *Duma*, Lenin's policy was as follows: The *Cadets* (or Liberals) were becoming increasingly the party of the bourgeoisie and of reaction. Not only were they adopting a position of compromise with Tsarism; they were showing signs of being actually counter-revolutionary. Between them and the Social Democrats was a sort of Radical or Labour Party, called the *Trudoviki*. These were essentially a petty-bourgeois party, and hence vacillating; but they represented the *masses* (essentially the *peasant masses*). The Bolsheviks must "help the weak petty-bourgeois democrats, wrest them from the influence of the Liberals, rally the democratic camp against the counter-revolutionary Cadets, and not only against the Rights."

At this time two tendencies showed themselves within the Social-Democratic ranks, against both of which Lenin fought vigorously. On the one hand, the *Liquidators* wanted to liquidate the illegal revolutionary organization and to concentrate on legal (or semi-legal) work in the broad organizations (trade unions, the Duma, etc.). This, Lenin showed, meant the death of the Party and to give up the revolutionary struggle in favour of reformism. On the other hand, a group of Bolsheviks, called *Boycottists*, wanted to abandon broad mass work, to boycott the Duma elections, and to concentrate on intensive training and theoretical discussion in small groups. Against both these tendencies Lenin emphasised the principle of *combining legal with illegal work*—taking advantage of every opportunity for broad, open work, while keeping the illegal Party organization in being, developing its "cadres," etc.

To fight the Liquidators, Lenin formed a bloc with a group of Mensheviks round Plekhanov who were anti-Liquidator. Trotsky, on the other hand, formed what was known as the August "bloc," combining both Liquidators and Boycottists against Lenin.

At the Sixth Party Conference (at Prague) in 1912 a break was finally made with the Mensheviks. A Bolshevik central committee was elected; and the Bolsheviks continued to use the name of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party until 1917 (when the name was changed to that of Communist Party). At the same Conference, a purge of opportunist elements from the party was carried out, to make its composition really worthy of the "party of a new type." A programme of immediate demands was adopted, centring round the slogans of the Democratic Republic, the Eight-Hour Day, and the Confiscation of the Large Landed Estates for the benefit of the peasantry. *Pravda* was founded as the newspaper of the Party; and in the ensuing Duma elections six out of the nine deputies elected from the "workers' constituencies" were Bolsheviks, elected on the basis of the above programme of immediate demands.

**Reading:** *History of the C.P.S.U.(B)*, Chaps. 3, 4 and 5 (omitting Section 2 of Chap. 4). For 1905: Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Pt. I; and *Little Lenin Library*, No. 17; and for the peasant question, "Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy" in Part II; also pages 342-53, 357-385. For 1908-14 period: Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. 4, Part IV.

## Suggested Questions to follow Lecture Two

1. Why has the Party in England taken part in Parliamentary elections?
2. Are there in existence in England today any organisations which are similar to Soviets?
3. Have there been periods in the history of the English working-class movement when waves of strikes have assumed a political character?
4. Has a Bourgeois-Democratic revolution been achieved in England?

### THIRD LECTURE

## THE WAR AND THE OVERTHROW OF TSARISM IN 1917

### Socialism and Imperialist War

At the end of the 19th century capitalism in the leading capitalist countries was passing into the stage of *imperialism*: the dominance of big monopoly groups, exploiting colonial areas abroad as well as an industrial proletariat at home. From the struggle of these monopoly groups to partition the globe as colonies, an armed clash between imperialist States for the redivision of the world becomes inevitable.

Marxists in the 19th century had always drawn a distinction between "*progressive*" and "*reactionary*" wars. To the former belonged wars of national liberation, which broke the fetters of feudal autocracy and furthered the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Europe. Lenin showed that it was above all necessary to make a concrete estimate of each war situation in terms of the alignment of the leading class forces at the time. He showed that in the imperialist epoch the only progressive wars which socialists could support were wars waged by small nations against foreign attack and enslavement and wars of colonial or semi-colonial peoples against imperialist domination (or else a war of defence by a workers' country *after* the —Syllabus for Six Lectures on History of C.P.S.U.—FOUR workers had seized power). In this epoch all wars between the ruling classes of large capitalist states were reactionary imperialist wars—wars about colonies and re-division of territory: slave-holders' wars, in which the workers should have no part. The duty of a revolutionary working-class party in such a war was to organize the workers *against* the war and against its own ruling class, taking advantage of the first defeat or weakening of the latter to seize power. "Change the imperialist war into a civil war against one's own ruling class." (N.B.—The creation of the first socialist country, the U.S.S.R., as a leading world Power has, again, introduced a new element into the situation; and a war in defence of socialism, in defence of democratic rights, and for the liberation of subject peoples against Fascism, becomes a "*progressive*" war of national liberation, and not an imperialist one, even if the ruling class of

some of the Powers opposed to Fascism are governed primarily by imperialistic motives.)

During the war Lenin endeavoured to re-unite the revolutionary and anti-war sections of the various countries. This was done first of all in September, 1915, at *Zimmerwald*: a conference summoned on the initiative of the Italian Socialist Party, and including representatives of anti-war and internationalist groups in France and Germany and Balkan and Scandinavian countries. In Britain the Independent Labour Party and British Socialist Party gave their support. *Zimmerwald* was followed in 1916 by a further conference at *Kienthal*. The Bolsheviks advanced the proposal of forming a Third International to replace the old Second International disrupted by the war and the treachery of the old Social-Democratic parties. Although this was not accepted at the time, "the Kienthal Conference helped to crystallize the internationalist elements, of whom the Communist Third International was subsequently formed" (in 1919).

In Russia the Mensheviks supported the slogan of "Defence of the Fatherland." In Russia and elsewhere there were Centrists who were nominally against the war, but in practice adopted no action against it (e.g., they *refrained* from voting in Parliament on the question of war credits, but did *not* vote *against* these credits). Lenin's policy included the following: Vote against the war credits; encourage fraternization between soldiers and opposing armies in the trenches; workers' boycott of War Industry Committees (joint committees set up by government to help production); organize revolutionary action against the government and the war, with an uprising against the imperialist government as ultimate objective.

### The Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution

Military defeats; economic disorganization and collapse, aided by corruption and inefficiency in government circles (Tsarist Ministers and elements at Court even intrigued with the Germans for their own ends), spread popular discontent and led to the overthrow of *Tsarism* by a popular rising led by the workers in March, 1917, and the formation in its place of a *Provisional Government*. This government was formed by bourgeois liberals in agreement with the Menshevik leaders and the Socialist-Revolutionaries (a party mainly of the peasantry). The Cadets were prominent in it; and it was joined by Kerensky

of the S.R. party. Lenin characterised it as a new State power representative of "the bourgeoisie and landlords who had become bourgeois."

Parallel with this government there existed another power: the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies which had come into existence again in the March days as organs of the popular uprising. These were dominated at the time by Mensheviks and S.R.s; but they represented the power of the people—in particular the workers and peasants in alliance against Tsarism.

This situation Lenin characterised as *Dual Power*. Nominally State power rested with the bourgeois Provisional Government; but this in turn depended on the support of the Soviets and governed by their consent. The Soviets, because of political immaturity of the masses and the predominance of petty-bourgeois influence, had voluntarily surrendered power to the bourgeoisie.

### Preparations for Transition

When Lenin returned to Russia in April, he immediately advanced (in his famous April Theses) the following line of policy. After some discussion this was adopted as the policy of the Bolshevik Party (which at the same time adopted the title of Communist Party) at the 7th Congress of the Party in April.

1. A transition from the first stage (the bourgeois-democratic) to the second stage (the socialist) of the revolution, which had in fact already begun, must be carried through.
2. To achieve this, the aim must be, not a Parliamentary republic, but a Soviet Republic, this being a fuller and higher form of democracy and the only one that could ensure the transition to socialism.
3. The immediate slogan must therefore be: "No support for the Provisional Government"; and by a process of careful explanation the masses must be persuaded to take power into their hands through the Soviets.

At the same Conference Stalin's Thesis on the National Question laid down the policy of supporting the struggle of oppressed nationalities and recognizing their right of self-determination and secession.

A minority group of Bolsheviks, led by Kamenev and Rykov, opposed Lenin's theses, and declared that Russia was not ripe for a socialist revolution, and that a bourgeois republic was the only thing possible. They advanced the line of "controlling" the Provisional Government. Pyatakov and Bukharin opposed the theses on the national question and its support of national self-determination.

It is to be noted that an important part of Lenin's theory of imperialism had been that in the epoch of imperialism the *unequal development* of different countries was accentuated. Hence it was impossible for all countries to become ripe for the socialist revolution simultaneously; and in this epoch the victory of socialism became possible in a few countries or even in one country. Because of this uneven development, it might be a relatively backward (and hence weak) country where the old order cracked up first and workers' power (in alliance with the peasantry) became possible. This was the basis of Lenin's policy in 1917.

### Counter-Revolution

The Provisional Government continued to tie itself to the chariot-wheels of Britain and France and in June launched an unsuccessful offensive at the front. The failure of the offensive increased disillusion and indignation; and in mid-July a spontaneous demonstration in Petrograd was organized to demand transfer of power to the Soviets. The Bolsheviks were opposed to armed action at the time and to any isolated and premature rising, as being an aid to the counter-revolution that was beginning to muster its forces. But "when it became obviously impossible to keep the masses from demonstrating, the Party resolved to participate in the demonstration in order to lend it a peaceful and organized character." But the demonstration was fired upon by officers' detachments. Bolshevik papers were suppressed; Red Guards disarmed; arrests of Bolsheviks followed and Lenin had to go into hiding.

The situation after these "July days" rapidly changed. The counter-revolution began to organize for a counter-blow—a blow which was struck in the attempted *coup* of General Kornilov in September. The period of the Dual Power was ended. The continued existence of the Soviets was now threatened. Lenin declared that the peaceful development of the revolution was no longer possible, and that it was now necessary to prepare for the armed uprising of the workers to transfer power to the Soviets.

At the beginning of August the 6th Congress of the Bolshevik Party, which adopted this new policy, also



adopted as an economic platform the following: confiscation of large landed estates and nationalization of land; nationalization of banks and large-scale industry; workers' control over production and distribution.

**Reading :** *History of the C.P.S.U.(B)*, Chaps. 6 and 7, Sections 1-4. Lenin, *War and the Workers* and *Socialism and War*. Later in the *Little Lenin Library*, Nos. 20 and 3. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol 6, Part I and Part III, pages 240-96, 421-62, 500-8.

#### Suggested Questions to follow Lecture Three

1. *What was the policy of the Second International (adopted at the Stuttgart Congress in 1907) with regard to Imperialist war?*
2. *Were there any sections of the Labour Movement in Britain which opposed the official policy of the Labour Party with regard to the war of 1914-1918?*
3. *Had the present war any other than purely imperialist elements before June 22, 1941?*
4. *Are there still imperialist elements in the war?*

#### FOURTH LECTURE

### SOVIET POWER AND THE DEFEAT OF COUNTER-REVOLUTION

#### All Power to the Soviets

The Kornilov "Putsch" was the first attempt of the bourgeois reactionaries and landlords, menaced by the further development of the revolution, to suppress the Soviets. General Kornilov moved troops, whom he thought reliable, against the capital, and declared he intended to "save the fatherland." The Bolsheviks organized Red Guard detachments; trade unions mobilized their members; and delegates were sent to Kornilov's regiments to explain the political purpose of Kornilov's move. As a result, the revolt was crushed. Lenin had advanced the line of "fight against Kornilov while at the same time exposing the weakness and vacillation of Kerensky" (since the summer Premier of the Provisional Government).

The struggle against Kornilov gave new vitality to the Soviets and increased Bolshevik influence in them. The day after the defeat of Kornilov the Bolsheviks secured a majority in the Petrograd Soviet, and on September 5 in the Moscow Soviet also. September and October witnessed a large number of forcible seizures of landlords' estates by the peasants. Disintegration set in among the Mensheviks and S.R.s; and Left groups in each case formed which gravitated towards the Bolsheviks. Thus the time became ripe for raising the slogan, "All Power to the Soviets."

#### The Seizure of Power

By October the situation had developed to the point where the armed uprising was "on the order of the day," and at the meeting of the Central Committee on October 10th, presided over by Lenin, who had returned secretly to Moscow, the historic resolution to this effect was passed. A few days later the Central Committee elected a *Party Centre*, headed by Comrade Stalin, responsible for the practical direction of the whole uprising. On October 25th (November 7th new style) Red Guards seized the railway stations, post and telegraph offices, State Bank and Ministries, and deposed the Government at the Winter Palace. The next day the Congress of Soviets adopted (1) a Decree on Peace, inviting all belligerent countries to conclude an armistice for three months and to discuss peace terms; (2) a Decree on Land, expropriating the large landlords, nationalising land, and directing that the landlords' estates be divided among the peasantry. At the same time the Congress appointed the first Soviet Government—the Council of People's Commissars—consisting entirely of Bolsheviks, with Lenin as chairman. Later an agreement was come to with the "Left group" of Social Revolutionaries to give them a certain number of posts in the government (this group being influential among the peasantry).

Why was the victory of the Socialist Revolution achieved with such comparative ease?

1. Because of the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie.
2. Because the working class of Russia was politically mature, as a result of 1905 and March, 1917, and had an ally in the poor peasantry, who formed the overwhelming majority of the population.
3. Because the working class was led by a tried and tested and politically developed party, the Bolshevik party.

4. Because it took place at the height of the imperialist war when the capitalist world was split into two hostile camps and immersed in war.

The belligerent powers rejected the appeal to conclude a three-month armistice; and the Soviet Government was forced to enter into negotiations with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk over terms of peace. Economic disruption and war weariness made it essential for the new-born Soviet Republic to secure peace and a respite, even though it meant accepting onerous terms of peace. The Germans were in a position to dictate onerous terms, and in February, 1918, proceeded to move their troops into Russia. Against the opposition of Trotsky and a group round Bukharin, calling themselves the "Left Communists," Lenin insisted that the German terms must be accepted and peace signed in order to gain a breathing space for the consolidation of Soviet Power. *The Peace of Brest-Litovsk* was signed. The "Left Communists" intrigued with the Left S.R.s; and in July the latter attempted to stage a revolt in Moscow and other towns against the government of Lenin.

Once peace and a breathing-space had been gained, the Government started the task of restoring economic life and *laying the foundation of a socialist economic system*. Here the factory committees taking advantage of the powers given to them to control production, had a big—Syllabus for Six Lectures on History of C.P.S.U.—SIX part to play in preparing the ground for socialisation of industry. It was necessary for the workers to learn to organize and manage production. "The struggle for labour discipline became the major task of the period." Again, the "Left Communists," and also the Anarchists, opposed Lenin and the Soviet Government on this.

To carry through the re-distribution of land in the countryside, so as not to allow the best land to be grabbed by the "kulaks" (rich, semi-capitalist, peasants), and to help to organize the supply of foodstuffs to the towns and the Red Army, *Committees of the Poor Peasants* were formed in the villages in June, 1918. The Left S.R.s opposed the work of these committees and were opposed to the struggle against the "kulaks."

### Civil War and Intervention

But the breathing-space assured by Brest-Litovsk did not prove to be long-lived, valuable though it was. The Imperialist Powers, fearful of the continued existence of the Soviet Government, proceeded to aid the counter-revolu-

tionary organizations of Whiteguard Generals, landowners and officers, and vanquished politicians of the Cadet, Menshevik and S.R. parties, and to promote armed intervention and civil war against the Soviet Government. Great Britain, France, Japan and U.S.A., as well as Germany, sent troops to aid the White counter-revolutionaries on Russian soil. The Red Army had to fight a revolutionary war of defence simultaneously on five or six fronts.

To organise production and supply during this period of civil war, the Soviet Government had to introduce the system known as *War Communism*. The basis of this was the taking over by the State, not only of large-scale industry, but of medium and small-scale industries as well, and the establishment of a State monopoly in the grain trade (with a consequent prohibition on private trade in grain). The system developed of *compulsory requisitioning* of the peasants' surplus products. This system was "necessitated by the exceptionally difficult conditions of national defence and bore a temporary character."

At the end of 1918 the Committees of Poor Peasants, having fulfilled their role in the village, were merged with the rural Soviets. At the 8th Party Congress, which met in March, 1919, a new line of the Party towards the "middle peasants" was developed. The "middle peasants" now comprised the majority of the peasantry, and their alignment was to prove a decisive factor in the civil war. The military outcome depended largely on which way they would swing—to the side of the proletariat or of the bourgeoisie. In the summer of 1918 the White Guards were able to make progress, overthrowing the Soviets in certain regions, because they were supported by large sections of the middle peasantry. Later the middle peasants swung over to the Soviets, seeing that White victories led to the restoration of landlordism. Before the 8th Congress the Party policy had been one of *neutralising the middle peasant*. This was now seen not to be enough. Instead, the congress laid down the policy of *a stable alliance with the middle peasant, the leading role in this alliance to be maintained by the proletariat*. This new policy played a decisive part in securing the defeat of foreign intervention and the White armies in the civil war.

### The Defeat of Intervention

Admiral Kolchak and his army in Siberia, General Yudenitch advancing from the north-west up to the gates of Petrograd, General Denikin from the south, were successively thrown back and defeated in 1919. In January, 1920, Britain, France and Italy, influenced by

popular pressure and working-class action (e.g., 1920 Councils of Action in Britain) in their own countries, called off the blockade of Soviet Russia. But in the spring of 1920 General Wrangel in the south gathered the remnants of Denikin's army, and the Poles invaded the Ukraine and seized Kiev. The Red Army launched counter-offensives. In October Peace was signed with Poland, and in November the Red Army stormed Perekop and drove Wrangel from the Crimea. The period of intervention was ended. The period of economic reconstruction began.

The question now arose as to the economic forms within which the restoration of industry and agriculture should take place. Was "War Communism" to continue? If not, what was to take its place? Was a return to be made to the system in being in the first half of 1918?

War Communism was essential to ensure the supply of the armies and the factories during the civil war. But as a continuing policy it had this weakness: the system of compulsory requisitioning of surplus products antagonised the peasantry, and stood in contradiction to the policy of alliance between workers and middle and poor peasants. At the end of the civil war, even the working class in the factories was in danger of disintegration, and even of demoralisation, so far had economic disruption gone and the breakdown of production both in town and village. A new turn of policy had to be made.

This new turn of policy was the so-called *New Economic Policy*, outlined by Lenin at the 10th Party Congress in March, 1921. This had its keynote in the abolition of compulsory requisitioning of the peasants' surplus and the restoration of the right to free trade in grain.

**Reading:** *History of C.P.S.U.(B)*, Chapter 7, Section 5-8, Chapter 8. Stalin, *Leninism* (1940 ed.), Pages 86-117, 175-186.

#### Suggested Questions to follow Lecture Four

1. *What caused the failure of the General Strike in Britain?*
2. *When the Red Army was formed, in what ways did it differ from any other existing army?*
3. *Give instances of any other armies which have had similar characteristics.*
4. *Give examples of Trotskyite activity at the present time, and show how Trotskyists are working against the interests of the working class.*

## FIFTH LECTURE

# THE PERIOD OF RECONSTRUCTION

### The New Economic Policy

The *New Economic Policy* (N.E.P.), which replaced the system of War Communism in 1921 after the civil war ended, was designed to restore the link between workers and (middle and poor) peasants, which the compulsory requisitioning of the War Communism had endangered. N.E.P. rested on the peasants' right to *trade freely in his surplus produce* (sell it on the market to whomsoever he pleased, whether private trader, Co-operative or State, and with the money-proceeds to buy industrial goods in return). There was an Agricultural Tax in kind, fixed in advance: anything beyond that the peasant was free to dispose of. Consequently he now had the inducement of personal gain to sow and harvest as much as possible. During this period the economic link between workers and the peasant masses, between industry and agriculture, was *through the market*. Restoration of economic life required an increase of the trade turnover, increased agricultural production stimulating industry, and vice versa.

This freedom of trade inevitably gave scope for some revival of capitalism: the private trader and shopkeeper, and to some extent also, the *kulak*. To this extent, Lenin admitted, it was a retreat. But it was a retreat so as to gather strength for a new advance: by restoring production of food and raw materials in the countryside the resources could be found for building up industry, and hence enlarging and strengthening the industrial basis for socialism.

At this time there were two false conceptions about the character of N.E.P., both of which had to be exposed theoretically and fought against politically. Trotsky, Zinoviev and Co. and some "Left" doctrinaires could see in N.E.P. *nothing but a retreat*; and consequently exaggerated the growth of capitalist elements to the point of panic and defeatism. On the other hand, there were some Right-wing Bolsheviks (Bukharin, Krassin, Sokolnikov, etc.) who advocated a *greater retreat than was necessary*, and would actually have encouraged the "kulaks" to get rich, given enormous concessions to foreign capitalists, and even abandoned the State monopoly of foreign trade.

The re-introduction of trade as the chief link between industry and agriculture involved the re-introduction of money-dealings, money-accounting and "commercial practices" in State industry. At the same time, certain of the small factories (which had been hastily nationalised under stress of civil war) were leased to private owners or to producers' co-operatives.

The system that existed under N.E.P. was not socialism, no more than was the system in the first part of 1918. Industry was socialist. But the system as a whole was what Lenin called a "mixed system": it included socialist industry, peasant agriculture (non-capitalist small commodity production), some "kulak" agriculture (employing wage-labour), private trade as well as co-operative and State trade, and also a very small amount of capitalist small-scale industry and foreign "concession" enterprises. But in the "mixed system" the workers' state occupied the "commanding heights" (large-scale industry, the banks, transport and the major part of wholesale trade); and to the extent that industry and socialist accumulation (growth of industrial capital) developed, the socialist elements grew in weight and ultimately would conquer. Already at the 11th Party Congress (in 1922) Lenin said that "the retreat had come to an end" and that it was time to prepare for a new advance towards socialism. In his last speech (to the Moscow Soviet, November, 1922) he confidently declared "N.E.P. Russia will become Socialist Russia."

### Inner Party Struggles

The 10th Party Congress included a resolution on *Party unity*, in which the existence of opposition groups and factions was condemned. Factions were declared inconsistent with Party membership. After the Congress a "party cleansing" (individual scrutiny of the membership) took place, in the course of which about a quarter of the members were excluded. Lenin spoke of the need to rid the Party of "careerists, bureaucrats, dishonest or wavering Communists and Mensheviks who have repainted their facade but have remained Mensheviks at heart."

### Forward to Socialism

In these years trading relations were opened up with capitalist countries; and in 1924 diplomatic relations were restored with Britain, France, Japan and Italy. By developing trade with other countries the Soviet Union was able to secure those things it needed but could not yet

produce, and so helped the building up of socialist industry. The position of the Soviet Union in the international arena grew stronger, following the failure of the capitalist attempts at intervention.

By 1926 the Period of Reconstruction was drawing to a close. The task of restoring industry to full capacity-working on the basis of its existing capital-equipment (machinery and plant), and of restoring the agricultural sown area to roughly the 1914 level, was achieved.

The question now confronted the Party: which way forward? How to develop from N.E.P. into socialism? To develop socialism required a rapid growth of industry, and hence of the basic capital of industry (new factories, power plants, railways, etc.) and a growth in the number of the industrial workers. This was impossible without a growth of agricultural production (especially of the marketable surplus) to supply food to the growing number of factory workers and raw materials for the new factories. How was this possible on the basis of the old-fashioned primitive peasant farming and without resting the foundations of socialist industry on a strengthened "kulak" farming, i.e., on a revival of capitalism in the village?

Tsarist Russia had been a country of weakly-developed industry, especially heavy industry (iron and steel and machine-building). How build factories and power stations without a developed heavy industry to provide the iron, steel and machinery? Moreover, to safeguard the country against a renewal of foreign intervention necessitated a modern armament industry; and this too required a developed iron and steel industry as its necessary base.

The 14th Party Congress in December, 1925, launched the slogan of *socialist industrialisation* of the country. This required, in particular, an intensive campaign to build up heavy industry.

The 15th Party Congress in December, 1927, launched the slogan of the fullest development of *collectivization in agriculture* (building collective farms), and at the same time of a new offensive against the "kulaks." This was a necessary condition for the success of industrialization. The country had the alternative of either developing large-scale capitalist farming or of amalgamating the dwarf peasant farms into large collective farms.

Stalin said: "The way out is to unite the small and dwarf peasant farms gradually but surely, not by pressure, but by example and persuasion, into large farms based on

a common, co-operative, collective cultivation of the soil with the use of agricultural machines and tractors and scientific methods of intensive agriculture. There is no other way out."

These collective farms (*Kolhoze*), which were to be the main type in the countryside, were not the same as State farms (*Sovhoze*). They represented a form of collective or co-operative production by the peasants who joined them; jointly owned and run by the members of the *Kolhoz*, and the proceeds of the farm (after deducting taxes, expenses, etc.) being divided among the members in proportion to the amount of work each had done. The individual collective farmer, however, has his own house and allotment, and can keep for his own use a small amount of livestock. The collective farm, therefore, enabled the peasants to learn co-operation; and, as the town workers had done through their trade unions and the factory committees, enabled them to get experience of running production themselves on a collective basis.

This policy of industrial construction *plus* agricultural collectivisation became the basis of the *First Five-Year Plan* for the development of the national economy in 1928-9.

Again Trotsky and his followers, together with Bukharin and his Right-group, opposed the policy. They did not believe that the building of socialism in one country was possible. Hence their attitude was defeatist. Trotsky could only suggest schemes of super-industrialization, resting on "exploitation of the peasantry," which would have wrecked the alliance with the "middle peasants." The Rights favoured a policy of bolstering up "kulak" farming, and making the U.S.S.R. dependent on capitalist countries. The 14th and 15th Congresses condemned both these standpoints; and the 15th Congress decided to expel the active members of the Trotsky-Zinoviev bloc.

**Reading:** *History of C.P.S.U.(B)*, Chapters 9 and 10, Sections 1 and 2. Stalin, *Leninism* (1940 ed.), Pages 205-16, 228-93, 306-32. Also Webb's *Soviet Communism*, Part I, Chapters 2, 3 and 5.

#### Suggested Questions to follow Lecture Five

1. Why, in the present situation, does the Party not press for immediate nationalisation of heavy industry, transport, etc.?

2. What are the reasons for the first Proletarian Revolution having occurred in Russia, instead of in one of the more highly developed capitalist states?
3. Would the present state of industrial development in England make socialist construction easier than it was in Russia?
4. What are the main differences in the functions of Trade Unions in a capitalist society and in a socialist society?

#### SIXTH LECTURE

### THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIALISM

#### Planning Industry

The First Five-Year Plan was intended to cover the years 1928 to 1933 (its first year was the financial year October, 1928, to October, 1929). Its keynote was a *very high rate of capital investment; i.e.*, devoting an abnormally high proportion of labour-power and materials to constructional work, especially in heavy industry (building things like the Dnieper Dam, blast furnaces, steel mills, tractor factories). The Plan had been drawn up in two "variants"—a minimum and a maximum. The 16th Party Conference in April, 1929, decided to adopt the latter as the operative plan; and in 1930 the slogan was launched of: "Carry Out the Five-Year Plan in Four Years."

The Right opposition-group of Bukharin and Rykov opposed this adoption of the higher tempo of development and the emphasis on heavy industry. They also opposed the offensive against the "kulaks," advancing the theory that the "kulaks" would "grow into Socialism." They had become representatives of the "kulak" and capitalist elements *against* the Party. They also formed a secret alliance with the Trotskyists. Tomsky opposed the whole-hearted co-operation of the trade unions in the battle for production (raising labour productivity and overcoming the backwardness of the newer strata of factory workers); and he and his supporters were removed from leadership of the trade unions.

## The Struggle for Collectivisation

It was inevitable that the fight for socialism, in particular for collective cultivation in the village, should arouse the maximum resistance from the remaining capitalist elements, especially the "kulaks." The "kulaks" launched an offensive against the collective farm movement, organized the slaughter of livestock, etc., and sought to win over the middle peasants to their side. Counter-revolutionaries abroad tried to take advantage of this to organize an anti-Soviet movement in the Ukraine.

The Soviet Government replied to this threat at the end of 1929 by measures to eliminate the "kulaks" as a class. Prior to this the Government had pursued a policy of restricting the "kulaks." Within limits they were permitted to rent additional land and to hire labour. Now these laws were repealed and they were no longer allowed to rent land or hire labour. Moreover, the government allowed the local peasants, if they so decided, to confiscate cattle and farm property of the "kulaks" for the benefit of the collective farms. Extensive expropriation of the "kulaks" on the collective initiative of the village occurred.

At the same time certain serious mistakes were made by some local Party organizations in the direction of compulsory formation of collective farms by administrative pressure or by decrees from above. Carried away by initial success, some districts accelerated the pace of collectivization to a disorganizing and impractical extent. These mistakes had the effect of antagonising the middle peasants and playing into the hands of the "kulaks." They were denounced, by decision of the Central Committee of the Party, in an article by Stalin, entitled "Dizzy with Success," in March, 1930. Stalin subsequently pointed out that the root cause of these Leftist errors was an incorrect approach to the middle peasant and a violation of the Leninist principles that the formation of collective farms must be voluntary and that diversity of local conditions must be taken into account.

Despite these set-backs, the collective farm movement made amazing progress, greater than had been originally expected. By the end of 1932 nearly two-thirds of all peasant holdings (covering  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the cultivated area) were collectivized. (In 1928 less than 3 per cent of the cultivated area had been covered by state farms and collective farms.) The First Five-Year Plan was actually completed by the end of 1932 ( $4\frac{1}{2}$  years). By 1934 there were 280,000 tractors at work in Soviet agriculture and 32,000 combine-harvesters. The "kulaks" as a class had ceased to exist;

and the old-style individual peasant with dwarf farm and primitive methods was rapidly disappearing.

The Second Five-Year Plan (1933-7) continued the pace of high industrial construction; and while more of the capital invested was devoted to light industry (e.g., increasing the number of boot and shoe, woollen and food-canning factories), the main emphasis continued to be on heavy industry. The collectivization and mechanization of agriculture was to be completed. As a result of the Second Five-Year Plan, the remaining capitalist elements were to be eliminated.

By 1937 93 per cent of peasant farms and 99 per cent of the total grain area were collectivized. The output of coal had been increased  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times over 1928, of iron and steel 4 times, of electrical power 7 times. The grain crop was larger than 1928 by 50 per cent, the harvest of cotton three times and of sugar-beet double 1928. During the period of the Second Plan the output of industry was more than doubled.

## The Need for "New People"

But the building of Socialism needed something more than the building of new factories and power stations; it needed *people*. Firstly, it needed a great increase in the number of trained and educated skilled workers and technicians to run the new factories and machines. In a speech in 1935, Stalin said: "Formerly we used to say that 'technique decides everything.' This slogan helped us to put an end to the dearth in technique. . . . But it is not enough. . . . Without people who have mastered technique, technique is dead. In the charge of people who have mastered technique, technique can and should perform miracles. . . . That is why emphasis must now be laid on people, on cadres, on workers who have mastered technique."

Secondly, it needed workers who were not simply "trained" in the narrow sense but had developed a capacity for initiative and taking charge of production, as a result of day-by-day experience of working-class democracy, especially in the factory. The fruit of this experience was shown in the Stakhanov movement—a movement from among the workers, not just to work harder, but to rationalise their own working methods. This showed, not only that workers were "mastering

technique," but that ordinary workers were taking independently a new and constructive attitude toward the problems of production, "smashing antiquated technical standards and creating new and higher standards." (Stalin).

### Socialism in One Country

In declaring that the victory of Socialism in U.S.S.R. was quite possible, even though it remained the only Workers' State in a capitalist world, the Party did not consider that a *final* victory of socialism could be guaranteed. *Final* victory was not possible so long as the danger of foreign armed intervention remained. Even though all basis for capitalist restoration had been abolished *internally*, *externally* the threat of capitalist restoration remained. To defeat this threat, capitalist encirclement had to be combatted. This could be done

- (a) by the support of the workers in other countries;
- (b) by taking advantage of divisions within the capitalist camp;
- (c) by building up the defence system of the Red Army, Navy and Air Force.

In the 1930's the danger of attack from without increased. This was the result of the world economic crisis of 1929-30, heightened contradictions and the new upsurge of the working class. In 1932 Japan invaded Manchuria and North China. In 1933 Fascism came to power in Germany; Germany withdrew from the League of Nations and openly prepared for war. In 1935 Fascist Italy attacked Abyssinia; and in 1936 Germany and Italy started military intervention in Spain. Thus "a second imperialist war" had already been begun by "the three aggressor states, the Fascist ruling circles of Germany, Italy and Japan." At any time it might be turned against the U.S.S.R. To prevent this, and to attempt to form a Peace Front to stop Fascist aggression, the U.S.S.R. in 1934 joined the League, and in 1935 made treaties of mutual assistance with France and Czechoslovakia.

At the same time the U.S.S.R. developed a modern armament industry at an extraordinary speed. (In 1940 Defence expenditure amounted to one-third of the total Budget, and was double the 1938 figure.) This was only made possible by the successes of the First and Second Five-Year Plans in building up heavy industry—building

a metal base for modern armaments. Collectivization in agriculture had secured the food-base for the army and the towns in case of war; and the elimination of the "kulaks" had destroyed the social basis for a Quisling movement in the countryside.

The *Third Five-Year Plan* (1937-42) had intended to continue the work of construction, placing special emphasis on defence industries, on non-ferrous metals (copper, aluminium, lead, etc.), and on developing the new industrial districts east of the Urals. Special emphasis was to be placed on developing new *cadres* of trained workers and technicians, and on extending the movement of workers' initiative in rationalizing working methods, started by *Stakhanov*. At the 18th Party Congress in 1939, Stalin declared that it was now necessary to overtake the more advanced industrial countries, not only in absolute output-figures but in output per head of the population.

The Trials of Trotskyites and Bukharinite Wreckers in 1936 and 1937 had exposed the final degeneration of the old opposition-leaders, who, lacking any mass basis, had become intriguers and Fascist agents.

In December, 1922, the formation of the *Union of Soviet Republics* had taken place (a Union of separate Soviet Republics of Russia, Ukraine, Transcaucasia, Byelorussia, and later of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tadjikistan), and the first All-Union Congress of Soviets had been held.

### The Stalin Constitution

In 1936 the 7th Congress of Soviets had signaled the victory of socialism by adopting the new Soviet Constitution drafted under the chairmanship of Stalin.

The main changes introduced by this Constitution were as follows: (1) *universal voting rights* for all citizens; (2) all citizens vote on an *equal footing*; (3) all elections of deputies to Soviets to be *direct*; (4) all voting to be by *secret ballot*. Previously voting rights had been confined to workers and peasants; and the remnants of the employing class, traders, priests and ex-police agents had been excluded from the franchise. Election to higher Soviet bodies had been *indirect*, delegates to them being elected by the lower Soviet bodies (e.g., those of towns or villages or provinces). This system of indirect election had operated so as to give greater weight to town electors than to the

villages, as expression of the leading role played by the working class in the revolutionary alliance of the working class and the peasantry (e.g., in the All-Union Congress of Soviets the towns had been represented by one delegate for every 25,000 electors and the provinces by one delegate for every 125,000 inhabitants).

The Constitution defined the Supreme Soviet of the Union as the body by which "legislative power of the U.S.S.R. is exercised exclusively." This consists of two Chambers with equal rights (the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities), elected for a term of four years. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, which conducts business in between sessions of the Supreme Soviet, is elected at a joint sitting of the two Chambers, as is also the Council of People's Commissars. The Constitution gives women equal rights with men in all spheres of life; assures equality for all citizens irrespective of nationality or race; recognises "freedom of conscience" and of religious observance; guarantees freedom of speech and assembly and inviolability of the person. It also lays down that citizens have "the right to work," "the right to material security in old age" and "the right to education."

What were the reasons for, and what was the importance of, these changes? Between 1924 and 1936 the economic and social life of U.S.S.R. had undergone a complete change. Capitalist elements (which continued to exist during the N.E.P.) had been eliminated and the Socialist system had triumphed. The class composition of the population had changed correspondingly. The old classes (employers, traders, kulaks) had disappeared, except for insignificant remnants. The working class itself "had been transformed into an entirely new class": it had emancipated itself from exploitation and its efforts had built up Socialism. "Hence it was a working class the like of which the history of mankind had never known before." Similar changes had taken place among the peasantry; and the intelligentsia was an entirely new intelligentsia, recruited from the ranks of workers and peasants; serving the people and "an equal member" of the new socialist society. The old class dividing lines had largely been obliterated; "the economic and political contradictions between workers, peasants and intellectuals were declining and becoming obliterated." "According to the new Constitution Soviet society consists of two friendly classes—the workers and peasants—class distinctions between the

two still remaining. . . . *The U.S.S.R. had entered a new stage of the completion of the building of a Socialist society and the gradual transition to Communist society.*"

**Reading:** *History of C.P.S.U. (B)*, Chapter 10, Section 3, Chapters 11 and 12. *Stalin's Historic Speech*, March, 1939. *Voznesensky, Economic Results of U.S.S.R. in 1940, etc.* For summary of Five-Year Plans: *Dobb, Soviet Economy and the War*, Chapters 3 and 4.

### Suggested Questions to follow Lecture Six

1. *What are the principles of the Stakhanovite movement. Can we apply similar methods in English industry today?*
2. *Do comrades working in factories where a Production Committee is working efficiently find that their own initiative and organisational abilities are given more scope?*
3. *Can Production Committees serve as schools for Factory Soviets?*
4. *Does the fact that wages are not equal, and that before the war certain luxuries were becoming available mean that Russia is no longer a Socialist country?*