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LIFE and LABOR in the SOVIET UNION

by ROBERT W. DUNN and GEORGE WALLACE

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Life and Labor in the Soviet Union

By ROBERT W. DUNN
and GEORGE WALLACE

An impressive-looking building, somewhat like a theater, stands surrounded by trees and flower beds. Mounting the steps of this building, we find ourselves in a spacious corridor, filled with industrial exhibits and all kinds of pictures. Turning a corner of this corridor, we come upon signs indicating that here are the showers and dressing rooms of the men and women workers of the plant.

Workers leaving the shift are washing up in these rooms. Further along the corridor are the offices of the plant administration and of the plant trade union committee. A

staircase leads to the forge shop on the floor below. Here a nurse is on duty in a separate medical room. She is connected by direct wire with the main clinic of the plant where doctors are available at all hours.

Everything in the forge shop is surprisingly clean for such a department. The windows are large, giving much light, and are carefully washed. Cleanliness, fresh air and bright sunshine make you forget you are in a forge shop, a place usually associated with soot and stuffiness and gloom.

A number of stands with carbonated water are located throughout the plant. This water is supplied free of charge to all persons working where the heat is intense or where work is harmful to the health. Free milk also is provided for these workers every day.

At dinner time the workers go to the factory dining room, where they can obtain hot meals. Special dietetic dining rooms are provided for workers who need to follow a special diet to improve their health. Near the main dining room is a large, comfortably furnished room where the workers may sit after they have eaten. Here they read books, magazines or newspapers, play checkers, listen to the radio, or possibly listen to the factory doctor who may come in and give a short talk on questions of sanitation and hygiene.

This is the picture one gets of the factory life of the worker in the Soviet Union when one visits a typical plant, whether it be in Moscow or Leningrad, in Stalingrad or Gorky. But in order to realize more fully the present picture one must have some notion of the way the Russian workers lived before they overthrew the tsarist autocracy and began building a new society. One must examine present con-

ditions in the light of the conditions of twenty or more years ago in order to comprehend the vast changes that have been wrought by the workers of the Soviet Union. The purpose of this pamphlet is to examine the situation of the workers today, contrasting it with their past.

Wages in Old Russia and in the Soviet Union

From 139,200,000 in 1913 living in the territory that now is known as the Soviet Union, the population grew to 180,700,000 by 1937. Releasing the productive energies of the country, the Soviet system has drawn large masses of the population into factories, mills, mines, state farms and other enterprises. The total number of wage earners and salaried or non-manual employees was estimated at 26,300,000 for 1937 as compared with 11,400,000 for 1913.

Wages in pre-war Russia were notoriously low. The census of 1913 which compiled data on earnings of 2,500,000 wage earners in factories and mines, put average annual earnings at 291 rubles. Prior to 1913 wages had increased very slowly. Reports of government factory inspectors indicated that by 1913 wages had risen about 28 per cent above their 1901-1904 level. The difference between the wages of workers and the earnings of salaried or non-manual employees in that period was very great. It is estimated that in 1913 salaried employees' average annual earnings were four times as large as those of wage workers.

In contrast with pre-war Russia, wages in the Soviet Union are not only much higher but are increasing more rapidly. During the period of the First Five-Year Plan

(1928-32), wages were doubled. They almost doubled again during the following four years of the Second Five-Year Plan, reaching an average of 2,770 rubles a year for all workers and employees in 1936. Reports for 1937 indicated that wages in that year would rise another 7.4 per cent over the previous year.

The rise in wages in recent years is indicated in the following table:

Average Yearly Earnings of Wage Workers and Salaried Employees in the Soviet Union, 1928–36

Year	All enterprises and institutions	Basic industries	Construction	Transportation
	(in rubles)			
1928	703	870	996	861
1930	936	1,035	1,082	1,064
1932	1,427	1,473	1,509	1,506
1934	1,858	1,927	2,042	1,954
1935	2,269	2,375	2,497	2,389
1936	2,770	2,864	....	....

The wages of those workers who participate in the Stakhanov movement, which we discuss later, are considerably higher than the average. In a large brake factory in Moscow the average monthly earnings were reported at 189 rubles in 1935, while Stakhanov workers' earnings reached 317 rubles. Prior to the spread of this movement toolmakers, drillers and die makers, for example, were earning from 200 to 400 rubles a month. In 1936 the same workers earned from 700 to 1,000 rubles. Monthly earnings of over 1,000 rubles and up to and above 2,000 were frequently reported by Stakhanov workers in 1936 and 1937. These workers show higher productivity and receive correspondingly higher wages.

Earnings in rubles do not fully reflect the improvements in the living standards. What is known as the real wage, that is, how much a worker can buy with the money he earns, in the end determines his well-being.

Reports on wage increases between 1900 and 1913 indicate that prices went up considerably during that period. Thus, one student of the wages of those years reported that while wages in 1913 had risen 28 per cent above the 1901-1904 level, the price of rye flour, the staple commodity of all Russian workers and peasants at that time, rose 42 per cent. Other authorities report that while money earnings rose 35.5 per cent from 1900 to 1913, real wages rose only 10 per cent.

Living Standards Rise

Living standards of the Soviet workers, on the other hand, are steadily improving. This is demonstrated not so much by large increases in cash earnings as by the fact that at the same time retail prices are actually being lowered. For example, average earnings rose more than 12 per cent from 1935 to 1936, while retail prices for such foodstuffs as vegetables, meat and eggs were lowered by more than 10 per cent. With wages in 1937 scheduled to be raised 7 per cent over 1936, retail prices for woolens, cotton textiles, shoes, furniture and stockings were lowered by 5 to 16 per cent in June, 1937. The following table of index numbers shows the sharp reduction in prices of foodstuffs in the markets of the ten largest cities of the Soviet Union in the course of three years.

	Bread	Vege-tables	Meat	Milk Products	Eggs
March, 1933	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
June, 1934	37.9	52.2	70.5	48.8	48.0
June, 1935	30.6	34.1	58.2	41.2	40.7
June, 1936	13.0	23.5	43.9	34.3	29.8

In 1935, retail prices for many commodities other than food were reduced in all state and cooperative stores. The reductions ranged between 12 per cent and 50 per cent.

This downward trend in prices combined with the upward trend in earnings changes drastically the composition of the workers' family budget. Proportionately less is spent for food, more for commodities other than food. The following percentage increase in expenditures of the average worker's family from 1935 to 1936 illustrates this change:

	Increase from 1935 to 1936 (in percentages)
Food expenditures	+ 15.3
Clothing	+ 50.8
Furniture	+ 48.4
Cultural activities	+ 47.5

Still further indication of the improving standards of living is seen in the growing volume of retail trade. From a turnover of 15 billion rubles in 1928 it rose to 74 billion in 1935. The estimated increase from 1936 to 1937 alone amounts to 23 per cent. The production of consumption goods such as food, clothing, shoes and furniture is rising rapidly. The volume of food consumption in the average worker's family from 1934 to 1935 rose 14 per cent. It rose again by 14.4 per cent from 1935 to 1936. The consumption

of various foodstuffs increased greatly, as can be seen from the table below:

Increase in Per Capita Consumption of Foodstuffs During 1934–36 in the Soviet Union

Article	Worker's family		Salaried employee's family
	from 1934 to 1935	from 1935 to 1936	from 1934 to 1936*
	(in percentages)		
Meat	+ 9.6	+ 43.2	+ 88.0
Lard	+ 90.6	+ 144.2	+ 185.0
Butter	+ 21.1	+ 18.0**	+ 42.0
Milk	+ 21.0	+ 22.8	+ 33.0
Eggs	+ 57.7	+ 129.3	+ 131.0
Vegetable oil	+ 26.8	+ 56.0	+ 31.0
Fruits and berries	+ 39.7	...	+ 156.0
Sugar	...	+ 67.0	+ 76.0

* Data not available for 1935. ** Milk products.

In addition to higher earnings and lower prices, still another factor accounts for the rapid rise in living standards. The number of working members per family has been growing steadily. From 1930 to 1935 the average size of the family of workers in basic industries declined 5.5 per cent, from 4.02 persons to 3.80 persons, yet at the same time the number of workers per family rose 11.4 per cent, from 1.32 persons to 1.47 persons. This increase in the number of persons in a family working productively brings a larger income to the family as a whole.

What a contrast these higher earnings of the Soviet worker make with the conditions of pre-war days. For example, if we compare the family expenditures of workers in a typical

factory near Moscow in 1908 with those of workers in the Moscow district (excluding the city of Moscow) in 1936, we find that the *per capita consumption of foodstuffs* increased as follows:

Meat and lard....................doubled
Fish ....increased five-fold
Butter ....increased by one-third
Sugar ....increased three and one-half times
Bread ....increased one and one-half times
Potatoes ....increased by two-thirds

"Socialized Wages"

In pre-war days from 95 per cent to 100 per cent of the worker's income came from wages. Now, in addition to wages, which are much higher, the Soviet workers derive a large volume of goods and services in the form of what has been termed "socialized wages" or "socialized income." This is a part of national earnings not disbursed in wages but put into reserve funds and paid out to workers and employees in the form of social insurance, pensions, health protection and educational and cultural benefits of various kinds. The figures for 1935, for example, show that in addition to their cash wages, workers in basic industries received socialized income equal to over a third (34.5 per cent) of their cash wages.

From these socialized funds, creches, kindergartens, rest homes, sanatoria, clubs and similar institutions are maintained. The forms of social protection provided by these funds are manifold. Sickness insurance, care of infants, assistance to women during pregnancy and confinement are

some of them. Loans and outright assistance grants to workers are provided to meet various emergencies.

A report from a typical shoe factory in Rostov-on-Don for the year 1936 shows the various forms in which these social benefits are paid. During that year, 160 workers were sent to sanatoria in the Caucasus mountains and on the Black Sea. Some 5,500 workers went to rest homes. Dietetic feeding was provided for 105 workers. Forty children were sent to boarding schools and provided with free food and clothing. Three hundred workers' children were sent to summer camps, thirty to children's rest homes, while 140 were provided for in pre-school boarding houses. More than forty workers received outright money assistance grants and about 1,500 received loans. The factory trade union committee maintained a factory club and began building its own rest house. Technical schools and special courses attended by more than 4,000 workers were maintained, and an apartment house for forty-eight families was in the process of construction. Five-year loans for repairs were given to twenty-three workers having their own homes.

Clothing, Housing and Health

The rising money income of Russian wage-earners and salaried employees and the increasing volume of social services they receive are reflected also in such things as their clothing and their living quarters. Surveys recently made among young workers, for example, showed that each person had adequate clothing. In tsarist Russia so little money was left after expenditures for food and rent that even

the higher-paid workers were forced to buy second-hand clothing and shoes. In St. Petersburg, an investigation showed that before the World War about 40 per cent of the workers could afford only second-hand clothing.

The slum dwellings of the workers in tsarist Russia were notorious for their congestion, dirt and disease. A survey made of the living quarters of working class families with average incomes in St. Petersburg in 1908 showed that 25 per cent of the single men and women rented only a bed or half a bed; 44 per cent of the single persons and 36 per cent of the families rented only a corner of a room. The same survey showed that only 29 per cent of the workers' families lived in separate apartments. The Moscow census of 1912 registered 26,788 one-room apartments inhabited by 300,000, that is, more than 11 persons per room. In many industrial regions the proprietors of mills and factories provided living quarters in barracks where the workers lived under almost military discipline.

The Soviet Union on the other hand is providing a constantly increasing amount of clean, cheap and comfortable housing space for its population. And it should be noted also that the expenditures for rent of the average worker's family in the basic industries in 1935 did not exceed 5 per cent of total family money earnings as compared with 15 to 20 per cent of total earnings in pre-war days .

Housing conditions of the Soviet workers have been greatly improved since 1928, the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan. New cities have been built, new apartment houses erected, hundreds of thousands of old houses remodeled. Water, electricity and open plumbing have been

provided in tens of thousands of workers' apartments.

Improvements in housing have been accompanied by a great growth of municipal facilities beneficial to workers and their families. In pre-war Russia there were 1,063 cities with a population of 10,000 or more. Of these only 19 had sewerage systems, and only about 15 per cent had electricity. In 1932, there were 1,300 cities with a population of 10,000 or more. About 90 per cent had electricity. Such facilities as water supply systems, public baths, mechanized laundries, street railways and sewerage systems are now being developed on a large scale.

Health protection in the Soviet Union is real in the sense that existing facilities are available to everyone. These facilities are immeasurably greater and better in quality than in pre-revolutionary Russia. Medicine is free from the limitations associated with privately practiced medical aid. In the factories and other larger industrial enterprises the health clinic is the main center for the protection of workers' health. There were 7,587 health clinics in 1935, while in 1913 there were no such clinics in existence.

These Soviet factory clinics usually employ a number of doctors. They also keep in close contact with the trade union doctor who is at the same time a sanitary inspector of the factory. Working together, these doctors carefully supervise the health of workers, prescribe special diet in the factory dietetic restaurants and transfer to lighter work those workers who may suffer from stomach disorders.

Workers also receive competent medical treatment in general clinics and dispensaries. The number of these institutions rose from 5,597 in 1913 to 27,016 in 1935. A few

figures will suffice to show the vast improvement in medical aid in the Soviet Union as compared with 1913. The number of hospital beds increased from 175,600 in 1913 to an estimated 619,800 in 1937. The number of doctors rose from 19,875 in 1913 to 85,900 in 1934. The fight against tuberculosis, a disease associated with poverty and bad living conditions, has been waged most successfully. Examination of army recruits in the Kiev area in 1913 showed that for every 1,000 recruits, 7.69 had tuberculosis. Examination in the same district showed only 0.68 per 1,000 in 1935. In the North Caucasian area in the same period the rate declined from 4.05 to 0.38; and in the Asov area from 5.21 to 0.49. Examination of young men of military age in recent years has revealed a steady improvement in weight, height and chest measurements.

Wage Payment Methods

Workers in the Soviet Union receive wages for their work as do the workers in other countries. There is, however, an important distinction in the nature of wages received by the Soviet worker. In the capitalist countries wages represent the price paid for labor power. The various methods of payment, such as the piece rate or hourly rate practiced in those countries, are influenced by that price. In the Soviet Union the tools of production belong to the producers themselves, that is, to the workers. Labor power is thus not a commodity; workers are not exploited as in the capitalist countries. Thus the growth in the material and cultural well-being of the workers depends on how fast

the workers can develop the productive forces of the country and increase their own productivity.

Elimination of the capitalist forms of production permits also a shortening of the working day at the same time that wages are rising. The degree to which this can be done depends on the amount of labor needed to do all necessary work. This amount of necessary work does not remain the same. It expands and it must expand, because the living standards of the masses rise, because ever larger funds must be built up to take care of social improvements and because larger and larger reserves must be accumulated for capital investments in plants, railroad equipment, machinery and the like which enable the country to carry on its planned expansion of production.

While the increase in wages of individual workers is great, it would be still greater if not for some outside factors influencing the rise in wages. In carrying out its industrialization program, the Soviet Union cannot depend upon borrowing capital from other countries; it has to find the material means for its development within the country itself. Therefore, the speed of industrialization has depended upon the accumulation of reserves by various industries, upon the extent to which the available equipment has been utilized, upon the increase in the productivity of labor, and upon the costs of production. Wages form a large proportion of the cost of production. Therefore, the relationship between wages and labor productivity is of primary importance in planning Soviet production. Such factors as the danger from surrounding enemy countries

and the need to allow for a large war budget have, of course, limited somewhat the possible increases in wages.

Often one hears about inequality of wages in the Soviet Union. These remarks are usually based upon a wrong interpretation of Marx's famous words, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." It is not realized by such persons that these words refer to the final stage in the progress of the human race, a complete state of communism. They cannot be applied to the Soviet Union which is only in a period of socialism. Socialist theory never claimed that wage equality would immediately follow a social revolution. In fact it stressed direct dependence of wages on production during the early stages of socialism.

The new Constitution of the Soviet Union, adopted in December, 1936, marked a new era for the Soviet people. Article 118 of this Constitution declares: "Citizens of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics have the right to work, *i.e.*, the right to guaranteed employment and payment for their work in accordance with its quantity and quality."* By putting these words into its new Constitution, the Soviet Union followed the true Marxian concept of payment for labor during the transition period from capitalism to communism. For Karl Marx, in the nineteenth century, had written against leveling wages in a socialist society, that is, in the preliminary stage of communism. In his criticism of the Gotha Program of the German Labor Party, Marx foresaw that when the workers wrested power from the bour-

* *Constitution of the U.S.S.R.*, p. 40, International Publishers, New York. 10 cents.

geoisie, abolished private ownership of the tools of production and eliminated the exploitation of the working class, they would be able to build first a socialist society in which each one would work according to his ability and be paid according to his labor.

Wages in the Soviet Union are not equal and the leveling of wages would not solve the problems confronting the socialist state. Equalized wages would tend to increase the labor turnover in a country where labor mobility has always been very high. They would eliminate the material stimulus to workers to increase their skills and productivity. They would interfere with the process of attracting workers into leading and more important industries. Unskilled workers would not be interested in becoming skilled or in their own advancement. They would work for a while in one plant, then quit to look for better luck. The labor turnover would doubtless increase among skilled workers who might be attracted by better working arrangements in other plants.

All these results of leveling wages could be observed in the Soviet Union prior to 1928. During those years there was a considerable amount of misunderstanding of the theory of wages during the early stages of socialism. As a result of wage-leveling practice during that period, average earnings in some industries were entirely out of proportion to the conditions of work and the national importance of those industries. Thus the wages of coal miners in 1928 were far below the wages of shoe workers, clothing workers and so on. This situation interfered with the process of industrialization of the country and retarded workers from entering the more important basic industries.

Wage differentials are established according to the relative importance of different branches of production. To attract labor, wages are higher in more important industries. The same policy is applied in planning wages for geographic regions. Wages are raised for those regions which are in greater need of development. Leading professions and those sections of individual industries which are of relatively greater strategic value also receive higher wages.

Piece Work Under Socialism

The method of payment which best answers these various problems is piece work. There are many variations in the piece-work methods used, such as bonuses, premiums, progressive piece rates—most of these variations being introduced upon the initiative of the workers themselves.

Piece work is not, as yet, generally applied in the Soviet Union, but is expanding. The following figures indicate the relation of hours worked on a piece-rate basis to total hours worked in the basic industries: 1928, 57.5 per cent; 1932, 63.7 per cent; 1935, 69.8 per cent.

Since piece work is also practiced in the capitalist countries, the difference in its application there should be emphasized. In capitalist countries piece rates serve as one of the most common methods for speeding up and exploiting workers. Piece work is used to take as much as possible out of the workers and is often very injurious to their health. At the same time earnings not only do not increase but very often go down under the piece-work system as applied in these countries. As the practice of capitalist enterprises shows, an increase in output of in-

dividual workers leads to reduction in the piece rate. Furthermore, increased productivity often results in squeezing out workers who cannot keep up with the speeded pace and thus increases unemployment.

In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, piece work is applied where the six and seven-hour working day exists, where the standards of safety laws and of the care of workers' health are high and the laws strictly enforced. Furthermore, the Soviet worker works for his own class in an economic system where unemployment does not exist. Piece rates are used to improve the organization of labor and to determine wage increases on the basis of productivity. Piece work is accompanied by increasing standards of living, improved working conditions and rising wages.

Additional wages above basic rates are paid in many instances. Overtime is paid at one and a half times the regular rate for the first two hours and double for any additional time. Night work also is paid a higher rate than day work—about one-seventh more. Workers teaching apprentices are paid additional wages for the extra work.

Workers carrying on state or social duties are paid their average earnings during absence from their regular jobs. Young workers between 16 and 18 years of age, who are not permitted to work more than six hours a day, are paid for a full seven-hour day. If they are piece workers, their piece rates are the same as those of the older workers, but they must receive an additional hour's pay. Mothers nursing infants receive additional time off amounting to at least a half hour every three and one-half hours. They are paid for their time lost, time workers being paid their full day's

pay, piece workers receiving additional payment for time absent at the rate of average earnings of each individual mother. Vacations are also paid for at the average earnings rate. The payment is made before the worker leaves for his vacation.

Hours of Work and Vacations

Back in 1913, the average length of the working day was ten hours. Men, women and children worked these hours, in addition to much overtime. The law of 1897 limited overtime to 120 hours a year. However, this law was not enforced. Nor was there extra pay for overtime. Workers in hazardous industries worked as long as or even longer hours than wage earners in other employment. The table below shows that the average length of the working day in industry generally was 9.92 hours in 1913. The workers in coal mines then worked 10.07 hours. Today, however, average hours worked in all industries are less than seven, while coal miners work less than any other large industrial group.

During the very first days after the October Revolution, the Soviet government published a decree establishing an eight-hour working day. And on the tenth anniversary of the Soviet power, hours were still further reduced. Today a maximum seven-hour day obtains.

A shorter maximum of six hours a day is set for workers in certain hazardous industries, for clerical and non-manual workers, and for workers between 16 and 18 years of age. Minors under 16, whenever permitted to work, may not work more than four hours a day.

Actual Average Hours Worked per Day in the Russian Empire and in the Soviet Union (younger workers excluded)

Industry	*1913*	*1928*	*1934*
All industries	9.92	7.81	6.98
Coal mining	10.07	7.32	6.81
Metal mining	10.07	7.88	6.96
Metals and machinery	9.73	7.91	6.97
Textiles	9.39	7.84	7.00

Overtime is limited to 120 hours a year. It is allowed only in exceptional cases, when there is a rush of work. Even then overtime in the course of two consecutive days is allowed purely as an exception and then only to the extent of four hours. Young workers under 18 are prohibited from working any overtime, as also are pregnant women and women nursing their infants.

The management of a plant may use workers for overtime work only with the permission of the trade union and by agreement of the individual worker involved. The trade unions very often refuse permission for overtime work, insisting that instead the management introduce improvements in the organization of work.

The number of working days per week has also been reduced. The basic week set by the law for industry is a four-day week—four days of work and one day of rest, with the factory itself running every day. However, a five-day working week is still prevalent, most Soviet workers working for five days and resting on the sixth. The five-day week applies also to most of the non-manual workers. Days of rest are set on every sixth, twelfth, eighteenth, twenty-fourth and thirtieth day of each month. The four-day working week prevails in chemical works, copper smelting,

foundries and other factories and mines considered among the most harmful branches of industry from the viewpoint of health.

Besides the one-day rest each week and revolutionary holidays, the worker receives an annual vacation. The law provides a minimum vacation of twelve working days with pay. The worker has the right to a vacation after he has worked for five and one-half months at a stretch at any plant and the number of vacation days to which he is entitled, with the rest days added, must be given to him all at once in a single period.

Those workers who are engaged in occupations and industries harmful to their health have a holiday of from twenty-four to thirty-six working days annually.

The total number of days in the average annual vacation has been increasing. In 1932 the average was 15.1 work days. In 1935, in the basic industries, the number of rest days a year, including the vacation period, was 81.4 days per worker.

While paid vacations grow longer, the resort and rest provisions for the workers also improve. During 1935 over 3,000,000 workers were cared for at sanatoriums or rest homes. The number of beds in resort sanatoriums rose from 91,500 in 1936 to an estimated 95,000 in 1937, while the number of beds in the trade union rest homes was estimated at 105,000 in 1937, compared with 99,300 in 1936.

Labor Protection

Such labor protection as was given to the Russian workers by law in the days before the Revolution was meager

and loosely enforced. The labor law itself was not universal but consisted of governmental rules and regulations applying to particular industries. The Factory Inspection Administration was little more than an adjunct of the Police Department, most of the inspectors' time being taken up with strike-breaking, espionage, and other anti-union activity. Prosecutions of employers for violations of the labor laws were infrequent. Fines were trivial, and arrests practically unknown. In 1913, the factory inspectors reported 13,814 infractions of the labor laws by employers, of which only 557 cases were prosecuted, still fewer tried, and scarcely any resulted in convictions.

The law permitted night work for women, except in the textile industry. The latter prohibition, however, was widely violated. Child labor was officially prohibited only for children under 12. Minors between 12 and 15 years of age were permitted to work eight hours a day, nine hours in factories on two shifts. Rules for safety and sanitation were practically unknown. There was no protection of workers using dangerous materials or those engaged in dangerous processes. A survey of the working conditions in the Donetz Coal Basin made before the war showed that the amount of dust in the air was from 1,000 to 15,000 times more than in an ordinary workshop. In forty mines only five had wash rooms and workers had to pay for the water they used in washing after work.

Workers could be discharged without cause on two weeks' notice, but were subject to punishment for voluntarily dropping work. There were, however, plenty of legal reasons such as "arrogance" or "bad conduct" that could be

used to get rid of a worker at any time without previous notice. On the other hand, it was not easy for a worker to quit his job. He could do it only with the court's permission. Wage cuts were not considered to be a legal reason for leaving work. If a worker quit his job without proper permission he was subject to a jail sentence of as high as one month.

Fines imposed by employers upon workers were another feature of conditions of work in pre-revolutionary days. Lenin himself wrote a pamphlet on this serious grievance. Under the law employers were then permitted to fine a worker up to one-third of his wages for a mere violation of factory rules. According to the testimony of one well-known factory inspector, fines in many instances totalled 15 to 20 per cent of wages. Factory rules were established by the employers themselves and often reflected their whims. Thus one of the largest textile factories in Moscow had fines for such things as :"getting up early" in the barracks. 50 kopeks; "passing through the lower gate," 50 kopeks; "leaving the yard," 50 kopeks.

Another factory in pre-revolutionary Moscow fined workers "for singing songs after 9:30 p.m., or singing in places other than those designated by the owner," "for washing laundry in the sleeping barracks," "for bringing tea with sugar into the textile shop," etc. Imposed at the will of the owner, fines had a definite purpose: they were used by employers primarily to cut wage payments and to get as much as possible out of the workers.

The Labor Law of the Soviet Union applies to all wage workers and salaried employees. The administration and

enforcement of this body of laws is entrusted to the trade unions. The trade unions are empowered also to issue such rules and regulations as are necessary to carry out the basic principles of the code. The actual agencies of administration are the factory committees elected by the workers of the various individual factories and the factory inspectors appointed by the elected trade union authorities.

The labor of minors under sixteen is prohibited, except that in special circumstances minors between the ages of fourteen and sixteen are permitted to work not more than four hours a day. Night work and employment in certain hazardous industries are prohibited for all under the age of eighteen. Night work and employment in certain dangerous trades are prohibited for women.

Safety and sanitation regulations are very extensive and are strictly enforced. All machines must be provided with safeguards at the factory in which they are manufactured. The technical staff of a plant is prohibited from installing machinery without preliminary inspection. Finally, the factory committees and inspectors check and enforce regulations. In dangerous trades special clothing must be provided the workers free of charge.

Widespread safety measures result in fewer injuries and in smaller loss of working time. In a Soviet plant an accident is a rare event. It is carefully investigated, and if it is due to negligence on the part of the management, the guilty persons are prosecuted.

Social Insurance in Pre-War Russia

Of limited coverage, both geographically and industrially,

social insurance was hardly known to the majority of workers in the old Russian Empire. Existing primarily in what is known as European Russia, and there only in factories and mines large enough to use steam or other mechanical power, it provided only meager protection to scarcely one-third of the wage earners. To this limited group of wage earners, protected by some social insurance, should be added certain categories of employees working for the government and on railroads. The remaining mass of workers could enjoy only the limited coverage of certain mutual and beneficial societies. The Russian government encouraged these societies in order to keep workers out of independent trade unions.

Old age and invalid insurance were unknown in pre-war Russia except to certain groups of government and railroad employees. There were not more than a million workers covered by this form of insurance, one-half of the cost of which was paid by the workers insured.

Money grants in case of sickness were established in 1912, covering about two million employees, who paid about 60 per cent of the cost. A weekly benefit of from one-fourth to two-thirds of average wages for not more than twenty-six weeks was provided a sick worker after a four-day waiting period. In the case of maternity small benefits were paid for two weeks before and four weeks after childbirth. How insufficient these benefits were is indicated by the fact that in St. Petersburg about three-fourths of the women workers did not stop working until the very day of confinement for childbirth.

Soviet Social Insurance

Social insurance in the Soviet Union is the most widespread and comprehensive in the world. It includes medical care, provides for permanent or temporary disability, be it sickness, quarantine, care of a sick member of the family, pregnancy, childbirth, or an accident. It provides for additional assistance for clothing and nursing an infant and for burials. Pensions are paid to invalids and to aged persons. Death benefits are paid to the worker's family. Discharge payments are made amounting to wages for twelve workings days if the contract is cancelled. The worker does not lost the right to his last job for two months if he is temporarily disabled, while women have a right to their jobs for four months in case of pregnancy and childbirth.

Unemployment insurance protection was suspended by the Soviet Union in 1930, for unemployment had by then become a thing of the past. Contrast this situation with unemployment in the Russian Empire, when millions of workers were continually jobless. There were no censuses of the unemployed, nor were there employment exchanges which could count the jobless. However, local population counts taken in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1911-1912 had reported tens of thousands as unemployed. During the years preceding the Revolution a few million people migrated to America in the hope of finding an opportunity to work. Often as many as ten million poor peasants would come annually to the cities seeking seasonal employment. They sold their labor for miserable wages. According to the official records of the time, they made on an average 53 rubles for four months of intensive work.

Even those who were employed could not count on steady jobs. Here is a typical statement on the uncertainties of pre-war employment by a worker who is now the foreman of a plant in Leningrad:

"I came to Petersburg from White Russia in 1910 and for two years was working in the rolling mill of the Obukhov works.

"There was no regular work. Every morning we men working on the rolling mill turned up at the factory gates. There were forty of us. Many were left outside the gates, because usually only ten to fifteen men were needed. I used to work about three times a week, earning ten rubles a month. I paid three rubles for coal alone. . . ."

In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, there is a place for everyone to work. The number of workers and employees in Soviet enterprises and institutions grows rapidly from year to year. During the years of the First Five-Year Plan their number increased by 11,300,000. Three more millions were added during the four years of the Second Five-Year Plan. Over 26,000,000 workers are now employed. These workers do not know economic crises or unemployment. Their growing numbers reflect the complete elimination of unemployment, the bringing into productive work of large masses of women, and the participation in the work of Soviet enterprises of hundreds of thousands of former hired agricultural workers and poor peasants.

Disability benefits paid to Soviet workers equal the worker's previous wage, if he needs someone to take care of him. Temporary disability is compensated by payment

of sums of money equaling two-thirds of the regular wages, although it may be one-third when a worker is partially incapacitated as the result of general illness.

Soviet health insurance is all-inclusive, the right to obtain benefit beginning after two months' employment. There is no waiting period, benefits commencing on the first day of sickness. Full wages are paid to a worker absent on account of illness, quarantine, or because of need to nurse a sick member of the family. In addition to wages, a worker is entitled to full free medical care and hospitalization; the latter service is given not only to workers themselves but to their entire families.

Maternity leaves range from twelve to sixteen weeks during which full wages are paid. There are fixed money grants for clothing and nursing the infant, and additional monthly grants to cover added expenditures during the first nine months of its life. Free milk is supplied to infants in the cities.

The whole burden of insurance costs is carried by the employer, which in most cases means the state. *No deductions from wages are made.* The cost of social insurance is considered to be an integral part of the cost of production of each industrial unit.

The eligibility of workers for benefits is determined by local trade union factory committees, which administer the benefits in a manner adjusted to local conditions. Claimants face administrators who are fellow workers and not hostile judges. The system operates without malingering, social safeguards working to reduce red tape and to insure good faith on the part of administrators and claimants.

Trade Unions Under the Tsar

Trade unions were practically non-existent in tsarist Russia. Unionism was virtually illegal. Clause 318 of the Russian Criminal Code of 1874 read in part: "Persons accused of belonging to societies having the aims of rousing hostility between employers and workers as well as provoking strikes are liable to imprisonment for eight months with deprivation of rights and property and exile to Siberia."

However, such laws and the drastic, suppressive measures taken against any manifestation of labor unionism did not completely stop workers from organizing. There had been many ups and downs in the history of unionism in pre-revolutionary Russia. Before the uprising against the tsar in 1905, militant unions had sprung up in leading industrial centers. They were closely related to the revolutionary political parties. They led widespread strikes; they even had central organizations and conferences. Ruthlessly suppressed after 1905 when, according to the police department, 107 unions were closed down in 1907 alone, they sprang up again just before the outbreak of the World War. Again they were smashed by the wartime terror beginning in 1914. The leaders were arrested and in many cases banished to Siberia. The whole movement was practically wiped out so that at the time of the first revolution of March, 1917, very few trade union members could be found functioning "above ground." But underneath the ferment had continued. Driven into illegality, trade unions continued to advance the interests of labor and came into their own after the tsar was overthrown.

Union Growth Since 1917

The development of unions since the Revolution has been both rapid and integrated with the development of the country. They have played a vital part in transforming the old Russia into a socialist state. During the early years of the Revolution trade unions established labor control in production, fought sabotage and raised labor discipline and productivity of labor. They participated in determining wage rates and in putting safety laws into effect. During the years of the civil war which swept the country and threatened the life of the revolution the trade unions mobilized masses of workers. As soldiers they fought the enemy on every front. They gathered, guarded and distributed food supplies.

When the civil war was over, the trade unions were active in helping the government to strengthen the economic ties with the peasants. During the period of the New Economic Policy they defended the class interests of workers against the capitalist elements. They entered into collective agreements, built up strike and unemployment funds, and carried on cultural work among the masses.

Then came the reconstruction period and again the trade unions actively participated in the efforts to organize production. Through the "socialist competition" movement and in "shock brigades" in factories, mills and mines, they strive for the success of the Five-Year Plans and organize the masses for the building of socialism.

Today in the Soviet Union trade unions are more powerful than in any country in the world. From a position of

underground illegality they have advanced to first place as builders of the new classless society. They are regarded by such authorities as Beatrice and Sidney Webb as the most remarkable mass organizations in the world.

Membership in these Soviet trade unions has shown a startling growth in the period since 1917. Imagine a rise in membership from a possible few thousands in that year to the startling figure of 21,614,700 in October, 1936, and over 22,000,000 in 1937.

This makes it today easily the largest trade union movement in the whole world. Compare it with the 7,500,000 in American trade unions, the highest number yet reached here, and you get some notion of the enormous size of this primary organization of workers' democracy in the Soviet Union.

It should not be concluded from their size that these Soviet trade unions have compulsory membership. There is no such provision either in law or in trade union practice. But the advantages of membership are so great that about 83 per cent of all the eligible workers in the Soviet Union are now in the unions. The percentage may, of course, vary from one union to another. In agriculture, where the wage workers are not so well developed educationally and politically, the percentage runs from 60 to 80 per cent, while among factory workers generally the percentage will range from 80 to 95 per cent, depending upon the industry, the type of worker and the area covered.

Functions of the Unions

The distinct job of the trade unions is to work for the

general improvement of the conditions of the workers *as workers*. It is true that the Soviet government as a whole represents the workers and farmers of the country as citizens and collective owners of all the means of production and distribution. But the workers on the job need their own special organizations to protect them from dangerous bureaucratic tendencies in industrial and plant management. The unions thus represent the workers in their day-to-day interests in office, factory and mine.

In representing the workers, the unions, on a national and regional scale as well as locally and in the particular plants, carry on collective bargaining with the managements. Collective agreements are periodically thrashed out and signed. Wages are determined after full discussion of all the possibilities of production in the plant, the needs of the workers and the general coordinated plan of the industry in relation to the plans for the whole Soviet economy for a particular period.

These collective agreements fix detailed wages. They determine many other things. For example, the agreement stipulates the amount of funds that the management is to set aside for various purposes, such as clubs, housing, kindergartens for the workers' children, cultural and athletic activities.

Labor protection, in the more immediate sense of the word, is under the direct supervision of special subcommittees of the factory committee in each place of work. This committee works for the reduction of occupational hazards, the prevention of accidents, and the general pro-

tection of the workers' health, including the strict enforcement of the health and labor laws.

Then there is the promotion of educational and cultural activities in each plant, which is carried on by the trade unions. Every unit of the union, from the smallest subcommittee in the smallest office or shop to the Central Council of Trade Unions, is vitally concerned with this task, which is carried on by means of study classes, clubs, lectures, libraries, technical training, physical and recreational activities and sports of all kinds, periodicals and newspapers edited in the plants by the workers themselves, theatricals, movies and radio. This mass education work is one of the outstanding achievements of trade unions in the U.S.S.R.

Since 1933 the unions have undertaken one of the most important functions ever exercised by unions in any country. They now carry the tremendous responsibility of administering all the social insurance funds. This covers the control and operation of rest homes and sanatoria, playgrounds, summer camps, restaurants, nurseries as well as the administration of pension funds, medical funds, scholarship funds and other special funds connected with the operations of the vast social insurance system. The Commissariat of Labor was abolished in 1933, its functions being turned over to the unions.

Another important function of the unions is that of factory inspection. This task also was previously performed by a government agency but is now carried out only by the trade unions. The unions choose the factory inspectors as well as recall them at any time they may prove themselves inefficient or unsatisfactory. These inspectors have

the power to assess fines and to enforce all the laws relating to health in the basic Labor Law. Violations of the labor standards required by law may lead to the imposition of a fine on the employing institution. The fine is imposed by the labor protection bureau operated not by the government but by the trade unions.

Unlike the union in any capitalist land, the union in the U.S.S.R., where all the means of production and distribution belong to a workers' and farmers' government, can, without betraying its membership, take a real and "selfish" interest in the improvement of technique and in the organization of higher labor efficiency. It is the trade unions that actively participate in the organization of the now world-famous "socialist competition" and the "shock brigades," both aimed at improving the quantity and quality of output in mine, mill, factory and farm. The unions have from the very first days after the Revolution taken a keen interest in production. They have trained hundreds of thousands of workers to assume responsible positions in industry, agriculture and government administration posts.

Such activity on the part of the unions can certainly not be termed "class collaboration" in a country where classes have been resolved into one united producing class. It is rather in essence the working class, organized in trade unions, helping itself—the same working class organized as a government and operating thousands of industries and farms.

Because of this central fact of complete unity with the government the unions are able to play a strategic part in the planned development of the socialist economy. They,

in fact, draw up the plans covering labor conditions and standards that are used by the State Planning Commission in working out its plans for the year and covering every phase of economic life in the country. The so-called "counter-planning" in each industrial unit and factory is conducted through the union committee. It works out the proposed production rate for the factory as well as the work requirements for each job, consistent with the plans for the whole industry.

The unions are clearly one of the most vital agencies in Soviet society. Because they operate in a country where the private employers as a class have been abolished, they are able to perform the varied new functions which give the fullest expression to the needs of the working class as a whole in the building of the new order.

Soviet Workers Work for Themselves

The Soviet worker, it is clear, does not work for an exploiter or for the enrichment of a few owners. He works for himself, for his class, for his Soviet society. That is why one so often hears Soviet workers speak of "our shop," "our factory," "our mine." In such a society the worker perceives the creative character of his work. This fact has given rise to such developments as "socialist competition," "shock brigades" and the "Stakhanov movement" which are expressions of the socially creative character of Soviet education.

The attitude of the Soviet worker toward his work has been undergoing a rapid change. "To reach and surpass America," words now heard so often in the Soviet Union,

is not just a catch phrase used for propaganda purposes by the government officials. For they truly represent the changing attitude toward work. Instead of slaving at their machines the wage earners participate more and more in guiding and improving the production processes in the factories, mills, mines and plants of the country. Through their sweeping mass movements they learn new technique, raise their productivity, increase the output per worker and apply their individual initiative in organizing their work. Such mass movements as "socialist competition," which have embraced millions of workers, or the "shock brigades" in which more than a million workers have participated, or the rapidly-spreading Stakhanov movement—all are means through which the Soviet workers are mastering newly acquired knowledge, technique and the organization of work.

Increasing Productivity

The productivity of the Soviet workers is increasing rapidly. This occurs in the face of the quick industrialization of the country, where the physical volume of the industrial production has increased more than eight times since 1913 and where masses of untrained people have been rapidly drawn into new and complicated modern processes of production. The productivity of the Soviet industrial worker is estimated in 1937 to be 230.5 per cent higher than in 1928, at the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan.

Increase in productivity as a basic condition for the success of socialism has been repeatedly stressed by Soviet leaders and has been grasped by the masses of the workers them-

selves. In the words of Lenin, the productivity of labor is, in the last analysis, most important and most essential for the victory of the new social order. By creating a new and much higher productivity, socialism defeats the capitalist order.

"Land of Opportunity"

Higher wages compensate individual workers for higher productivity. However, this is not the only advantage. There are countless examples of workers advancing rapidly to positions as leaders of working brigades, foremen, and factory managers. The Soviet Union, with its rapidly expanding industries, develops all workers who manifest higher skill and ability. Such workers are sent to schools to receive special training, are given responsible tasks. Their advancement is fostered by all possible means. Ability, not favoritism, counts. Here is a typical history of one of thousands of such workers:

Korabov was born in a family of blast furnace workers. He is now 35 years old. When he was 14 he began to work at the Makayevka metallurgical plant in South Russia. That was in 1916. He started as an apprentice locksmith. At the time of the Revolution he was a rank-and-file worker in the blast furnace department of that plant. The Soviets nationalized the plant, and in 1922 Korabov entered the Moscow mining academy. He studied for four years, specializing in blast furnace engineering. He was sent back to the Makayevka plant as an engineer in 1926. In a short time he was made an assistant chief and then a chief of the blast furnace department. After two years he was transferred to

the same position at the Petrovsky Works and later was sent to the new Magnitogorsk Works in Siberia. For his excellent work in organizing the smelting of metal he was decorated with highest honors by the government. In 1936 he became chief engineer and deputy director of the Stalin Combinat at Magnitogorsk and in March, 1937, he was made a director of the entire gigantic Magnitogorsk works.

It is clear from such examples as this that the Soviet Union is indeed the real "land of opportunity." It opens the door of advancement to those who under the old régime would certainly have had no chance to rise from the ranks. Bricklayers, shoe workers, rolling mill hands, drop forgers, clerks, weavers, oil workers, miners, stokers, machinists, agricultural workers are now taking their places as the real organizers and planners of production in the new economy where wealth is created for the welfare of the whole people rather than for the profits of the wealthy few.

The rapid mechanization of Soviet industry is not limited to the introduction of new machinery and adaptation of workers to new technical processes. From engineers down to rank-and-file workers, all participate in improving technique. There are countless examples of engineers trying out new inventions in cooperation with factory management and workers and as a result revolutionizing methods of production in the plant. In most Soviet plants there are voluntary societies of inventors and "rationalizers." Each invention offered by a worker or engineer is examined by the society and, if the invention is worth while, it is put into use. For every invention or improvement, the management of a plant pays rewards in accordance with the extent of

the economies achieved when it is put into operation. The Soviet Union Inventors' Society already has more than 300,000 members.

The Stakhanov Movement

The Stakhanov movement, that spectacular adaptation of new techniques, new methods of production and of better organization of labor, is the result of years devoted to acquiring knowledge and technique. Year after year, technicians were being trained, workers were receiving additional education, new workers were gaining knowledge, new machines and new processes were being introduced. Suddenly this process of accumulation received an outward and accelerated expression in the Stakhanov movement.

In 1935, after eighteen years, ten of which were spent in healing the wounds left from the World War, intervention and civil war, a humble beginning by a worker from the Donetz Coal Basin, Alexei Stakhanov, opened a new page in the history of labor. Compared with the earlier "socialist competition" and "shock brigades," this new movement is marked by the conquest of technique. After overthrowing the power of capitalists and landlords, conscious workers always considered the raising of the productivity of labor as a main problem. But in the Stakhanov movement it is being carried on by a new wave of enthusiasm of the working masses.

The significant fact about this movement is the broad participation of workers which it stimulates. Rationalization of the technical processes, a better organization of labor, careful check-up of day-by-day habits of work, elimination

of unnecessary hustle, of unnecessary machine stoppages, and a study of work motions—all these numerous steps are being carried out by the workers themselves.

At the first congress of the Stakhanov workers held in Moscow about two years ago, one worker after another rose to describe how through his own individual initiative or in cooperation with a few other workers, the output in their factories and mines and railroads was increased. Workers themselves initiate and carry out Stakhanov methods, adapting them to local conditions. A few at first, they would plan carefully, consult factory executives, show by their own example what could be done. Then they would organize a "Stakhanov day" for the entire plant. This day would then grow into a "Stakhanov week," a "Stakhanov month," the movement embracing more and more workers, spreading from one factory to another, from industry to industry, to agriculture, to all phases of the national economic life.

A worker from a steel smelting plant tells how he became such a Stakhanov worker:

"My record of 17.2 and 18.6 tons of steel from a square meter of hearth is no accident. I trained for it for a long time.

"I ran up my first record in the following way. I came to work an hour early. I learned about the composition of the charge, explained to my brigade the importance of the smeltings we were to do, gave instructions as to how the work should be organized in order to achieve success. . . ."

Another Stakhanovite in a shoe factory says:

"The whole difference in the methods of work is, first,

that my work bench is in perfect order, the leather lies two meters from me, the patterns were placed correctly and I use the parallelogram method in cutting the leather. . . . The essence of this method is that I cut out all the soles along the grain of the leather and not just anyhow. I lay the pattern down correctly and use every possible bit of the leather."

Schools are organized in all Soviet plants to teach the Stakhanov methods of work. Stakhanov workers themselves are usually the instructors in these schools. The students are workers who have not yet mastered the new methods.

The Stakhanov movement, it should be pointed out, with its improvement in order and technique, also has helped considerably in reducing the number of industrial accidents.

Higher earnings, resulting from higher productivity of Stakhanov workers, are reflected in the savings of these workers. An analysis of expenditures of this group shows that their monthly earnings exceed by several hundred rubles their monthly expenditures.

During recent years another movement has developed in the Soviet Union. Workers have organized themselves in groups agreeing to produce high quality goods. These workers are known as "quality workers." They work out standards for their output, rating it as "excellent," "good" or "average," each grade having definite specifications. Higher rates are, of course, paid for excellent and good work than for the average production.

It should be noted also that these "quality workers" as well as those who participate in socialist competition and the Stakhanov movement, do not achieve higher production

records by means of any special physical exertion, but rather by adopting more rational methods of work. They arrange their work at the bench or machine so as to eliminate surplus movements and at the same time make it easier to handle. And this planning of work, rather than any "speeding up" is the basis of socialist competition on the job. A worker who has mastered his machine and who knows his job properly finds new methods of work which increase his productivity.

It is difficult for some people to grasp the fact that workers stand behind this movement for raising labor output. In capitalist countries such a movement would be highly unpopular. It would lead to greater speed-up and certainly bring immediate, if not permanent, unemployment to large numbers. In the Soviet Union the measure of success is different. All successes there would be considered futile if they did not result in the increased consumption of goods and the improved welfare of the entire country. In the absence of unemployment, with shorter hours of work, growing wages and improving living conditions, the Soviet worker is happier. His work has a new meaning for him and he strives to improve both its quality and its quantity.

Heroes of Labor

And one of the most significant facts of all lies in the *recognition* that the worker gets in the Soviet Union. This in itself may seem an intangible item but it is, in a sense, the key to the higher productivity that is now being achieved in spite of all the difficulties of planning and the obstacles

which wreckers and enemies have thrown in the way of the advancing Soviet economy. The simple and eloquent truth in this situation was expressed by Stalin in his address to the Stakhanovite Congress in Moscow in November, 1935, when he said:

> "Here the man who works is honored. Here he does not work for exploiters, but for himself, for his class, for society. Here the man who works cannot feel himself deserted and alone. On the contrary, the man who works in our country feels that he is a free citizen of his country, in a way a public figure. And if he works well and gives all that he can to society, he is a hero of labor and covered with glory."

Add this recognition and honor to the other characteristics of Soviet life—no unemployment, no fear of poverty and hunger, the certainty of a rising standard of living. The worker in the Soviet Union has indeed broken from the past of the tsars, the past of capitalism. He is without question living already in a new civilization. Entering the third decade after the revolution he is beginning to reap the tremendous gains guaranteed in an advancing socialist society.

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