

ABOLITION
OF
ZAMINDARI

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KITABISTAN

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TWO ALTERNATIVES

By

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PREFACE

The two main problems that face India to-day are : Industrialization of the country and re-organization of its agriculture. The co-ordination of small, medium and big industries *inter se* and their correlation to agriculture are other questions that call for application of constructive statesmanship and all that is best in our leadership.

As for agriculture on which three-fourths of the Indian people depend directly for their livelihood, it may be pointed out that land system lies at the root of all organization in this sphere. The existing system has cramped both men and crops. It has now few protagonists left in the country and has outgrown its utility, if ever it had any. It has stood for economic inequality and political reaction; it has to go.

It is going, but the question is—what should take its place ? The answer to this question depends on the type of civilization that we hope to develop. We may nationalize our land and collectivize agriculture. This means elimination of exploitation and of rule by landed aristocracy or oligarchy, but results in substitution of a society where individual initiative has little or no scope and where the place of the old privileged classes—the zemindars, financiers and the lawyers—is taken by a new class, viz., the managers of factories and farms and their superior and subordinate officials up and down the ladder. The kolhoz (collective farm) may lead to economic equality, but it does not necessarily lead to political equality; on the contrary, it engenders dictatorship. Collectivization—cum—mechanization means a big economic unit worked by big machines; it means corres-

pondingly so much less liberty to the worker on the land and his subordination to the urban industrial worker. In the Bolshevik scheme of things, the leading role is assigned to the proletariat which shall wield political power; the land worker or the peasant is to play only a secondary part.

Or, we may, instead of centralizing the ownership of the means of production in the hands of the State, make the worker the owner of his tools and the means of production with or upon which he works, i.e., make the tenant proprietor of his holding. Just as decentralization in the field of politics is our aim, so in the sphere of economic activities decentralization happens to be the correct ideal. Only one thread can run through all our life, political or economic. Panchayat of ancient memory shows us the way on the political or administrative side and the Chinese industrial co-operative on the side of manufacturing industry. Logically, the picture of the agricultural co-operative of independent peasant producers rises in our mind to fill the gap in agriculture. These three alone can form lasting bases of economic and political democracy. Then alone the worker or peasant can come into his own. Certainly a strong centre representing the reversionary interests of the community as a whole, carrying on certain essential functions and wielding residuary or exceptional powers to intervene and co-ordinate, is not inconsistent with the panchayat and the co-operatives. Not to digress; collectivization or mechanization of agriculture on big scale is by no means the last word in social evolution. We have to find a solution in consonance with the needs of our situation and with our traditions. I know the climate of opinion prevailing in certain intellectual circles of the country is not congenial to my views; in raising my voice against collectivization it seems I am wading against the stream—against fashion, but public interest demands that I should.

I shall not anticipate the contents of the book further.

It is unnecessary on my part to say that my views do not reflect those of the U. P. Government (to be precise, they have not yet formulated any); still it is better to say it than not.

I must state here unreservedly that for the most part of my account of the Soviet system I am indebted to Mr. Leonard E. Hubbard*. Mr. Hubbard writes from personal knowledge; he states facts and in his opinions he is neither a blind admirer of the U.S.S.R. nor its inveterate hater. He tows a middle line successfully, giving praise where due and assigning blame where necessary. My thanks are due to other writers also whose names and works have been mentioned at the proper place.

Lucknow
October 3, 1946

CHARAN SINGH

*Economics of Social Agriculture, 1939.

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CHAPTER I

LAND TENURE

CONCEPTION OF PROPERTY

Man's ideas on property—perhaps, the most stubborn of all social canons—have altered considerably during the last three-quarters of a century. The first Great War particularly acted as a sharp dissolvent of a state of things wherein many elements, economic and social, had already been working a change. Increasingly, under the pressure of philosophical and political criticism, property has come to be looked upon less as an absolute individual right and more as a social function which must serve common interests and satisfy the needs of the whole national community. The Weimar constitution of Republican Germany issued on August 11, 1919, was the first to proclaim the new view as an established principle in its Article 153 which said:—"Property carries duties with it. Its use shall at the same time be a service for the general good."

PECULIAR NATURE OF LANDED PROPERTY

Although in practice, the new view was more extensively applied in the industrial field, because the somewhat brutal features of the Industrial Revolution called for increased public control and the organized pressure of the workers helped to secure it, yet theoretically the change of outlook in Europe made greater strides with regard to land ownership than other forms of property. Social philosophers have continually pointed out how inadmissible it is that land, which was

not created by man's efforts yet is the primary source of his existence, should be owned despotically. Obviously it cannot be gainsaid that the private ownership of land confers upon its owner a power over his fellow-citizens which, when exercised, is greater than the power possessed by the owner of any other form of private property. We must live on the land, and if the power of the owner were absolute this might be made impossible. Because of this, land ownership has always been separately treated in law and the fiction established that land is held for the King. That is also the *raison d'être* of the various Tenancy Acts throughout India and similar enactments in other parts of the world which seek to control and circumscribe the power of the private owners of agricultural land.

There is still another reason why all economists have been inclined to treat land as a special kind of property. The land area of the earth has been estimated at 58 million square miles; of this area the polar regions claim 7 millions and the deserts 5, while only about 29 million square miles are considered fertile agricultural land. Land, therefore, partakes of the nature of a monopoly, of which there can never be an unlimited supply. If individual countries be considered, some appear still to have a super-abundance of potential fertile land, while in others, called old countries, practically every square inch of soil that can be used has been brought under cultivation. "The stock of land in an old country", explains Marshall, "at any time is the stock for all times; and when a cultivator decides to take in a little more land to his business he decides in effect to take it away from somebody else's business". But as population of new countries increases, fresh land is being brought under the plough and land tends to become the limiting factor of production in agriculture everywhere, which circumstance distinguishes it from every other industry. Capital in manufacturing industries, being a pro-

duct of labour, can practically be increased indefinitely, but not land.

Land possesses another distinctive feature also; it is almost the only asset that improves with use. Shells, guns and battleships are rapidly wasting assets and so are minerals, factories and all kinds of machinery, but land is there still—the better and the more valuable by sensible use. Its exploitation can go on indefinitely without deterioration, whereas mineral resources can be exploited only once. Unlike other forms of Capital it is not evanescent or subject to wear and tear or depreciation, and therefore, need not be renewed or replaced. "The relative inexhaustibility of the land", says Dr. Hsiao Tung Fei, "gives the people a relative security. Although there are bad years, the land never disillusiones the people completely, since hope for plenty in the future always remains and is not infrequently realized. If we take the other kinds of productive work, we shall see that the risks involved are much greater. The sense of security is expressed in the following statement made to me by one of the villagers:—

"Land is there. You can see it every day. Robbers cannot take it away. Thieves cannot steal it. Men die but land remains".

"The incentive to hold land is directly related to the sense of security. The farmer says: 'The best thing to give one's son is land. It is living property. Money will be used up but land never'."¹

Living creates wants, and it is through production alone that they can be satisfied. No wonder, then, that at the basis of all arts and industries lies agriculture, the art of producing raw materials from land, without which neither life nor civilization is possible.

"It is evident", says Van Der Post, "that society is dependent upon agriculture for its food and the raw

¹ "Peasant Life in China" (1938), pp. 181-82.

materials of its clothing. Man must be fed in order to live and to be able to perform his duties whether they be in the field of agriculture or in any other field of human endeavour, and only agriculture can provide him with the necessities which will satisfy his hunger. Similarly, man must be clothed and here again it is mainly agriculture which provides the raw material from which his clothing is made.”²

In addition to providing food and clothing for man, it yields him the various basic raw materials to meet his other needs. Obviously, the prosperity of a nation must largely, if not solely, depend on the use that it makes of this free gift of nature, on the way that land is utilized. The significance, therefore, of agriculture is self-evident; it defies description. No truer statement of the rôle that agriculture should enjoy in the body-politic of a country has been made than by the “*Businessmen’s Commission on Agriculture*” appointed in 1926 by the National Industrial Conference Board, Inc., and the Chamber of Commerce of the United States of America, to report on the condition of agriculture in the United States and measures for its improvement. While summarizing its conclusions on the question as to how the agriculture problem has to be approached the Commission says:—

“Agriculture is not merely a way of making money by raising crops; it is not merely an industry or a business; it is essentially a public function or service performed by private individuals for the care and use of the land in the national interest and farmers in the course of their pursuit of a living and a private profit are the custodians of the basis of the national life. Agriculture is, therefore, affected with a clear and unquestionable public interest, and its status is a matter of national concern calling for deliberate and far-sighted national policies,

² “*The Economics of Agriculture*” (1937), p. 5.

not only to conserve the natural and human resources involved in it, but to provide for national security, promote a well-rounded prosperity and secure social and political stability." (p.20).

LAND TENURE IN INDIA.

It will be readily conceded that of the many factors contributing to the well-being or otherwise of the agricultural industry and of the innumerable forces influencing the development of society in any country, the system of land tenure, that is, the method of distribution of land among its citizens and their relations with one another and with the State, including their right to dispose of land by law, or, in other words, the system of legal rights which defines the relations between men and soil is singly the most important. Clearly, that system of land tenure alone is ideal which allows for exploitation of land in the national interest, leads to an equitable distribution of agricultural income and ensures social peace in the country-side and that nation alone will prosper which recognizes that "the custodian of the basis of the nation's life," viz., the tiller of the soil—the man who makes the unwilling soil yield its boons for the good of his fellow-men—and his welfare, are the worthiest objects of its solicitude. The first volume of the Report of the Statutory Commission says of the cultivator:—

"It is he who clears and fertilizes the land. The vernal exuberance in which it is clothed and the landscape views which it wears, arise from his exertions. It is he who supplies the necessities of life, infuses activity and vigour into commerce and keeps up the vitality of the whole country. His welfare and the welfare of the country are so much linked with each other, that it behoves everyone to interest himself in his cause."

The existing system in India, as we shall see, is far from the ideal; it is "antiquated, wooden and antediluvian". Neither the welfare of the cultivator nor that of

the country is served by it; it is positively injurious and mischievous.

As we have to deal with the problems of the present, it will not be very useful to enter into the details of the land system that obtained at various periods of the immeasurably long pre-British span of Indian history; still the underlying principles will bear reference.

In the ancient times the law was laid down thus by the sage Jaimini, in his *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* (VI.7.3):—"The king cannot give away the earth because it is not his exclusive property, but is common to all beings enjoying the fruits of their own labour on it. It belongs to all alike". Sāvāra Swami commenting on this passage says:—"The king cannot make a gift of his kingdom, for it is not his as he is entitled only to a share of the produce by reason of his affording protection to his subjects." To this Sāyan adds:—"The king's sovereignty consists in punishing the guilty and protecting the good. Nor is the land his property, for what is yielded by land as the fruit of labour on the part of all beings must be enjoyed by them as their own property".

The King was entitled to a share of the usufruct of the land in the occupation of his subjects not because he was the owner, but as a price for the protection afforded to life, liberty and property and because common expenses of the community had to be met. The Revenue Settlements were made with the village community which was held collectively responsible for the payment of the total demand. The soil, though in law it belonged to all, that is, to the people, was in practice allotted to its members by a particular village community for separate enjoyment to be held so long as a fixed land tax assessed and realized by the Village Council or Panchayat was paid to the State. But in addition to the levy of taxes, the State, again in the common interest of the community, exercised through the village Panchayat a further right—and this right is the crux of the

matter. Whenever the holder failed to cultivate the land or to cultivate it properly, the State intervened by evicting or mulcting him. We would refer the reader to the *Artha-Shāstra* of Kautilya, the only comprehensive and detailed account available of the ancient Indian Land system and agriculture. Says Kautilya:—"Non-cultivation of land by the peasant or his letting it out to a third person renders it liable to confiscation. The king may either, if he chooses to confiscate, settle the holding with other persons or continue it with the defaulter and realize a fine".³ Again in Chapter ten of Part three of his monumental work, he lays down that "the owner of a plot of cultivable land, if he or the land is not affected by any calamity, shall be liable to a fine of rupees twelve if he begins to reside elsewhere and does not sow seed therein at the proper time".⁴ In order that the standard and efficiency of cultivation may be maintained in the general good, Manu also, a far earlier and even greater authority, entitles the king to inflict similar penalties upon the defaulter.⁵

Thus strangely enough we find the principle embodied in Article 155 of the Weimar constitution of Germany, viz., "the cultivation and exploitation of the soil is a duty of the landowner towards the community," fully recognized and acted upon in Hindu India. "The soil belonged to all alike", neither to the king alone nor its holder absolutely, but as all could not cultivate the whole soil of the realm jointly nor could the king do so on their behalf, it was allotted to individuals with extensive rights granted to, or inhering in, them therein, and the king as repository of the general well-being and the only executive of the whole community, reserved or had got delegated to himself certain rights—rights which over-

³ Part II, Chap. I, Sh. 12-14.

⁴ Sh. 15-16.

⁵ VII, 243 and IX, 45.

rode all individual interests as and when common weal dictated. "The right of cultivating particular portions of the earth", observes Sir George Campbell in his *Essay on Indian Land Tenures* (Cobden Club Papers), "is rather a privilege than a property—a privilege, first, of the whole people, then, of a particular tribe or a particular village community and finally of particular individuals of the community. In this last stage, land is partitioned off to these individuals as a matter of mutual convenience, but not as unconditional property; it long remains subject to certain conditions and to reversionary interests of the community, which prevent its uncontrolled alienation and attach to it certain common rights and common burdens."⁶

This is, however, only the purest and most dominant aspect of the Hindu land system; there was another strain discernible side by side. Jaimini's sutra was clear and the distinction between the political rights of the crown and the individual rights of ownership was well understood, yet the king sometimes, as the "lord of all" (vide *Manu* VIII,39), did make actual gifts and grants of lands to his preceptors or to Kshatriyas in reward of spiritual services or conquests for him, or to his officers in lieu of salaries. It is thus that India's first landlords were created and peasants on the gifted or granted land degraded to tenants. In the Buddhist period we read of estates of 1,000 Karisas (probably acres) or more farmed by Brahmins, and of one estate being cultivated by as many as 500 ploughs with hired labour. The law books of this period, therefore, also contemplate non-cultivating landlords letting out land for cultivation against a share of the produce⁷. These jagirs or large estates, however, were so few and far between that they did not mar the general picture presented by the country

⁶ Cited by Baden Powell, Vol. I, p. 219.

⁷ (*Āpṣṭamba* 1·6, 1820) II.11.28 (1).

as a whole. India continued to be a country of small holders or peasant proprietors; the actual tiller still faced the State—through the village Panchayat, of course. The idea held up in the Buddhist scriptures, as we have seen in those of the Hindus, was that of the landholder not divorced from his land, but cultivating it himself. This is proved by the fact that a social stigma attached to the 'hireling' who was ranked below the slave. A *Jātaka* laments as a symptom of social decadence the sorry spectacle of sturdy peasants leaving behind their own barns at home to toil as hirelings on the estates of the royal capitalist⁸.

As we pass on to the Muslim period, we find that, while under the Hindu Law a peasant could be ejected for inefficiency, available historical documents do not mention any such provision, although they do, in the Afghan period, record cases of peasants being flogged for failure to produce adequate crops, not so much because it was in the interest of the community to produce crops, but because owing to this failure they could not pay revenue to the State. Secondly, instead of dealing with the actual tiller of the soil and having the revenue collected directly by salaried government officials, intermediaries began to be increasingly employed for the purpose. Akbar's Zabt or Regulation system aiming at direct settlement with the individual cultivator did not apply to the whole of the Moghul Empire, and, in the areas in which it did, could not resist the encroachment or intrusion of middlemen everywhere. The intermediaries consisted of the petty ruling Hindu chiefs, who became vassals of the Muslim overlord, the village headmen with whom settlements of their respective villages were made, the farmers or contractors called

⁸ (Vide Dr. R. K. Mukerjee's Note on *Indian Land System* appearing in Volume II of the Report of the Bengal Land Revenue Commission, 1940).

Taluqdars in Oudh and Ijaredars elsewhere who engaged to pay for the year a lump sum for a village or larger area, and the assignees or jagirdars who were high officers of the State and whose salaries were charged upon the revenues of the areas respectively assigned to them and out of which they had frequently to provide a prescribed force of cavalry for the sovereign's needs. Though the Moghul kings were very solicitous of the well-being of the cultivators and from time to time issued various instructions against undue exactions being made from the peasantry and though the country flourished, as perhaps it never did before, yet unfortunately and paradoxically enough, the Moghul period saw the introduction of intermediaries on a large scale in the land system of India who were, later on, to prove the bane of the country. Perhaps, they were a necessity of the times. There was one relieving feature, however, about this class of intermediaries, viz., all these grants, engagements and assignments enured only till the death of the king or that of the jagirdar, whichever event happened earlier; they had to be renewed by the king to the jagirdar's heir or by his successor to the throne to the old jagirdar, as the case might be. Grants usually passed from father to son, but in law renewal could be refused and was, in actual practice, refused in many cases where proper grounds existed. Howsoever it may be, we find in the last days of the Moghul Empire a gradual "transformation of a heterogenous body of chiefs, farmers and grantees into a class which under British rule was to become a homogeneous body of landlords"⁹.

This class which on the advent of the British rule already held the bulk of the country in its hands and enjoyed practical freedom in its relations with the peasants was, however,—although, as we have seen, all offices in the Moghul times tended to become hereditary—still far

⁹ *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. IV, Chap. 16.

from being the owner of the soil of the peasants within their small jurisdictions. "The Talookhdar was little more than an hereditary revenue-contractor. His right was the right to all the just rents paid by the actual occupants, after satisfaction of the Government claims. His property was the rent minus the revenue of a particular estate. This Talookhdaree right, a right of collection, was distinct from a proprietary right in the soil. The Talookhdar, who paid to Government the revenue of a large cluster of villages, had, perhaps, a proprietary right in some of these small estates, perhaps, in none. The proprietary right in most instances lay with the village communities."¹⁰

To dispossess the zamindar or Taluqdar, therefore, of his historical zamindari or taluqdari, as did happen often times in the Moghul days, was not—and, for the matter of that, should not be to-day—to deprive him of his household and *Khas* lands; but only to assign to another the profitable employment of collecting from the cultivators the revenue assessed on their holdings and retaining a commission on the revenue so collected. For, they had simply the functions that in some parts of India the *Jambardar* performs these days.

The British traders themselves appeared on the scene as zamindars in the garb of the East India Company. Their interests coincided with those of the intermediaries and, as political power passed into their hands, they turned the *ijaredars*—the tax-gatherers and officers of the Moghul period—into full-fledged owners and, consequently, turned the cultivators into tenants. Revenue paid to the State through the Taluqdar or Zamindar now became rent—revenue multiplied manifold—payable to him as owner. In the first settlement of the Ceded and Conquered Provinces, known as the Settle-

¹⁰ *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857-58*, John William Kaye F. R. S.

ment of the N.W.P. (as the U.P. was then called) ordered in the time of Lord William Bentinck and carried out by R.M. Bird, it was the main effort of the English officers to bring the actual occupants of land into direct relationship with the Government and no intermediaries between the Prince and the Peasant were recognized. That was the proper view to take; it was in consonance with the history of the problem and accorded well with the interests of the country. But, a quarter of a century later came the fateful 1857 which changed the theory. "It is admitted now", writes Kaye, "even by men who were personally concerned in the great work of the settlement of the Northern India, that it involved a great political error. It was undoubtedly to convert into bitter enemies those whom sound policy would have made friends and supporters of the State. Men of the old School had seen plainly from the first that by these measures we were sowing broadcast the seeds of future trouble"¹¹. After the Rebellion this political error was set right and the next settlement made with the Talooqdars and the Zamindars, while the actual tillers of the soil were left largely to their mercy.

DEFECTS OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM

In this measure the Britishers saw a means of consolidating their rule—and their expectations have been amply justified—but, what is still worse, as traders became rulers, the revenue demand was instantly increased. In fact, in the first decades it was publicly auctioned in Bengal and settlement made with the highest bidders who happened to be, in most cases, merchants and usurers. The State squeezed the intermediaries who in turn squeezed the tenantry. Whatever might have been the defects of the land system of the period immediately preceding the British rule they were relieved by the pos-

¹¹ Ibid.

sibility of removal and dismissal of the intermediaries, if they abused their power, and by the central fact of agriculture of those days, viz., that the supply of land was much larger than the demand for it. The aim of the Government and the intermediaries—the would-be landlords—, therefore, was to keep peasants on land, not to turn them off it. With conferment of hereditary rights on the contractors and assignees, with the destruction of Indian industries which forced vast numbers of the workers and artisans to take to agriculture and which took away the subsidiary occupation of hereditary agriculturists themselves, and also with the absolute increase in population, the relieving features have disappeared. Not only that, but the changed circumstances have led to hideous rack-renting and a grinding down of the masses with a nicety and perfection associated only with machines of iron and steel.

Broadly speaking, the land system of British India may be divided into three main classifications:—

Ryotwari, where the land revenue is assessed on individual pieces of land and directly upon the cultivator subject to periodical revision; *Mahalwari*, where all the inhabited part of the country is divided into portions with fixed boundaries called *Mahals* or estates and all the proprietors of a *Mahal* are severally and jointly responsible for the payment of the sum assessed by the Government on the *Mahal*, the amount being subject to periodical revision as in the case of *Ryotwari*, and the *Permanent Zamindari* where the assessment is fixed on estates (as in *Mahalwari*) in perpetuity with hereditary rent collectors called proprietors, and not with the actual occupants. The permanently settled estate system covers 25 per cent of the area and prevails in most parts of the provinces of Bengal and Bihar, about one-half of Orissa, about one-third of Madras and smaller proportions of the provinces of Assam and United Provinces. The temporarily settled estate system accounts for 39 per cent and prevails

in the United Provinces, nearly the whole of the Central Provinces (but not Berar), about a fourth of the province of Orissa and in some areas in provinces where the permanently settled estate system prevails. The *Ryotwari* system comprising about 36 per cent of the land prevails in the rest of the country.

All the three forms of land settlement have given rise to a number of complicated problems. "For instance, in the ryotwari tracts there has been a steady increase of rent-receivers with the result that the cultivating proprietors are becoming cultivating tenants. In the Punjab alone the number of rent-receivers has increased during the last decade from 626,000 to 1,008,000. Similar change is taking place in other provinces. In the zamindari tracts, there has been a remarkable growth of numerous intervening interests between the actual cultivator and the superior landlord. The landlords and these intermediaries reap the benefit of the rise in agricultural prices and of such land improvements as may be effected either by their tenants or by public bodies"¹². In the U. P., the extent of lands described as 'Sir' and 'khudkasht' (representing land held by proprietors in cultivating possession) is 5.96 million acres against 26.92 million acres held by various classes of tenants who are occupancy-right-holders. Corresponding figures for Bihar are 3.46 and 20.36 million acres respectively. In India as a whole, as much as 70 per cent of the total area under cultivation is cultivated by non-owners.

One of the most serious defects of the present land tenure, as seen above, is that a great proportion of the wealth from land is appropriated by middlemen who are interposed between the actual cultivator and the State. Particularly, in the permanently settled area, where there is a big margin between the fixed land revenue

¹² *The Indian Peasant*, 1933, N. Gangulee.

and the economic rent of the land, the chain of middlemen is lengthening and, as the Simon Commission pointed out in 1929, there have been found in certain districts of Bengal as many as 50 or more intermediate interests between the landlord at the top and the cultivator at the bottom. Rent is a wholly unnecessary payment. If these rent-takers disappear, the land would still remain and continue to yield the same products as before. Agricultural production does not depend upon the existence of a class of landlords who render no service to the land or to their tenants. The existing system, therefore, breeds and supports a class of persons who simply live upon the labour of others, who take absolutely no part in any enterprise, and whose profession is idleness. The landlords are parasites in the truest sense of the term; they are nothing but "drones doing no good in the public hive."

With honourable exceptions, the big, non-cultivating landowners pass their lives in luxurious pursuits, ill spending the money they ill get, and, what is unforgivable, they have, in league with the minions of the foreign bureaucracy, always lorded it over those very countrymen of theirs—the rightful heirs to the soil—who contribute to make their luxuries possible. Viewed in this light, this system is also one of the direct causes of the lowering of the national character.

The system resolves into one where thousands slave for the few; it reduces the toiling masses to the starkest poverty and degradation. The amount of rent that the tenant has to pay for hired land is fixed so high that the net return for his labour works out at no more, and often less, than what he would have earned, had he worked on the same land as a hired labourer. The landlord-tenant system takes no notice of the necessities of the cultivator; after meeting the expenses of cultivation and payment of his rent, a very little portion of the produce of his labour—sometimes nil—is left to him. More

often than not, it is insufficient to keep him and the members of his family, who also drudge day and night along with him, in bare food and clothes throughout the year; physical comforts, education of his children and entertainments are dreams to which he cannot aspire. From the cradle to the grave or the cremation-ground, his life is one long span of unrelieved misery; he labours and waits, but the day of redemption does not draw near.

In some parts of India the tenant or as he is rightly described in certain parts of the country, the ryot or 'rayyat', in the words of a German historian, Knapp by name, used to describe the conditions of the peasantry in eastern Germany under the Junkers in the last century, is "gloomy, discontented, coarse, slavish—a hapless missing link between a beast of burden and a man".

His critics would do well to note that he sticks to the land because there is nothing else to do, because he is not assured of a remunerative employment in other spheres and also to note that if he left the land they, the critics, would starve to death.

Big zamindars are usually men who have no connection with agriculture; they cannot possibly cultivate all their lands themselves even if they would. Almost the whole area is occupied by tenants, the vast majority of whom, owing to the high rents they have to pay, are too poor to effect any substantial improvements upon their holdings. This state of affairs results in an improper and insufficient utilization of the nation's greatest source of wealth—in a type of cultivation that increasingly impairs the fertility of the soil. The true welfare of agriculture, therefore, will continue to be neglected as long as this system lasts.

Security of tenure has been universally recognized as a condition precedent to efficient farming, but under the landlord-tenant system the cultivator, particularly if he is a non-occupancy tenant, has no security and, therefore, no incentive to make any improvements on his

holding; for he knows that he may be deprived any day of the fruits of his labour and capital investments. Therefore, although in some parts of the country, as in the Punjab, the cultivator is still a mere tenant-at-will, liable to ejectment at the sweet pleasure of the zamindar, various Tenancy Acts have been enacted in many parts of India to remedy this evil of insecurity. The tenant has been given rights of occupancy and his ejectment from the holding hedged with many restrictions. But this system has resulted in a system of dual ownership where the landlord has been reduced almost to the position of a mere receiver of rent and yet the tenant is not the owner. Whilst compensation for improvements and safeguards against capricious eviction do not satisfy the tenants, real security of tenure is odious to the landlord. The existing system, therefore, creates bad blood and engenders class-war. It has helped in bringing about a rural society where the few in whom proprietorship of the land is vested have interests differing from those of the many who actually cultivate it. For example, according to the census of 1931, in the table of earners and working dependents for the U. P. 260,610 persons are shown as non-cultivating landlords and 12,011,621 as cultivating tenants, i.e., conditions have been created in the U. P. under which, on an average, the interests of one man are in juxtaposition to those of forty-five. The ratio of rent-receivers to cultivating tenants for all India was 8 : 125. Instead of ensuring social peace and justice in the country, therefore, which ought to be the aim of all social organization, the existing land system of India is a prolific cause of disturbance of the public peace; it has, directly or indirectly, led to riots and affrays resulting in criminal prosecutions and consequent misery.

The complexities of the Tenancy Law, which has to balance the conflicting claims of the zamindar and the tenant, have led to an intense volume of litigation

between the privileged class and its under-dog—between the exploiter and the exploited. A vast army of Revenue Court officials is kept occupied in settling disputes relating to interests in land, and, though the court fees procure a considerable revenue to the Government, the cost to the litigant is far in excess of the revenue and is almost always out of all proportion to the amounts at stake.

The State, though it has been forced to enact various Tenancy Acts, has on the whole up till now looked on almost unconcerned and cared only for its revenue which has gone up after every thirty years or so. It has often refused to recognize famine conditions even when people have been starving to death, lest it might have to remit revenue and the zamindar his rent. The English, being themselves a nation of big landlords, have practically followed the policy of *laissez faire*, as if the welfare of the peasantry—the only class of people who live by the sweat of their brow—was nobody's concern, and have, in effect, allowed, rather encouraged, big landowners and also rich moneylenders to hold the peasants tight in their grip, and, in a sense, to skin them alive.

Now that the moneylender has been mentioned, still another defect of the present system is worth notice. Wealth in the form of land was unknown in the pre-British days; agriculture was merely a way of life. "Agriculture", says Professor Acerbo, "has throughout been looked upon not only as a productive form of activity, but as a mode of life and the pivot of the social structure". The usurer in the Hindu and Muslim periods could not get the land auctioned off for the realization of his debts. 'Property in land as a transferable commodity absolutely owned and passing from hand to hand like any chattel, is not an ancient institution, but a modern development'—a gift to India by the Britishers. With land made transferable at the orders of the civil courts and undue emphasis laid on the sanctity of contract, that is, with the introduction of the legal system

of a "nation of shopkeepers", land—the basis of the national life—was dragged into the marketplace and profiteering therein followed with its inevitable consequences. Neither the big taluqdar nor the peasant proprietor has escaped the attentions of his more intelligent countryman, the moneylender. Land having become an economic commodity available for sale in the market, a class of absentee owners has emerged whose connection with agriculture is purely financial, most of whom know nothing about the location of land, the crop raised upon it, and even the men who pay the rent.

It would not matter to the nation if, instead of one individual, another, who purchases land from the former, begins to cultivate it. But a purchaser of the non-agriculturist, town-dwelling variety looks upon it as an object of commercial investment, his only interest being to get the largest possible rent he can, and not to ply the plough and wield the scythe himself. For him the human element and personal relations have no importance; it is the amount of interest on the capital invested in the land that matters. He has not a grain of sympathy to waste over his ryots on howsoever bad days he might have fallen. He is not inspired by humanitarian feelings as the ancient Taluqdar or Zamindar in many cases was; his sole interest is the rent itself, neither the land nor the man who works upon it.

A state of affairs in which a vast proportion of land is in the ownership of a few while the many who work it are mere tenants, cannot, therefore, be accepted as a suitable economy in a country where agriculture has been, and still is, the main occupation of its people. It is neither politically expedient nor socially desirable. The feudal system has disappeared from all parts of the world and landlordism is almost everywhere a thing of the past. Direct exploitation of land by the owner is by far the commonest method on the continent of Europe these days. The proportion of land directly

worked by the owner, according to the agricultural censuses of 1929 and 1930, is 80 per cent in Switzerland; in Denmark it is 87.1 p. c.; in Norway 85.7 p. c.; in Hungary 85.0 p. c.; in Czechoslovakia 90 p. c. and in Sweden 80 p. c. . In Italy nearly three-fifths of the total number of undertakings (59.1 p. c.) representing an area equal to 57.5 p. c. of the total, were worked directly by the owner in 1938. It showed an increase of 18.8 p. c. in the number of such undertakings since 1922. In France the proportion of land directly worked by the owner rose from 53% in 1892 to 60% of the area cultivated in 1929, and in Germany it rose from 83.6% in 1907 to 88.7% in 1933.

In England the proportion of land directly worked by the owner rose from 10.6 p. c. in 1913 to 20 p. c. in 1921 and to 36 p. c. of the total agricultural area in 1927. Although there are no figures available for the more recent years, this indicates a tendency towards an increase in the proportion of land worked directly by the owner. That is, even in conservative England landlordism is on the wane. But here in this unfortunate land of ours it flourishes in all its former glory—or, shall we say, infamy. We have got to recognize the fact, sooner or later, that a few thousand zamindars do not make a nation and that politics can have one foundation only and that is the people—the toiling masses—for they alone provide sustenance for the community; it is they who pay the taxes and it is they again who supply soldiers in times of threat against the national existence.

Mahatma Gandhi had some more than ten years ago, in the course of an interview on the position of the Taluqdars in the U. P., enunciated the theory of trusteeship, viz., that the property-owners hold the property in trust for the community. Commenting on this, Mr. M.R. Masani says:—

“Trusteeship in law is the ownership of property by A under such circumstances that he is bound to use

the property for the benefit of B who is called the beneficiary. If trustee A should in any way misuse his legal ownership by seeking to make any personal gain out of it, the law sees to it that he is removed from possession. A's property rights are, to put it bluntly, a legal fiction. Applying this to the rights of the property-owners generally, what the theory of trusteeship comes to is that the State allows present owners of the property on condition that they use the property for the benefit and profit of the entire community. Any property-owner who uses his property primarily for private profit would be removed from possession on the ground of breach of trust"¹⁸.

There is no doubt that the zamindars have failed to administer the trust in national welfare. Judged by all standards, the Zamindari system has ceased to serve national interest, if ever it did; it has failed and has, therefore, to go lock, stock and barrel. The relations between landlords and tenant, perhaps, possessed some justification in the conditions of the time which saw their introduction, but they have gradually so degenerated that justice and common sense demand their outright abolition. No half-measures will satisfactorily remedy the defects of the system.

The time has arrived to take steps to effect a radical change in the relationship of the soil with the person who cultivates it—to liquidate the non-cultivating owner who lives on rent or trades in land. If national well-being is our aim, it should be made clear to those whom it may concern that the vast gulf that separates man from man shall have to be bridged—that the highly-placed shall be lowered and the humble raised. "That those who till the soil shall be its first masters, that those who raise food shall be its first partakers" shall be our motto and our

¹⁸ *Socialism Reconsidered*, 1944, p. 52.

slogan; it shall be the governing principle of our agrarian programme.

TWO ALTERNATIVES

Let us, therefore, consider the alternatives to the present system. The system of land tenure that is proposed here for the consideration of those in whose hands it lies to influence the destinies of this great country is, what was pleaded by the well-known French social philosopher, Proudhon, a century ago, viz., peasant proprietorship, that is, ownership of land by the man who actually tills it. The only other course that is seriously suggested is total abolition of private ownership of land and national acquisition thereof—when no man will be able to call a plot of land more exclusively his than that of his neighbour. When people talk of nationalization of land, they have invariably in mind the example of Russia, now called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, where in agriculture the collective farm has been adopted as the standard form of farm enterprise. It is natural to ask whether the methods which the Bolsheviks have applied to Russia might with an advantage be applied to rural India in order to banish poverty from this country and, therefore, necessary to study how the U. S. S. R. has solved her problem. We will deal with peasant proprietorship later.

CHAPTER II

THE RUSSIAN SYSTEM IN ITS MAKING

LAND TENURE IN PRE-REVOLUTION RUSSIA

For a true appreciation of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent collectivization drive, it is important to understand the broad features of the land system that prevailed in Russia before 1917.

The early Russian Princes had made grants of land to the local chieftains, or boyars, in order to attach them to their service, or reward them for services rendered. This amounted to transferring to the boyars the Princes' right of collecting taxes or levies from the peasant population. In return the boyars were bound to follow the Prince to war at the head of a contingent of their own people.

Until nearly the middle of the seventeenth century every peasant taking up land in a *pomestic* or estate made a contract with the *pomestichik* (i.e., who held an estate on conditions of service) in which his right to leave his plot was formally acknowledged. However, a peasant could only leave at a certain time of the year, in November, after harvest had been collected and the year's work completed, and then only if free of debt to the *pomestichik*. Since practically no peasant possessed any capital of his own, a loan, in money or kind or both, was almost invariably necessary at the start of a tenancy. Absconding peasants could be prosecuted and brought back within a certain time-limit. But these conditions did not satisfy the land-owning class which agitated for

further rights until, in 1649, Tsar Alexie granted laws which legalized the recovery of runaway peasants without any time-limit and in effect introduced the principle of hereditary bondedness. Where previously the individual peasant had legally been bound, at most, to his individual landlord during the latter's life, henceforth the peasant and his descendants were bound to the landlord and his heirs in perpetuity'.¹

Obligatory service to the State by the nobility and gentry was brought to an end by an ukaz of 18th February, 1762, in which Peter III conferred "upon all the well-born of our Russian nobility full freedom from service and release thence."

Not a word was said concerning the nobles' serf-right, though this was derived from the nobles' compulsory service. The release of the nobility from obligatory State service, on the contrary, aggravated rather than alleviated the serfs' position; for the serf-owners now regarded their serfs as their own personal property and the source of their wealth. In fact the serfs had descended to a position practically of slavery, and the wealth of a noble landowner depended more on the number of his serfs than the area of his estate. The serfs could be bought and sold with or apart from land, in families, or singly; only public auction was forbidden.

For administrative purposes the peasants combined in communities called Mir, Commune or Obstchina, and were taxed collectively, the taxes being levied on the total land actually cultivated by each peasant commune and not on the individual holdings. In place of communal taxation, however, Peter the Great introduced a poll-tax, payable by every male peasant irrespective of the amount of land cultivated.

¹ *The Economics of Soviet Agriculture* (1939), pp. 12-13 by Leonard E. Hubbard.

The characteristics of communal land-holding were:—

- (1) Distribution in strips.
- (2) Compulsory adherence by all members of the commune to a common rotation of crops.
- (3) Temporary occupation by the individual of his allotment, and
- (4) Periodical alteration in the size of allotments.

Each family had to share in the good land and the bad. The rotation followed was the so-called three-fold—winter corn (rye or wheat), spring corn (wheat or barley) and fallow. This course had to be enforced on all owners; otherwise the crops of one would have spread into the fallow of the others. It was also necessary that all the crops should be the same in each area, because after harvest the cattle of the village grazed in herds on the fields and had to be let in on the same date. Periodical re-distribution was repeated at an interval of twelve years and was based sometimes on the number of workers in each household, sometimes on the number of mouths.

The communal system necessarily involved a good deal of communal control of the community's farming activities, so that not only were the times of sowing and harvesting, hay-making and the like very dependent on the decision of the commune as a whole, but the crops to be sown, what area to be left fallow, etc., were similarly dictated.

Before a peasant could leave his village, the consent of the commune and of his own family had to be obtained as well as of his *pomestichik*. For, every peasant as a member of a commune was responsible for his share of the total taxes payable by the commune and as a member of a household, or *dvor*, was responsible for his share in his *dvor*'s liabilities and for his share in cultivating the *dvor*'s *nadiel* or allotment of land.

The first restriction on serf-right was a law of Tsar Paul in 1797 which forbade the pomestichik to make his serfs work for him on more than three days in the week. Then followed the laws of 1803 and 1842 which allowed pomestichiki to free their serfs by whole villages or by families on conditions arrived at by mutual agreement. The effect of these laws, however, was negligible.

The Act of Emancipation (19th February, 1861) released all peasants from bonded dependency. The law compelled the pomestichiki to make over to the peasants their dwellings and a given amount of land, and in return the peasants were to render certain stated liabilities. The peasants were granted the right to redeem their homesteads, but could not acquire absolute ownership of their farm land without the consent of the landowner. At the same time the Government came to the assistance of the peasants with a redemption loan to enable them to purchase their nadieli from the landowners.

While each peasant was individually responsible for redeeming his homestead, the arable land was redeemable by the peasant commune or mir in agreement with the pomestichik. If no agreement were reached the landlord could claim a compulsory settlement. Voluntary agreements were comparatively rare and a very important content of the redemption law was the "mutual guarantee" under which all the members of the mir were jointly responsible for the payment of the annuities and, as a corollary, the field land belonged to the community as a whole and not to the individual peasant households.

Originally, the redemption loan was to be extinguished by instalments paid by the peasants over 49 years, but in many parts of the country the peasants' liabilities were so large in comparison with the livelihood capacities of their nadieli that arrears mounted up. Various palliative measures were adopted from time to time until a manifesto of 3rd November, 1905, ended all further payments from the peasants as from 1st January, 1906.

The most important milestone in Russian agrarian history after the Emancipation in 1861 was the land reforms of 1906. These are commonly and justly attributed to Peter Arkadeivich Stolypin, President of the Council of Ministers from 1906 to 1911. But the conviction that some change in the principles of land tenure was necessary had been growing for some time.

On November 22nd, 1906, after the dissolution of the first Duma, an ukaz was promulgated depriving the mir of its forcible authority over the peasants and giving the latter the right to separate from the commune. The technical details of effecting the transfer and enclosure of the land took time, and it was not until 1908 that an effective start was made. The ukaz allowed every head of a peasant family, holding a nadiel by right of communal tenure, to claim the transfer to him as private property of his due share of the communal land.

As far as possible, peasants who decided to separate from the commune were given land in one compact piece instead of the numerous strips falling to their share under the communal distribution. The law which granted to the peasants the right to claim their nadieli as private freeholds also gave them the right to sell their freeholds to other peasants. Thus peasants who wished to leave the commune to emigrate to Asiatic provinces of the Empire or to become wage-earners in industry were able to liquidate their property.

At the close of 1916 there were 1·6 million independent farms covering 40 million acres, i.e., 10·7 p. c. of all peasant holdings, the total of which was about 15 millions. Thus ten years after the initiation of the land reforms in 1906 and immediately before the Revolution, a class of relatively prosperous independent peasant farmers had been created. Compared with the peasant farmers in Central and Western Europe, they were still backward and poor, but compared with the ordinary

peasant members of a commune prior to 1906 they were rich and progressive. Economically the reforms had not only begun to have an effect on the standard of farming and the yield of the land, but had given a great stimulus to industry. For the first time in Russian history a section of rural population was becoming steady purchasers of producers' goods as well as an expanding market for industrial consumption goods. Hard-working, intelligent and thrifty peasants were producing a saleable surplus and thus improving their situation, and in the process were earning the opprobrious title of Kulaks (fists).

THE REVOLUTION AND THE N. E. P.

The Provincial Lvov Government formed in March, 1917, decreed the formation of land committees in every volost, district and province, in addition to a Central Land Committee for the whole country. These committees were to prepare the way for new land reforms and draft provisional measures pending the settlement of the land question by the Constituent Assembly. The committees did pretty well what they liked; that is, if they functioned at all. The peasants proceeded to annex the land. At first they acted with restraint; peasants who had leased land simply stopped paying rent, while peasant communities pastured their cattle on private meadows and cut wood in private forests.

As soon as it became known among the soldiers and sailors that land was to be had for the taking, thousands deserted and returned to their villages to claim their share before it was too late. The deserters were, naturally, in a more truculent and revolutionary frame of mind than the peasants at home and began a persecution of the landowning gentry. The fury against the landowners extended to their possessions, and much valuable property, including even things that were of obvious value to the peasants, such as farm machinery and animals, were

senselessly butchered. When the Provisional Government at last woke up to the fact, it was too late to take any effective action.

Long before the Bolshevik Revolution in November 1917 brought the Provisional Government to an end, private ownership of land had been abolished. This applied not only to the gentry and non-peasant land-owners, the Crown, the State and the Church, but also to a large part of peasant proprietors who had become free-holders of their own farms. All land was forcibly integrated or re-integrated in the commune and re-distributed among its members on the old principles. The political tenets of the Narodnik and the Socialist-Revolutionary members of the Provisional Government favoured communal land tenure. When the land question was acute in the early years of the century they, and those of like socialist tint, had advocated the breaking up of large estates among the peasant communes without altering the form of peasant tenure. They beheld in the *obstchina* the prototype of their ideal form of land tenure, namely, socialization or nationalization, and regarded the Stolypin reforms as an anti-social measure calculated to increase the power and extent of capitalism on the land.

The Bolshevik agitators, already active but as yet irresponsible, encouraged the so-called *Chorny Peredel* (black, unauthorized and often violent re-distribution of the land) because the resulting disturbances embarrassed the Provisional Government and simultaneously brought the peasants over to their side. Their slogan originally, i.e., before February 1917 was: *together with the whole peasantry against the autocracy*. Later on, i.e., after the Provisional Government had come into power and during the period of preparation for the October Revolution, the slogan was changed to: *together with the poor peasantry against the bourgeoisie*. In November 1918, Lenin, casting a retrospective glance

along the path the Revolution had followed, wrote:

"Yes, our Revolution is a bourgeois revolution so long as we ally ourselves *with the peasantry as a whole*. That we realized absolutely clearly; we have stated it a hundred and thousand times since 1905; we never attempted to skip this essential phase of the historical process and never attempted to abolish it by decrees. . . . But in 1917, in the month of April, *long before the October Revolution and before we assumed power*, we openly declared, and explained to the people, that now the Revolution could not stop there; for the country has gone ahead, capitalism has moved on, has reached an unparalleled stage of ruin, which will *demand* (whether they like it or not) that steps be taken towards Socialism. For there was *no* other way of moving forward, no other way of saving the country racked by war and no other way of relieving the sufferings of the toilers and exploited. And it turned out just as we had foretold. The course of revolution confirmed our arguments. *At first*, together with *all* the peasantry against the monarchy, against the landlords, against medievalism (and to that extent the Revolution remained bourgeois, bourgeois-democratic). *Then*, together with the poor peasantry, together with the semi-proletariat, together with all the exploited, *against capitalism*, including the *rural rich, the kulaks, and the speculators* (and to that extent the Revolution became a Socialist revolution)."²

The real programme of the Bolsheviks was nationalization along with the creation of large centrally-controlled state farms, but to have shown their hand at the time would have turned the peasants against them. In any case the Bolsheviks had not worked out the details of their land policy, and since the Socialist-Revolutionaries were getting the support of the villages in the elections to the Constituent Assembly, Lenin decided to outbid

² Quoted in "*Whither Peasantry?*" Stalin, pp. 10-11.

them with the slogan of *grab negrablennoe* (loot that which was looted).

The collapse of the Kerensky Government and the success to power of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in November 1917 made very little immediate difference to the peasants. Since their hands were completely full with organizing their administration in the urban centres, the Bolsheviks left the peasants alone.

Their attitude was influenced by recognition of the fact that victory in Civil War would ultimately go to that side which unconditionally capitulated to the peasants' demand for the distribution of all the agricultural land. "The law on the Socialization of land" proclaimed by the Soviet Government in February 1918 was prepared by the leaders of the left wing of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, with whom the Russian Social Democrats, and consequently the Russian Bolsheviks, had differed as to principles of land economy for several decades, but who had now joined with the Bolsheviks to form a coalition.

It was proclaimed that all ownership in land was abolished and that the land was transferred to all the working people for their use; that all land was to be distributed on the principle of equalized land possession, according to the consumptive needs of the people who work it, or according to the labour resources of families working on land. Every citizen in principle acquired the right to use the land and all dealings in land were forbidden.

"Before the Revolution peasant farms of all sorts numbered some 18 millions. In 1919 there were over 20 million separate peasant farms and in 1923 over 22 millions. Very many peasants who had been agricultural labourers became possessed of land; thus between 1917 and 1919 the proportion of landless peasant households fell from 11·6 to 6·6 per cent. At the other end of the scale, the proportion of peasant farms over 27

acres in total area fell from 5 to 1·6 per cent. The equalization of peasant holdings also extended to horses; in 1917, 28·9 per cent of peasant farms were horseless, in 1919, 25·1 per cent, but the proportion of farms with only one horse increased from 47·6 to 60·1 per cent, and the proportion of farms with two or more horses fell from 23·5 to 14·8 per cent.³

The result was that the peasantry everywhere eventually supported the Red Armies against the Whites who had threatened to reinstate the landlords in their possessions.

Certainly the peasants got possession of a great deal of land—about 135 million acres—which was closed to them before, or which they occupied only as tenants. But they made little use of it. It was not until 1925 that the total area under cultivation regained pre-War level. Owing to the shortage, or rather complete lack, of manufactured consumers' goods, the inflationary depreciation of the currency and the disorganization of transport, private trade had almost ceased. The lack of markets made the production of a marketable surplus of grain a mere waste of time and trouble and peasants who had a surplus were disinclined to sell, because they could not buy anything with their money. The Provisional Government had been compelled to resort to requisitioning grain to feed the urban population and the Army, and the Bolsheviks were compelled not only to continue the Provisional Government's grain monopoly, but to increase the severity of the requisitions. It was decreed that all peasants must surrender to the State all their grain in excess of a very modest norm to cover their own requirements. Nominally they were to receive in exchange a sufficient quantity of manufactured goods to satisfy their needs. Money was to be abolished and the exchange of the peasant's food for the proleta-

³ (Hubbard, p. 78).

riat's factory-made goods was to be carried out by the State. This was the essence of Lenin's *Smychka* (literally, the linking together of complementary parts), in which he believed that the peasants and workers would be equally satisfied with their bargain. However, the Government was unable to carry out the whole programme, because it had very little in the way of manufactured goods to send into the villages. But the peasants had to part with their grain just the same.

As a consequence of War Communism (as the Bolsheviks' attempts to organize direct distribution without the use of money was called) the peasants further reduced their cultivation; they purposely produced only enough food for their own immediate consumption, and not only did not try to realize a marketable surplus but refrained from producing a reserve because it would have been taken away by the Government. There was a severe drought in 1920, which on the top of the reduced sowings caused a terrible famine, in which millions of people died. The situation became desperate enough to drive Lenin to the New Economic Policy announced in March 1921 when he admitted that "we must now endeavour to develop a national economy based upon the real psychology of the well-to-do peasant, whose motives and sentiments we have been unable to change during these three years."

The main feature was the reduction of the peasants' compulsory deliveries of grain from the whole of their surplus to a fixed quantity. After fulfilling their obligations to the State, the peasants might deal with the rest of their crops as they thought fit. The Government, of course, intended that the peasants should sell food to the townspeople, since the attempt to make them give it to the Government had failed disastrously. If buying and selling were to be introduced money was necessary, and if the peasants were to accept money they must be able to buy something with it. The

Government, therefore, revived the moribund rouble and as soon as practicable issued a new stable currency, and simultaneously allowed private traders to buy and sell goods on the open market.

While this policy stopped any further deterioration in agriculture, the situation was still not satisfactory. In 1924 the Government found it necessary to announce further measures, rather, to change its entire attitude. Peasant taxation was placed on the monetary basis. It was decided that the hard-working and intelligent peasant, who had yesterday been a kulak, was an honest and thrifty farmer, the backbone of the country and a worthy citizen. Peasants were allowed to rent land from other peasants and hire labour. The Government also permitted, and even assisted, individual peasants to obtain agricultural machinery, and thus re-admitted the principle of private ownership of capital in agriculture.

By 1927 village life had returned to something very like pre-War conditions and the total area under cultivation and the gross quantity of crops harvested had about regained the pre-War level. The net marketable surplus, however, was not much more than one-third pre-War. For one thing, the rural population had increased, from an estimated 114·6 millions at the beginning of 1914 to 121·3 millions according to the census taken in December 1926; for another thing the peasants were consuming a larger proportion of their own produce. Since the prices of manufactured goods remained very high in comparison with the prices paid to the peasants for food-stuffs, the peasant farmer preferred consuming to satisfaction to restricting his consumption in order to buy, in his own opinion, a quite disproportionately small quantity of manufactured goods. Another result of the reversal of the Bolsheviki's agrarian policy was that the peasants were again becoming differentiated into rich, middle and poor.

VOLUNTARY, COLLECTIVE FARMING

Although, as we have already seen, the Bolsheviks' agrarian policy was originally founded on State ownership and large centrally-controlled farms, they were compelled for the time being to continue the old forms of peasant tenure. After the middle of 1918, however, the Soviet Government, following the rupture with the left wing of the Socialist-Revolutionary party, made its first attempt to apply its own principles to agricultural and agrarian policy, and to create large-scale farming on socialistic lines, in the form of agricultural communes and of State farms. As early as July 3, 1918, the Government assigned special sums to facilitate the organization of communes. Somewhat later, in a decree of February 14, 1919, the principles of the "socialistic organization of agricultural production" were developed in detail. According to this, individualistic forms of land utilization were to be replaced by collective forms. All land was proclaimed "a single State Fund", "all forms of individual land possession" were declared to be dying out; big soviet State farms (sovhozy or sovkhozy), communes and other forms of associated farming were pointed out as "the best means towards organizing a system of farming on socialist lines". According to this decree the land reserve was to be used preferably for satisfying the needs of the Soviet farms and of the communes; and in the second place for satisfying the needs of agricultural artels and other looser forms of collective farming. But since most of the land of confiscated estates had already been subdivided by the local peasantry, and only 3-4 per cent of the arable land remained in the possession of administrative organs, little was available for socialistic forms of farming.

While encouraging co-operative associations of every kind in agriculture, Lenin did not "endeavour to outrun the development of the masses", as he said. He

regarded attempts to introduce common cultivation of the land by decrees and legislation as the height of folly. Lenin held that the peasantry must be brought round to adopt collective farming only gradually and voluntarily, by convincing them through demonstration and practical experience, that it was more advantageous than individual farming and that it alone offered the poor and middle peasant a way out of poverty and want. He warned the Bolsheviks that any attempt to impose collective farming by force could only produce negative results and repel the peasants from the movement; that coercion would ruin the whole cause. Lenin, however, was dead set against small-peasant economy as we shall see later; he adopted this attitude of caution because he did not feel himself strong enough to introduce socialistic forms of agricultural all at once.

A certain number of former industrial workers and landless peasants with no capital of their own to start farming took advantage of the Government's offer to provide stock and credit and established collective farms on land allotted them from State land and large estates. In some places groups of poor peasants owning small farms voluntarily merged their separate holdings into collective farms in order to obtain Government assistance; but in many cases these collective farms were merely a pretence and there was no real pooling of property. The fluidity of collectivization in the early days is shown by the following figures:—

Type of Collective	July 1939	September 1919	Septem- ber 1920	March 1921	Decem- ber 1922
Communes ..	342	1961	1892	2114	1672
Artels ..		3603	7722	11136	8130
Associations ..		622	886	1356	1605
Total ..	342	6186	10500	14606	11407

In the land cultivation Co-operative ('Toz'), also called the Joint Tillage Association or simply the Association, members united to do a given piece of work, lasting a certain length of time, and only part of the work of production, such as ploughing or harvesting, was done in common, the rest being left to the individual. This type of co-operative in which all property remained in private possession, may be said to represent the simplest or lowest form of agricultural collectivization.

In the artel was united not merely the labour force, but also the ownership of the capital employed. The members retained their own houses, small garden plots and some livestock and lived separately, but pooled the land and working stock and shared in the proceeds of joint farming. Its members worked under the direction of an elected management and its methods of production were very similar to those of the agricultural commune, while in the methods it employed for the distribution of produce it closely resembled the toz, the co-operative for the farming of land in common.

The commune was formed by the complete pooling of all resources and property and the members lived a communal life in communal buildings. It was the most thoroughgoing form of collectivized farm; not only all production but distribution also was socialized. Not only the means of production, but also the appurtenances of life of every member of the commune were socialized, that is to say, the members of a commune, unlike the members of an artel, did not individually own poultry, small livestock, a cow, grain, or household land. Profits earned by an agrarian commune were not distributed among the members, but were used to strengthen the economic position of the entire community. If the latter was dissolved, all its property, land, livestock, buildings, etc., reverted to the State.

Generally speaking the sovkhozy (with which we will deal later) and the communal type of farm were

founded by members of the urban proletariat who were leaving the cities on account of the difficulty with the food supply and of the disorganization of manufacturing, which was nationalized by the State from the beginning of the communist revolution, while the genuine peasants preferred the comparative freedom of the *artel* or association. A number of collective farms were also formed by members of monasteries and ecclesiastical foundations and religious sects. The total membership of collective farms at the beginning of 1922 was just over one million, or some 1·4 per cent of the whole agricultural population.

As the figures show, collectivization was increasingly popular upto the beginning of 1921 and then declined after the introduction of N.E.P., the reason being that during War Communism collective farms were treated rather more liberally than independent peasants, having to deliver proportionately less grain and being given preference in the distribution of manufactured goods. Immediately private enterprise and individual economic liberty were reinstated many collective farms were liquidated, their members starting afresh as individual farmers.

The *toz* has disappeared altogether along with the independent peasantry, and the *artel*, as we shall see, has become the dominant form of economy and occupies the centre, if not the whole, of the picture. No information about the present position of the agricultural communes is available; perhaps, there is not a single commune now extant. At best, they are a dwindling feature of the Soviet agriculture. It is recognized by the communists that the conditions are not yet ripe for the agricultural commune as the predominant form. The commune, to be permanently successful, requires a considerably higher degree of personal character, and also of managerial capacity than other forms of village settlement—a level which cannot reasonably be expected

to become universal for generations to come. "At present", write Sydney and Beatrice Webb in "Soviet Communism: A New Civilization"? (1935), "it looks as if there was a tendency for individual ownership to re-appear inside the commune." Not every member of the commune came to work in time, nor did everyone work equally well. In these circumstances the few communes that existed were bound to dissolve.

Explaining the failure of the commune, Stalin said in his Report to the Seventeenth Congress of the C. P. S. U. (B.) on January 26, 1934:—

"The present agricultural commune arose on the basis of an under-developed technique and a shortage of products. This really explains why it practised equalization and showed little concern for the individual, everyday interests of its members—as a result of which it is now being compelled to assume the status of the artel, in which the individual and public interests of collective farmers are rationally combined. The future communes will arise out of developed and prosperous artels. The future agricultural commune will arise when the fields and farms of the artel are replete with grain, with cattle, with poultry, with vegetables, and all other produce; when the artels have mechanized laundries, modern dining-rooms, mechanized bakeries, etc.; when the collective farmer sees that it is more to his advantage to receive his meat and milk from the collective farm's meat and dairy departments than to keep his own cow and small livestock; when the woman collective farmer sees that it is more to her advantage to take her meals in the dining-room, to get her bread from the public bakery, and to get her linen washed in the public laundry, than to do all these things herself. The future commune will arise on the basis of a more developed technique and of a more developed artel, on the basis of an abundance of products".

FORCED COLLECTIVIZATION

From the Bolsheviks' economic point of view the continuation of the agrarian situation as it was in 1926 and 1927 offered no prospects. The New Economic Policy, as we have seen, did not solve the difficulties of the Soviet Government on the grain front. "The underlying cause of our grain difficulties", bewailed Stalin in a talk to students on May 28, 1928, "is that the increase in the production of grain for the market is not keeping pace with the increase in demand for grain. Industry is growing. The number of workers is growing. Towns are growing. And, lastly, the regions producing industrial crops (cotton, flax, sugar-beet, etc.) are growing, creating a demand for grain. All this leads to a rapid increase in our requirements as regards grain—grain available for the market. But the production of grain for the market is increasing at a disastrously slow rate." The Bolsheviks held that the perpetuation of a system of small peasant farmers would never result in the agricultural surplus necessary to support a large proletarian population; large, mechanized farms alone would provide the necessary grain for the market. There was still another very important reason why; Lenin tells us, a small-peasant economy could not be tolerated:—

"As long as we live in a small-peasant country, there is a surer economic basis for capitalism in Russia than for communism. This must be borne in mind. Anyone who has carefully observed life in the countryside, as compared with life in the towns, knows that we have not torn up the roots of capitalism and have not undermined the foundation, the basis of the internal economy. The latter depends on small-scale production, and there is only one way of undermining it, namely, to place the economy of the country, including agriculture, on a new technical basis, the technical basis of

modern large-scale production. And it is only in electricity that we have such a basis".⁴

There was, however, heated controversy over the alternative to peasant economy. A section of the Party, consisting of followers of Trotsky and Bukharin and others who in 1936 and 1937 paid with their lives for their mistake, at one time advocated concessions to peasant capitalism with the object of creating a class of large peasant farmers who would produce a large marketable surplus of grain. However, this policy was rejected and the fifteenth party Congress in December 1927 adopted a resolution for collectivizing peasant farms, and added a recommendation in favour of means for the suppression of the kulaks and peasant capitalism.

For, the Bolsheviks simply could not afford to pay fair prices for agricultural produce, especially, for grain. Their whole policy since the Revolution had been to make the peasants pay for their industrial programme because it was impossible to make the industrial proletariat pay, or at least, pay the full price. The eventual construction and consolidation of the Communist State depended on a large and contented industrial population. Thus, though possibly the chief reason for the expansion of industry and the creation of many very large industrial enterprises was the desire for self-sufficiency and independence of the Capitalistic world, a second and also important reason was the need for a rapidly growing industrial proletariat. In other words, industry had to be expanded as rapidly as possible in order to create a large industrial proletariat. And since the industrial population could not at the same time create a large amount of new fixed capital and produce a large output of consumption goods, the agricultural section of the population had to provide food for the industrial section without receiving a full equivalent in return. What

⁴ Selected Works, Vol. VIII, pp. 276-77.

place the peasantry occupied in the Bolshevik scheme of things will be apparent from the fact that in a speech at the Third Congress of the Comintern Lenin characterized the peasantry as "the last capitalist class" and declared that "the supreme principle of the dictatorship is the maintenance of the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry in order *that the former may retain its leading role and state power*".

"Apart from the inconsistency of permitting agriculture", writes Leonard E. Hubbard in "*The Economics of Soviet Agriculture*" (1939) from which much of this account has been taken and condensed, mostly in his own words, "to be based on private capital and enterprise while industry was completely socialized, and the possible danger to the Communist State if a large and influential class of prosperous peasant farmers were allowed to grow up, the Bolsheviks decided on the collectivization of peasant farms because this was the only practical way of forming large-scale and economic farm units under effective Government control. A collective farm could be made to grow whatever crop was considered best in the eyes of the Government, irrespective of whether it was the most profitable to the growers themselves; a large proportion of the harvest could be taken away from a collective farm than could easily be recovered from a number of independent farmers cultivating in the aggregate the same area; a collective farm could be compelled to introduce intensive methods of cultivation, including the use of modern machinery even if it raised production costs, while the independent peasant, even if a comparatively large farmer, was often too conservative and obstinate readily to adopt new and scientific methods, and in any case required to be convinced that it would be to his pecuniary advantage. Finally, as against State farms, the collective farm was less calculated to involve the State in a loss. A State farm has to pay fixed wages and salaries, and its overhead and

working expenses were relatively inelastic; a collective farm, on the contrary, reimbursed its members out of its net proceeds in kind and money. If its proceeds were small the kolhozniki had to reduce their own consumption, and the State had to come to their assistance only if they were actually starving. For all these reasons and because cultural and political instruction can be more effectively conducted among an associated group than separate units, the collective farm was adopted as the standard form of agricultural enterprise."⁵

This collective farm was to be of the artel type, also called Kolhoz from *Kollektivnoe Hozyaistvo* — a collective economic enterprise. A collectivized peasant is called a Kolhoznik.

When the details of the first Five-Year Plan were made known in 1928, it was seen that the Government expected that at the close of the period, 15 per cent of peasant farms would be collectivized. It was hoped that the peasants themselves would come to see the advantages of collectivization and voluntarily combine to form such associations. To assist them in coming to this decision, the Government took certain measures to render individual farming unattractive. It revived class-war in the village, setting the poor peasants against the more energetic and prosperous farmers. Lenin's well-known slogan which he had proclaimed on November 21, 1918, in his article to the press against Pitirim Sorokin and which was subsequently confirmed by the Eighth Congress of the Party in March, 1919, viz., "Rely on the poor peasant, establish a firm alliance with the middle peasant, do not for a moment relax the fight against the kulak" was now raked out of the Bolshevik archives and fully acted upon. Those, who a short time before had been called useful citizens and the foundation of Russian agriculture, were to their surprise and despair suddenly

⁵ Pp. 98-99.

restigmatized as Kulaks.

Taxation on independent peasant farmers was increased and various privileges were granted exclusively to collective farms, such as credit to buy machinery.

Up to 1927 the Government had produced its grain requirements by buying what the peasants could be induced to sell. The peasants were compelled to sell in order to pay their taxes and were latterly compelled to sell to the Government, at its own price, because transport facilities were refused for private consignments. In 1928, however, the Government was forced to consider more effective means of procuring sufficient grain to satisfy the increasing demand of the urban and rural population. It returned to a system of grain procurements, not very different from the requisitions during War Communism, euphemistically called by the Government a system of contracts. The chief element of what is usually understood by the word, namely, the freedom of each party to make its own offer, was, however, absent. These contracts bound the peasant to deliver in due course to the Government grain-collecting organizations the whole of his surplus harvest at the price fixed by the Government. The quantity of grain to be delivered by each peasant was assessed arbitrarily by the Government collecting organizations on information supplied by the village Soviet, which was, of course, in the hands of the poor peasants. These were by no means inclined to let their richer neighbours off lightly, the more so as the higher these were assessed the smaller would be the contribution demanded from the poor peasants. The result was that the richer a peasant was, the more rapid was his impoverishment. According to the official "*History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*", 'in answer to the kulaks' refusal to sell their grain surpluses to the State at the fixed prices, the Party and the Government adopted a number of emergency measures against the kulaks,

applied Article 107 of the Criminal Code empowering the courts to confiscate grain surpluses from the kulaks and profiteers in case they refused to sell them to the State at the fixed prices, and granted to poor peasants a number of privileges under which 25 per cent of the confiscated kulak grain was placed at their disposal.

It must also be noted that from 1927 onwards the Government tried to restrict the open market for other agricultural produce such as oil-seeds, sugar-beet, wool, flax and hemp, which during the N.E.P. had been purchased by the corresponding industries directly from the peasants as well as through official purchasing boards. The new State-collecting organizations set up to procure supplies of these raw materials under the contract system paid the peasants at prices usually appreciably lower than the prices ruling on the open market.

All these measures were designed to persuade the peasants to join collective farms. The peasants, however, evinced a strange reluctance to give up their independent way of life; they preferred retaining their own individualities and the prospect of bettering themselves by their own efforts to sinking their individualities in collective enterprise. Certainly, the "Model" State farms and the majority of collective farms already in existence were not good advertisements for the mode of life extolled by Bolshevism; they had not shown any marked advance over individual farming and the standard of living was no better than that of the average independent farmer. In spite of all the efforts made to attract peasants into collective farms, during the years from the spring of 1927 to the spring of 1929 the percentage of peasant housesteads collectivized rose from 0·8 to 3·9 only.

The Government decided, therefore, to force the pace and to adopt stricter measures. The Fifteenth Party Congress had launched "an offensive against the kulaks" and proclaimed the policy of "resolutely res-

tricting the exploiting proclivities of the kulaks", but the kulaks as a class were allowed to exist. It was for this reason, explained Stalin in an article dated January 21, 1930, that the Congress allowed the laws which permitted the renting of land and the hiring of labour in rural districts to remain in force and declared "once again that the expropriation of the kulaks as a class was impermissible". It was intended, according to Stalin, only to squeeze out and overcome individual sections of the kulaks by taxation measures and all sorts of other restrictions, but this policy of semi-voluntary collectivization which was pursued right down to the summer of 1929 failed, as it did in the time of Lenin, and a most decisive turn in policy was taken when the elimination of the kulaks as a class was decided upon by "breaking down its resistance in open battle and depriving it of the productive sources of its existence and development (the free use of land, means of production, the renting of land, the right to hire labour, etc)". In January 1930 the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued an instruction that by the coming spring 30 million hectares of land should be brought under collective cultivation. This was about 25 per cent of the total area under crops in 1929. Peasants labelled rich were *ipso facto* condemned to liquidation, and taxes far heavier in proportion to those borne by the other groups, middle and poor, were imposed on them; if they paid the first time, they were re-assessed at twice or three times the original sum. Sooner or later the peasant failed to pay his taxes; thereupon his property was handed over to the nearest kolhozy.

Middle peasants were taxed somewhat more lightly, but still severely enough; while poor peasants were taxed very lightly or not at all. The Government relied mainly on the last-named as the prime movers towards collectivization. As a result of this drive Soviet statistics showed that while in 1929 the land sown by kolhozy

amounted to 4·2 million hectares and in 1930 to 38·1 million hectares, the land cultivated by independent peasants had sunk from 110 million hectares in 1929 to 81·8 millions in 1930. By March 1930, 60 per cent of peasant homesteads in the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic were officially collectivized.

Before entering the kolhoz most peasants, feeling themselves condemned to a merger that was repugnant to them, got rid of as much of their movable property as could be disposed of, and in many cases actually destroyed both live and dead stock rather than hand it over. As a direct consequence of this destruction, five-ninths of the total head of livestock in 1929, that is, fourteen crores of animals, were lost within a space of four years; buildings and machinery deteriorated through neglect or were deliberately damaged and large areas of orchards and the other permanent cultures were destroyed. Probably, not less than five million peasants, including families, were deported to Siberia and the Far North, and of these it is estimated that 25 per cent perished. Also very largely as a result of neglect of the land, growth of weeds, late sowings, etc., comparatively dry summers in 1931 and 1932 resulted in such poor harvests that millions, variously estimated at four to ten, of persons died of direct starvation or diseases induced by starvation.

"In a very short time the campaign of forced collectivization caused such chaos in the country-side that the Central Government had to take steps to prevent the complete ruin of agriculture. On March 2, 1930 a letter of Stalin entitled "Dizziness from Success" was published in all Soviet newspapers. In this, Stalin, after giving qualified praise to the collectivizers for their energy and enthusiasm, reproached them strongly for their tactless and impetuous handling of the peasants. They had used force where persuasion was called for, and driven the peasants into kolhozy when they should have led them. The principle of voluntary collectiv-

ization was reaffirmed and the peasants were informed that those who had been collectivized against their will were to be allowed to leave the kolhozy. In two months collectivization in R.S.F.S.R., fell from 60 to 23·4 per cent. This was, however, a temporary and hollow victory for the peasants. Those who left the kolhozy did not receive their former holdings, but had to take whatever vacant, and therefore, inferior land was available; neither did they get back all their animals and stock. Usually they were given a sum of money in compensation, which being calculated at Government's arbitrarily fixed purchasing price was hopelessly insufficient to recoup their losses. Most of the peasants who left the kolhozy in the spring of 1930 were only too glad to be re-admitted before the end of the year".⁶

Not only did those who left the kolhozy not receive their former holdings and their animals and stock, but to withstand the wave of withdrawals from collective farms, the Soviet Government announced that it intended to give the collective farms privileges in respect of land, the supply of machines, tractors, seed, grain, etc., in respect of tax alleviation and in respect of credits. "A few days ago the Soviet Government", wrote Stalin in the *Pravda* on April 3, 1930, "decided to exempt from taxation for two years all socialized draught animals in the collective farms (horses, oxen, etc.), all cows, pigs, sheep and poultry both in the collective possession of the collective farms and in the individual possession of the collective farmers. In addition, the Soviet Government decided to prolong the term of payment of arrears on credits granted to collective farmers until the end of the year, and to waive all fines and court penalties imposed prior to April 1 in the case of all peasants who have joined collective farms. Lastly, it decided to advance credits to the collective farmers in the present

⁶ "The Economics of Agriculture", pp. 118-19.

year to the amount of 500,000,000, roubles”.

The Revolution was frankly a proletarian movement led by a small body of men belonging to the intelligentsia who were wanting in appreciation of peasant needs and sympathy for irrepressible peasant longings. The Bolsheviks stood for an alliance with the middle peasants; not any kind of alliance, however, as we have seen, but only such an alliance as “guaranteed the *leadership* of the working class, as *consolidated* the dictatorship of the proletariat and facilitated the abolition of classes”. Few, if any, of the competent Bolshevik leaders were of genuine peasant origin and they seem to have thought the peasants ought to reach to the new order in much the same way as the industrial proletariat. But the latter had not suffered a fundamental change in their condition; they had exchanged private employers for the State, but they still worked in the same factories for a regular wage. Collectivization, however, meant an enormous change in the peasants’ life. It seemed to them a return to the pre-war conditions of dependence from which they thought the Revolution had delivered them. Although in theory the kolhozy were to be co-operative enterprises in which all the members had an equal voice, the people who arrived in the villages in 1930—25,000 industrial workers—to organize the kolhozy and become their first presidents, left the peasants in no doubt what the kolhoz was in fact to become. Every able-bodied member was to do whatever work he was detailed to do, and to work during specified hours. In return he was to receive rations and, perhaps, a small sum of money, but he had no voice in the disposal of the farm’s produce, all of which, surplus to the consumptive needs of the farm, was to be handed over to the State at a fixed price, very low in comparison with the prices charged by the State for the goods produced by the State industries.

Perhaps, the roughness and suddenness of the

methods pursued in the course of collectivization were characteristic of the Bolsheviks rather than essential to the policy itself. With patience and tact, and, above all, if the Government had used as kolhoz organizers real farmers who knew their jobs and whom the peasants could respect and understand, the whole story might have been very different.

CHAPTER III

THE RUSSIAN SYSTEM OF TO-DAY

THE KOLHOZY : ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

Towards the close of 1932 the Government made two concessions; it instituted officially administered, and organized free, peasant markets in the towns at which both kolhozy and kolhozniki had the right to sell their produce at uncontrolled market prices, and it amended the system of Government collections of products subject to compulsory delivery to a fixed quantity per unit of land planted with specified crops. This meant that every kolhoz knew at the beginning of the year exactly how much grain, potatoes, etc., it would have to hand over to the State collectors after the harvest, instead of being assessed at harvest time at the whim of the local collecting organization. The kolhoz was allowed to deal with the balance of its harvest as it liked, provided, naturally, that it made the necessary provisions for seed, fodder and other domestic requirements.

As soon as the kolhozniki began to realize that something might be made of collectivization they started to demand a say in the management of the kolhozy and some voice in the disposal of the farm's resources and income. Since 1930, or even earlier, increasing numbers of kolhozniki had received training as agricultural experts in various branches, as tractor drivers and mechanics, and had in the process received a certain amount of general education and had gained a broader outlook than the typical peasant. It seems not improbable

that these considerations played some part in the decision of the Government to draw up a new and complete set of model articles of association for agricultural artels in 1935.

THE MODEL CONSTITUTION OF AN AGRICULTURAL ARTEL¹

I

Aims and Objects

1. The working peasants of the village voluntarily associate themselves in an agricultural artel, in order by means of common possession of the means of production and mutual organization of their labour to create a collective or socialized economic unit, to complete the extermination of the kulaks and all exploiters and enemies of the workers, to banish poverty and ignorance and dissolve the remnants of small individual undertakings, and to raise the productivity of labour and thus improve the standard of living of the collectivized peasants.

The path of the collective farm is the path of socialism and is the only true path for the working peasants to follow. The members of the artel undertake to consolidate their organization by honest toil, to share the collective income according to their individual contribution, to protect the common property and goods, to maintain the tractors, machines and horses in good condition and fulfil all their obligations towards the Workers' and Peasants' State, and thus create a truly Bolshevik collective farm and enable every collectivized peasant to become prosperous.

II

The Land

2. All boundaries formerly separating the farms of individual members of the artel shall be demolished and

¹ "Economics of Soviet Agriculture": Hubbard.

the land amalgamated into a single aggregate area for the common use and profit of the artel.

The land occupied by an artel (and this applies equally to all land in the U.S.S.R.) remains the property of the State. By virtue of the laws of the Workers' and Peasants' State it is transferred to the artel for the latter's permanent use. Land cannot be sold nor bought nor leased.

Every artel shall receive from the District Executive Committee a State certificate confirming the permanent usufruct of its land. This document shall accurately delineate the boundaries of the land, of which no reduction is permissible. Additions to the land held by an artel can be made from unoccupied State areas or from unused land occupied by independent peasants, with the proviso that there shall be no interposition (i.e., a plot of independent peasant land surrounded by collectivized land, or *vice versa*).

3. Small allotments of land shall be provided out of the artel's land for the private use of every household as vegetable gardens, etc.

The area of these garden allotments (excluding the area immediately surrounding the dwelling-houses) shall vary between $\frac{1}{4}$ hectare and $\frac{1}{2}$ hectare, though in special districts it may amount to 1 hectare (2.471 acres).

The area of land held by an artel can in no circumstances be reduced. It is forbidden to allot any artel land to a member leaving the artel, who can receive an allotment only from unoccupied State land.

Farm land held by an artel shall be divided into fields in accordance with the authorized crop rotation. Each farm brigade shall be attached to specific fields for the period of an entire crop rotation (i.e., three or more years).

When an artel possesses a considerable head of live-

stock, if the area of the farm permits, a certain area may be set aside for the sole purpose of growing fodder crops.

III

The Means Of Production

4. The following are held in common: all working cattle, agricultural implements (ploughs, drills, harrows, etc.), seed stocks, fodder in quantities sufficient to supply the needs of the collective livestock, farm buildings necessary for carrying on the work of the artel, and all enterprises for working up the products of the farm.

The following will remain in the private use of the individual households:—dwelling houses, private livestock and poultry, such buildings, etc., as are necessary for the proper housing of private livestock, and the garden tools necessary for cultivating private allotments.

At its own discretion the administration of the artel may allow against payment the farm's working cattle to be used by individual members for their own purpose.

Artels shall, whenever possible, organize a mixed livestock produce farm (i.e., a livestock side comprising cattle, sheep, pigs, etc., for producing marketable commodities). When an artel possesses a specially large head of livestock, several specialized livestock departments may be organized.

5. Every dvor in an artel in a grain, cotton, sugar-beet, flax, hemp, potato, vegetable, tea and tobacco-growing region may have for its own use one cow, two calves, one sow and its progeny, or, at the discretion of the farm administration, two sows and their progeny, upto 10 sheep or goats, an unlimited amount of poultry and rabbits and upto 20 bee-hives.

Every dvor in an agricultural region in which there is a well-developed stock-breeding industry may possess

2 or 3 cows together with their calves, 2 or 3 sows and their litters, from 20 to 25 sheep and goats, an unlimited quantity of poultry and rabbits and upto 20 bee-hives. This applies to agricultural areas not contiguous to regions inhabited by nomad people, such as

Every *dvor* in non-nomad or semi-nomad regions, where agriculture plays a minor role and stock-breeding is the chief industry, may own 4 or 5 cows and their calves, from 30 to 40 sheep and goats, 2 or 3 sows and their progeny, an unlimited quantity of poultry and rabbits and upto 20 bee-hives; in addition, 1 horse or 1 milch mare (for the production of Koumiss—a Mongol or Tartar preparation made of fermented mare's milk), or 2 camels, or 2 asses, or 2 mules. Among these regions are included the stock-breeding districts of

Every *dvor* in the nomad regions where agriculture is practically non-existent may own 8 to 10 cows and their calves, 100 to 150 sheep or goats, an unlimited quantity of poultry, upto 10 horses, and from 5 to 8 camels. Such districts are the nomad areas of Kazakhs-tan, the Nagaisk region and the nomad areas of Burial Mongolia.

IV

The operations of the Artel and its administration

6. The artel shall carry out its collective work according to a plan, paying strict attention to the Government's plan of agricultural production, and with due regard to its obligations towards the State.

In carrying out field work the artel shall execute the various seasonal tasks such as ploughing, sowing, etc., in accordance with the requirements of each particular crop and shall also carry out the Government's plan for developing the livestock side of its activities.

The management and all members of the artel shall:—

(a) Increase the yield of the farm by observing a proper system of crop rotation, deep ploughing, fallowing, etc., and strictly adhere to the rules laid down by the local agro-technical authorities;

(b) Select the best available seed and see that it is properly cleansed and stored;

(c) Extend the cultivated area of the farm by using all suitable land at the disposal of the artel;

(d) Use to the best advantage and keep in good repair and condition all implements, machinery, draught cattle, etc.;

(e) Organize a live-stock department, including, where possible, horse-breeding. The artel shall also take adequate steps to improve the livestock belonging to the individual members of the artel;

(f) Increase the production of fodder and improve meadows and pasturage, giving assistance also to the individual members of the artel by advice and by allowing them the use of the common pasture-land when possible;

(g) Develop all other branches of agricultural production suitable to the locality, as well as handicrafts;

(h) Construct buildings on proper economic principles;

(i) Improve the technical proficiency of the kolhozники, according to their qualifications posting them to brigades and appointing them tractor-drivers, cattle and horsemen, veterinary workers, etc.;

(j) Improve the cultural level of the artel by providing newspapers, books, wireless, etc., by forming clubs and libraries and installing baths, barber shops, and by seeing that the streets and premises of the village are kept clean and orderly and the houses in good repair; and

(k) Draw the women into the productive work of the farm and give them opportunities of developing their qualifications and increasing their experience by

relieving them, as far as possible, from domestic duties through organizing creches, kindergartens, etc.

V

Membership

7. Elections of new members take place at a general meeting of the kolhozniki to consider candidates proposed by the administration.

All workers of both sexes having reached the age of sixteen years, are eligible to become members of an artel.

Kulaks and all persons deprived of civil rights are ineligible for membership. But this does not apply:—

(a) To children of outlaws who for some years have been engaged in communal agricultural labour and have worked conscientiously;

(b) To former kulaks and members of kulak families who, having been exiled to new settlements on account of their anti-soviet and anti-collective attitude, have during the past three years given evidence of their reform by honest labour and subordination to Soviet regulations.

Independent peasants who sold their horses less than two years before being admitted to an artel and who possessed no seed, must within six years repay to the artel out of their own income the price of a horse and a given quantity of seed.

8. Expulsion from an artel can be effected only by the decision of a general meeting of members at which not less than two-thirds of all members are present. In the protocol of expulsion must be shown the number of members present at the meeting and number of votes passed for expulsion. An expelled member may appeal against the expulsion to the District Executive Committee and his appeal will eventually be decided

by the Presidium of the Committee in the presence of the director and managing committee of the artel.

VI

The Property of the Artel

9. New members on entering an artel must pay an entrance fee of between 20 and 40 roubles per dvor according to their means. The entrance fees of new members are paid into the indivisible fund.

10. One quarter to one-half of the property brought in by new members of the artel shall be credited to the indivisible fund. The remaining part of the property shall be considered as the dividend-earning contribution of the member concerned.

In the case of a member leaving the artel, the management shall make a settlement with him and return to him the value of his dividend-earning contribution in the form of money. No member leaving an artel can be allotted any of the land belonging to the artel.

11. The gross produce from both the arable and livestock sides of the artel farm is disposed of as follows, in order of precedence:

(a) The delivery to the State of compulsory quotas, the repayment of seed loans and payment in kind to the M. T. S. (Machine Tractor Station) for work carried out in accordance with the contract concluded between the artel and the M. T. S.;

(b) Provision of seed for the following agricultural year and of fodder for the cattle for the following year; the formation of a reserve fund as an assurance against harvest failures;

(c) Provision for the subsistence of invalids, the aged and those who are temporarily incapacitated from work, the families of serving soldiers, and to supplying meals to children in the creches and to orphans. The

total amount allotted for these purposes is determined by the members at a general meeting, but shall not exceed 2 p.c. of the farm's total produce;

(d) Marketable surplus as determined at a general meeting of members for sale either to the State or on the open market;

(e) The remainder of the artel's farm produce shall be divided among the members of the artel according to the number of their labour days;

12. ¹The money income of the artel shall be distributed as follows:—

(a) The payment of State taxes as established by law, the payment of insurance premiums and the repayment of financial loans;

(b) Necessary expenditure on current productive needs, such as repair to equipment and machinery, treatment of livestock, campaign against pests and vermin;

(c) Administrative costs, which must not exceed 2 p.c. of the gross income;

(d) Cultural requirements, such as the training of staff, organization of creches, children's play-grounds, the installation of wireless;

(e) The indivisible fund of the artel for the purpose of purchasing equipment and livestock, building materials, and the payment of wages to outside workers engaged for building;

The proportion of the money income to be appropriated to the indivisible fund shall be, in given regions, not less than 12 and not more than 15 per cent; in regions growing technical crops or engaged in stock-raising, not less than 15 and not more than 20 per cent.

(f) The remainder of the artel's money income shall be distributed among the members in accordance with their labour days.

¹ As amended on 5-12-1938.

The artel administration draws up the artel's annual budget, which, however, must be approved and adopted at a general meeting of members.

When passed the budget is obligatory on the artel administration, which must obtain the approval of a general meeting of members before funds may be diverted from one object to another.

VII

The Organization, Payment and Discipline of Labour

13. The work of a collective farm is normally to be performed by the members of the artel. Outside assistance is only to be resorted to when it is necessary to call in the services of an expert, or when ordinary hired labour is required to supplement the full labour strength of the artel during a rush of work. Outside hired labour may be employed in building.

14. The members of the artel shall be organized into "brigades".

Agricultural brigades are formed for a period of not less than a complete crop cycle. They shall be attached to the same fields for the whole period.

Every agricultural brigade shall be allotted the necessary machinery, implements, animals and farm buildings to enable it to carry on its work.

Livestock brigades are formed for a period of not less than three years. Each brigade has a definite head of stock allotted to it with the necessary complement of implements, draught animals, buildings, etc.

The members of the brigades shall be allotted to jobs by their brigadiers, who are to avoid any favouritism or discrimination and shall pay due regard to each individual's skill and capacity. Women are not to work for one month before and one month after childbirth, and during these two months are to be credited with half their average earnings.

15. All agricultural work is to be remunerated on the piece work system.

The management of the artel is to work out scales of work and fix the labour-day equivalents. The scheme must be approved at a general meeting of members.

The daily task in every sort of job must be within the capacity of the ordinary member working conscientiously.

In determining the labour-day equivalent of the unit task (e.g., ploughing a hectare, sowing a hectare, picking a hectare of cotton, threshing a ton of grain, etc.), due consideration must be given to the degree of skill required, the difficulty of the work, etc., and its importance for the community.

The brigadiers must reckon up the labour-day earnings of each member of their brigades at least once a week and enter the result in the members' labour-books.

Every month the administration must expose a list of members showing the number of labour days earned by each during the preceding month.

At the end of the year the book-keeper shall calculate each member's total earnings, and after a counter-check by the brigadiers and the president, a complete statement shall be exposed in public at least two weeks before the date of the general meeting at which the distribution of the artel's income is to be decided.

If any agricultural or livestock brigade, by reason of excellent work, returns a greater yield from its land or animals than the average for the whole farm, the management may award each member a bonus upto 10 p.c. more labour-day units than have actually been earned, upto 15 p.c. to the brigadier.

In the case of a brigade returning a lower yield than the average through bad work, a deduction upto

10 p.c. from the labour-day earnings of each member may be made.

The division of the divisible income of the artel among the members shall be strictly according to their labour-day earnings.

16. Every member may receive money advances during the year upto 50 p.c. of the sum already due to him.

Advances in kind to members may be made after threshing has begun from the 10-15 p.c. of the amount threshed which may be devoted at once to the farm's internal consumption.

In farms growing technical crops such as cotton, flax, etc., money advances may be made to members up to an aggregate amount not exceeding 60 p.c. of the value received for current sales of produce. That is, the distribution of the artel's monetary income shall not be held back till the total crop has been sold.

17. All members of an artel must obey the decision of the general meeting and the administration, take all possible care of the farm's property and State machines working on the farm, and generally do their work and observe proper discipline.

Misbehaviour, disobedience, laziness and so on is punished according to the artel's rules, e.g., a badly done job must be done over again without pay; an offender may be censured or reprimanded at a general meeting of members, may have his name written on the "black board"², may be fined upto 5 labour days, may be degraded to a lower job, or may be temporarily suspended from work.

If all attempts to reform a member by persuasion or punishment fail, the management may propose his expulsion to a general meeting of members. Expulsion may then follow under the provisions of clause 8 above.

² Names of exemplary members are displayed on "Red Boards."

18. Any damage or loss caused to collective or State property by negligence, and abuse of the property or animals belonging to the farm or of the machinery of the M. T. S. shall be regarded as treason towards the community and as support of the enemies of the people.

Any person accused of such crimes shall be handed over to the authorities for punishment according to the laws of the Workers' and Peasants' State.

VIII

The Administration of the Affairs of the Artel

19. The affairs of the artel are controlled by the members in general assembly; during the periods between general meetings decisions are taken by the administration elected and appointed by the members in general assembly.

20. The general assembly is the highest authority. Its functions are:

(a) To elect the president, the managing committee and reversionary commission, the last-named being confirmed by the District Executive Committee (i.e., the local Government authority);

(b) To decide on the admission of new members and the expulsion of existing members;

(c) To approve and confirm the annual production plan, the estimate of incomings and outgoings, the standards of work and the value of different kinds of the labour days;

(d) To confirm contracts entered into with the M. T. S.;

(e) To approve and confirm the general annual report of the administration in conjunction with the reversionary commission, as well as the separate reports of the administration on the most important activities of the artel;

(f) To approve and confirm the amount of the various funds and the labour-day equivalent in produce and money;

(g) To confirm the internal rules and regulations of the artel.

In all the above-mentioned questions a decision by the administration is invalid until confirmed by the general assembly.

For ordinary decisions a quorum of one-half the full number of members is necessary, but a decision on the following questions requires the presence at the meeting of at least two-thirds of the full membership;

Election of president and managing committee; expulsion of a member; the determination of the amount of the various funds.

All resolutions shall be passed by a majority vote recorded by open voting.

21. The managing committee of five to nine members, according to the size of the artel, is chosen by a general meeting of members from among their own number. The committee is elected for a period of two years.

The committee is the executive organ of the general meeting of members, to which it is responsible for all its activities.

22. The president, who is an ex-officio chairman of the Managing Committee, is responsible for the day-to-day routine of the farm and for seeing that the decisions of the committee are carried out.

The president must call a meeting of the committee not less than twice a month for the purpose of considering current matters and taking any necessary decisions.

The committee shall appoint any of its number as vice-president, who shall take his orders from the president.

23. Brigadiers and managers of the livestock departments shall be appointed by the committee for a period of not less than two years.

For keeping the books and accounts of the farm the committee may appoint a book-keeper from among the members of the artel or engage an outside book-keeper at a salary. The book-keeper shall keep the accounts according to the approved system, and is directly subordinate to the committee and the president.

The book-keeper shall have no personal authority regarding the disposal of the farm's means, nor in respect of advances to members in money or kind. These matters can only be decided by the committee and the president. All documents relating to payments of money require the signature of the book-keeper and the president or vice-president.

The reversionary commission shall check all the economic and financial actions of the committee to ensure that all receipts in money and kind are properly accounted for, and that all outgoings and expenditure are agreeable to the regulations and constitution of the artel, to guard against waste and the improper use of the artel's property and to ensure that the artel fulfils its obligations towards the State, and to see that all debts are punctually paid and money dues collected.

The reversionary commission shall also check all accounts between the artel and the individual members and generally safeguard the interest of all parties.

The reversionary commission shall hold an audit four times a year. The annual accounts shall be audited and formally certified as correct before submission to the general assembly.

The reversionary commission is responsible to the general assembly for all its actions.

In the working life of such a community as has been outlined above, there must inevitably occur disputes which even a vote cannot settle. For these, as in the factory, according to rules framed originally resort was had to the "triangle". The triangle on the kolhoz was composed of the president of the Managing Committee, the Chairman of the village Soviet and the party secretary. And this triangular form of representation was carried down through the farm structure. On each brigade there was also a member of the village Soviet, elected from the brigade, who with the brigadier and the brigade party organizer, formed the brigade triangles. What amendments, if any, have been made since then in this procedure, we have no information.

To-day the collective farm of the artel type covers the USSR from one end to the other; it has become the pattern organization of Russia. In 1937 there were 243,700 kolhozy cultivating 110·511 million hectares representing 99·1 per cent of the total cultivated area and giving an average of approximately 450 hectares per kolhoz for the whole country, and there were a little more than 18·5 million (according to some, 18·8 million) kolhozniki dvory which works out at an average of 75 dvory per kolhoz. The average number of workers in a kolhoz at the beginning of 1935 was 124·3, which may be taken as approximately correct for the following two or three years. The average kolhoznik dvor consists of about 4·8 persons and the number of labour days earned per dvor in 1937 was given as 438.

The energetic campaign for the introduction of collectivization in agriculture reduced the number of independent peasant undertakings from 25·6 million at the end of 1927 to 1·5 million in 1938. The proportion of the grain area in these peasant holdings was, however, reduced still further. In his report to the

Eighteenth Congress of the C. P. S. U. (B) Stalin stated on March 10, 1939—"Whereas the grain area of the collective farms increased from 75 million hectares in 1933 to 92 millions in 1938, the grain area of the individual peasant farmers dropped in this period from 15.7 million hectares to 0.6 million, or to 0.6 per cent of the total grain area". These individual holdings continued to linger in the nature of a social anachronism in the northern provinces, with their poorer soil, and in some of the autonomous republics inhabited by non-Russian nationalities. Soon after the Eighteenth Congress, a decree was issued on May 27, 1939, dealing with these remnants of individual peasants, which limited the farm land they may occupy exclusive of the homesteads to the following:—

In cotton regions when irrigated, $1/10$ hectare ($1/4$ acres)

In cotton regions when not irrigated, $1/2$ ha ($1\frac{1}{4}$ acres)

In vegetable and sugar-beet regions, $1/2$ ha ($1\frac{1}{4}$ acres)

In all other regions, upto 1 ha ($2\frac{1}{2}$, or to be quite accurate, 2.471 acres).

In irrigated districts the land occupied by the peasant's cottage, outbuildings, etc., must not exceed $1/10$ ha (a space roughly 30×40 yards), in all other places $1/5$ ha. This reduces the amount of land that an independent peasant may hold to about the same as private allotments allowed to kolhozniki. That is, independent peasants have been completely and finally liquidated.

MACHINE-TRACTOR STATIONS

An effective lever for lifting the kolhozy to prosperity was found in the Machine and Tractor Stations (M.T.S.) through which the Soviet Government renders the collective farmers scientific and technical assistance. They were organized in their present form

by a decree of the Council of People's Commissars issued on 2nd September, 1933, by which time they had emerged from the experimental stages. In 1930 the U.S.S.R. had 158 Machine and Tractor Stations. By the end of 1935 the number had increased to over 2,600. By the beginning of 1939 it had risen to 6,350, a great network extending from the White Sea to the Black Sea, from the Western frontiers to the Far East. In 1938 the Machine and Tractor Stations serving the collective farms *only* had 130,000 harvester combines, 160,000 motor trucks, 105,000 threshing machines and 394,500 powerful tractors aggregating 7,504,400 horse-power, and their number is steadily increasing. In addition there are hundreds of thousands of other machines and mechanical appliances in the Machine and Tractor Stations, as well as a large number of well-equipped repair shops. The M.T.S. are well staffed with engineers, mechanics, agronomists, expert book-keepers and accountants, land reclamation experts, hydraulic engineers and other trained men.

Early in 1934 the Government issued a standard form of contract as a guide to M.T.S. and kolhozy, when making their arrangements for the year's work. Besides specifying the amount and the nature of the work to be performed by M.T.S. tractors, harvester combines, threshing machines, etc., the contract provided that the M.T.S. should assist the kolhozy with advice on technical questions, such as the rotation of crops and financial plans, and instruction to members of the kolhoz in the use and care of machinery, etc. The kolhoz, for its part, undertook to provide all the necessary field labour and to put into effect the instructions issued by the district authorities and the M.T.S.

The form of model contract drawn up in 1934, however, proved to be unsatisfactory in some respects, and a new form of contract was published in January 1939 which instead of affording a standard model for

the guidance of M.T.S. and kolhozy was to be accurately followed and to have the force of law. The new contract differed from its predecessor in that it laid down more rigid rules enforcing a greater degree of responsibility on both parties in the punctual and accurate performance of their respective obligations. It contains, for example, a table showing the precise area of land to be ploughed, cultivated, etc., the depth of the furrow, the dates when each class of work must be completed, etc., while on its part the kolhoz must provide a specified number of field hands for various tasks, have its own machinery and implements in good repair when required, provide the requisite quantity of good seed where and when wanted, and so on.

As payment to the M.T.S. for the use of its machines the kolhoz delivers a certain percentage of the harvest to the State-collecting organizations, in addition to the statutory delivery of so much per hectare under cultivation, according to the actual yield realized. These rates, as fixed for 1937, come to about 11 per cent of the gross yield when the crop is small, to nearly 20 per cent when the crop is good, for the whole cycle of work, and somewhat higher proportionately for isolated tasks, such as ploughing. It was provided in 1939 that harvest estimates for the purpose of fixing the amounts due to the M.T.S. were in future to be made by the republican or provincial governments and not, as formerly, by the district commissions which possibly were thought to be too lenient towards the kolhozy.

The main function of the M.T.S. is to provide tractors to haul the so-called "coupled-up" machinery (ploughs, harrows, seed drills, etc., which belong to the kolhoz and not to the M.T.S.), harvester combines and power-driven threshing machines. Kolhozy which possessed such machines had to sell them to the M.T.S. in 1934, and only such farms that are not fully served by M.T.S. are now allowed to possess any motive machinery

of their own with the exception of motor lorries. The tractors on the collective farms do not work singly, but in teams consisting of a number of tractors with the requisite outfit of appliance and agricultural mechanics. The work of these machines is directed by mechanics and agronomists. Skilled men from the M.T.S. repair-shops see to it that the machines are kept in good order. The M.T.S. tractor teams are attached to a particular collective farm for the whole season to complete all the work undertaken in the contract.

Under a law of 5th February, 1938, all current and working costs were financed from the national budget, which opened an annual or six-months' credit for each, M.T.S. at the nearest branch of the State Bank. In that year the State assigned 7,000,000,000 roubles to the M.T.S. Since the amount was fixed the M.T.S. was often able to save money by economizing the petrol, oil, etc., through shallow ploughing and by delaying the start of spring operations until the ground was in easy working condition. Under the new dispensation of 1939 the M.T.S. are credited every quarter and the amount to which they can draw on their accounts depends on the way in which they fulfilled their plan during the preceding quarter. In addition to this, extra allowances of tractor fuel and wage increases are given during the first few days of the spring ploughing season in order to get the tractors on to the land at the earliest possible moment—a consideration which is of the utmost importance to the spring grain crops. Then at the end of the year the manager and chief officials of the M.T.S. may receive bonuses ranging from one to three months' pay if they have satisfactorily fulfilled their plan and the average yield of the farms they serve comes up to or exceeds expectations.

According to a decree of the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the Party, dated 8th March, 1939, which laid down elaborate rules

for remuneration of tractor-drivers for all forms of work, tractor-drivers who reduce their fuel-consumption below the official allowance receive a premium amounting to 50 per cent, and the brigadier 20 per cent, of the cost of the fuel saved. On the other hand, the extravagant tractor-driver is fined $1\frac{1}{2}$ times and his brigadier 10 per cent of the cost of the excess fuel consumed.

The reasons for concentrating power machinery in the M.T.S. are, fairly obviously, the more economical use and better care possible when all the tractors, combines, etc., in the district are at the disposal of a single authority, possessing also a more or less well-equipped repair depot. It is also alleged by some critics that another motive was the stranglehold it offered the Government over the kolhozy. Undoubtedly, the terms of the contract give the M.T.S. a great deal of control over the kolhozy. The M.T.S. together with the Rayzo (District Agricultural Department) dictate all the major operations of the kolhozy, and since kolhozy are permitted only in exceptional circumstances to possess tractors and complex machinery of their own, they are largely at the mercy of the M.T.S.

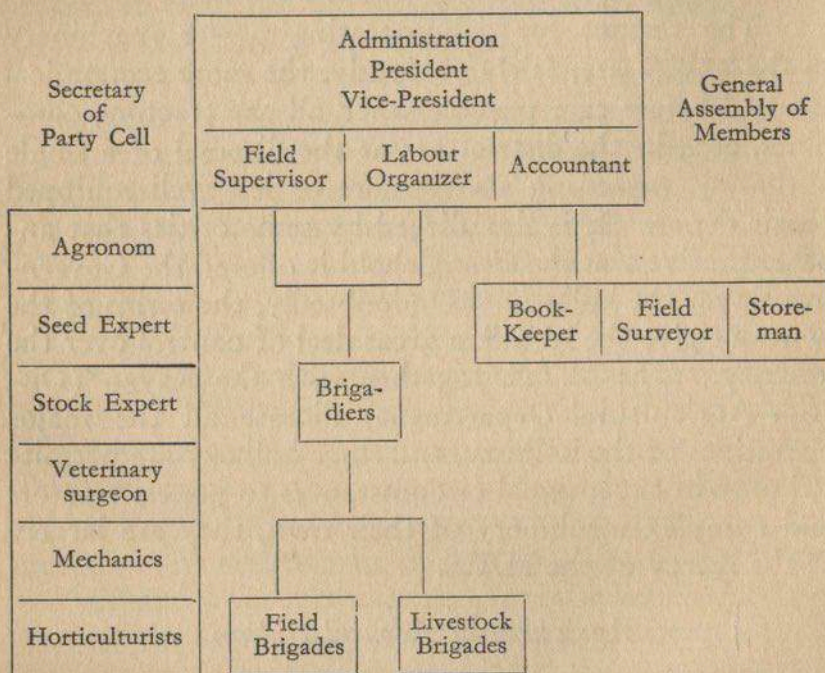
Agricultural Administration

While the political organization of kolhozy is controlled by the Central Committee of the Communist Party through the rayon party committees, the People's Commissariat of Agriculture is responsible for carrying out the Soviet Government's agricultural policy in the technical sense. The Commissariat draws up both the Five-Year Plans and the single-year plans, which include questions concerning the areas to be planted to different crops, stock-breeding, etc.

'The local organizations with which the kolhozy

come into direct contact are the rayzo,⁴ the village soviets, the rayon representatives of the State Collecting Organizations and the rayon party committees, and these in turn receive their orders and instructions from the republican or provincial governments and party committees.....

'The typical domestic organization of a kolhoz is best shown in the following diagram:



'The secretary of the party cell is a political official representing the rayon party committee, whose main function is to see that the Party's instructions are properly carried out and to guard against any heterodox ideas gaining currency in the kolhoz. The general assembly of members has the theoretical right to elect the president and to decide certain matters of domestic

⁴ Rayzo is that section of the district local Government board which deals with agricultural matters.

policy coming within its competence, such as decisions regarding the distribution of farm's surplus produce and money revenue among the members (vide the Kolhozy Statutes). Rules are, however, laid down which leave in actual fact very little discretion to the members.

'The president of the kolhozy is usually a party functionary and not a farmer, and, in fact, very few presidents are local men or even of rural origin. The 25,000 industrial workers who were sent into the country in 1930 to become the first kolhozy presidents were the forerunners of a class of professional presidents who to-day rule most of the 250,000 kolhozy. The vice-presidents, on the contrary, are mainly drawn from the peasant class and undertake the supervision of the economic activities of the farm.

'The field supervisors are responsible for the general work on the farm, while the labour organizers are responsible for the proper distribution of the farm's labour resources among the various activities of the farm. The accountant is, of course, in charge of the office and clerical work, who besides keeping accounts both of the farm's money and material resources, has the task of booking up each member's labour days and recording the normal tasks which constitute a labour day, which are largely fixed by the surveyors.

'The agronomists, or general farming experts, and the other experts are frequently salaried employees and not members of the kolhozy. In principle they have no executive authority, but act as advisers to the administration, though those with special duties, such as the veterinarians and mechanics, naturally have the power of acting independently, and on their own initiative without waiting for instructions when it is a question of dealing with sick animals or defective machines. The brigadiers may be compared with foremen and the brigades to labour-gangs.

'Kolhozy differ considerably both in regard to size and the number and nature of various activities carried on. Therefore all kolhozy do not possess the full complement of experts as enumerated above. Most large farms have their own agronomists, but smaller farms often share one agronomist with two or three others or employ the services of the M. T. S. staff agronomist. The same applies to stock experts, veterinary surgeons, etc. The number of field surveyors, brigadiers, office clerks, etc., depends on requirements, while some farms that carry on subsidiary enterprises, such as wine-making, alcohol distilling, dairying, tanning or even brick-making, possess experts to supervise these branches. In addition to the above, who may be described as forming the administrative and executive staff, every kolhoz employs a certain number of watchmen whose duties include the guarding of ripening crops from theft, though this is now not so frequent as during the early days, the nurses and children's governesses who take charge of the kolhozniki's babies, and young children when the mothers are at work⁵

STATE EXACTIONS AND TAXATION

As we have seen, a new system of compulsory deliveries was devised at the end of 1932. Grain, though by far the most important crop subject to compulsory deliveries, is not the only one. Quotas are also imposed on sun-flower seeds, potatoes, beans, wool, meat, butter and milk. Fixed quantities of these commodities, per unit of cultivated land or per head of livestock, were laid down for each region. As regards meat this law was followed by another on July 8, 1939, according to which the obligatory deliveries of meat were no longer computed on the basis of existing livestock but of land acreage, which meant that the collective had to devote

⁵ *Economics of Soviet Agriculture*, pp. 160-164.

increasing energy to the livestock business or suffer serious encroachment on its livestock possessions. Other products, mainly so-called industrial crops such as cotton, flax and sugar-beet, are subject to contractual deliveries which differ mainly in name but little in principle from compulsory deliveries.

Every kolhoz is compelled to deliver its quotas, for which it receives payment at the State's purchasing price, nominally based on the cost of production. The prices paid are, however, extremely low in comparison with the prices of manufactured goods bought by the peasants. They are one-tenth, or even less, of the open market prices for the same commodities. These compulsory deliveries are generally and appropriately referred to as a tax in kind because the State obtains a very large part of its budget revenue (viz. 58.9 p.c. in 1935, 54.6 p.c. in 1936 and 51.65 p.c. in 1937) by the sale at greatly inflated prices to the consuming population of the produce it has bought cheaply from the producers.

Excluding the Western Provinces, the percentage of compulsory deliveries to gross harvest averaged in 1935 about 35 p.c. and in 1936 about 23 p.c.

The kolhozy are required to pay directly to the exchequer an income-tax in money, equivalent to 3 p.c. of their gross money income and produce valued at the State purchasing price, as shown in the previous year's accounts. In addition, the kolhozy pay turn-over tax at the prescribed rates on any products of the industrial enterprises.

Farmers in collectives pay no income-tax on their returns from the collective. But according to the law of July 3, 1939, they pay a much higher tax on the income they derive from their own allotments, from their individually owned livestock, or from any gainful occupation they may be pursuing outside of farming. Formerly, under a law of 1937, the kolhozniki paid on such independent income a fixed sum per dvor, varying

from R.10 in the poorest regions to R.50 in richest regions. This income-tax has been increased presumably to discourage the kolhozniki from devoting too much time to their own individual plots of land and their own livestock and to compel them to give more and more attention to the kolhoz.

In addition to the income-tax, kolhozniki earning wages in State enterprises would have to pay certain unions dues.

The above concludes the list of all union or centralized taxation, but local taxes are collected by provincial governments and village soviets collect something in the nature of rural rates.

Finally, there is so-called "Voluntary taxation", which includes subscriptions to the State loan and levies for local cultural and social needs, such as building and equipping schools, clubs, etc. In practice the sums to be subscribed are fixed by the local party committee and the kolhozniki have no choice but to vote in favour of the resolution. The percentage of the average kolhoz and kolhozniki money income taxes by obligatory and "voluntary" taxation in 1935 was 7.9 and 9.7 respectively and in 1937, 8.3 and 5.8.

THE SOVHOZY OR STATE FARMS

The second element in the socialist land tenure system consists of the great State agricultural undertakings. Here the socialist principles find their complete expression; work is carried on according to plans drawn up by the State and labour is subject to socialist regulations. The workers are exclusively wage-labourers who have appropriate trade unions of their own like the industrial labourers. The State farms have an eight-hour day. Every worker is entitled to an annual vacation with pay. Many workers spend their vacations in sanatoria and rest-houses at the expense of the State.

The majority of these State farms have been organized on semi-arid land previously not cultivated at all. In order to utilize machinery and tractors most efficiently these farms were planned to be of enormous size, and the projected size of State grain farms continued to increase. From 75 to 100 thousand acres at first, the optimum size was raised to about 175 to 200 thousand acres. By 1929 the average size of the 121 farms of the Grain Trust was officially given as about 140 thousand acres per farm. Many of them were much large—as, for example, the 'Giant', or 'Gigant', which is the biggest wheat-producing estate in the world, fifty miles from north to south and forty miles from east to west, with 17,000 people working on it. By the spring of 1930, the number of State grain farms had risen to 143.

On October 1, 1936, according to a publication of the International Institute of Agriculture published in 1939, there were 4,295 sovhozy, with a cultivated area of 10,722,600 hectares. Of this number, 2,644 sovhozy, with a cultivated area of 7,342,600 hectares (68·4 per cent of the total area) were situated in the R. S. F. S. R. and 772 with a cultivated area of 2,269,400 hectares (21·3 per cent) in the Ukraine. According to a booklet issued by the People's Commissar of State Farms of the U. S. S. R. published in 1939 on the occasion of the New York World Fair, the number of State farms on January 1, 1939, was 3,957 *occupying* an immense area of 168 million acres or 68,016,200 hectares. The State farms then existing were classified as follows:—

Grain-growing	477
Growing cotton and other fibre crops	54
Growing special crops (tea, tobacco, etc.)	114
Fruit, vegetable, vine-growing	645
suburban (chiefly for vegetables, dairy, and miscellaneous)	816

Cattle-breeding	..	..	..	771
Pig-breeding	..	..	..	629
Sheep-raising	..	..	..	200
Reindeer-breeding	..	..	..	31
Poultry-raising	..	..	..	102
Studs	..	..	..	118
				3957

The scope of State farming may be seen from the fact that the total *sown* area of the State farms in 1938 was 12,250,000 ha. and the total livestock of the State farms was 2,597,000 head of cattle, 1,830,000 head of hogs and 5,676,000 head of sheep.

By the end of 1938 the number of tractors in the State farms had increased to 89,000, aggregating 1,751,800 horse power, and that of harvester combines to 26,000 and of motor lorries to 30,600. In the State grain farms 94·5 per cent of all work was done by mechanical tractors while the harvesting was done exclusively by combines. The State farms employ great numbers of agronomists, engineers, animal breeding experts, and veterinary surgeons. These professions are taught in a large number of special agricultural institutes and colleges run by the People's Commissariat of State Farms. The State farms run various schools and study-courses to train skilled personnel not only for themselves, but for the kolhozy farms too.

Many State farms are real townships, populated by thousands of people. Every State farm maintains nurseries, maternity homes, hospitals, clinics and schools for children, all expenses being borne by the State. There is little to distinguish life in the State farms from the life of the workers in the towns.

As regards their success in the economic sense we have the testimony of Swidersky, the official historian

of the Soviet agricultural policy, who, in an article written for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Soviet Government (1927), admitted that 4 or 5 thousand State farms existing during the period of War Communism occupying about 5 million acres in all provinces, could not produce sufficient quantities of food even for their personal consumption and for feed of their livestock. The Commissar of Agriculture recognized as late as in 1928 that the sugar-beet State farms never reached the level of efficiency of private large-scale farming before the Revolution. On January 7, 1933, Stalin himself, addressing the Central Committee of the Party, admitted that out of 5,000 State farms only a few scores were making both ends meet. "In regard to the State farms," said Stalin a year later, on January 26, 1934, in his Report to the Seventeenth Congress of the Party, "it must be said that they still fail to cope with their tasks. I do not in the least underestimate the great revolutionizing rôle of our State farms. But if we compare the enormous sums the State has invested in the State farms with the actual results they have achieved to date, we will find an enormous balance against the State farms. The principal reason for this discrepancy is the fact that our State grain farms are too unwieldy; the directors cannot manage such huge farms. The farms are also too specialized, they have no rotation of crops and fallow land; they do not engage in livestock breeding. Evidently, it will be necessary to split up the State farms and make them less specialized."

As a result, the year of 1934 proved to be of particular importance in the history of the Sovhozy. Not only was specialization, which they had carried to an extreme, as, for example, in the system of mono-culture practised in the so-called "Wheat factories", abolished in that year, but from that time on they were obliged to balance their budgets without State assistance. With-

out State assistance, however, most of these farms have failed and had to be wound up with the result that within three years, i.e., from 1936 to 1938, seven million hectares of land was transferred from sovhozy to kolhozy. The increase in the area cultivated by State farms from 10,722,600 hectares on October 1, 1936 to 12,250,000 hectares on January 1, 1939, can be explained by the fact that fresh areas, hitherto uncultivated, are being opened up and colonized and new sovhozy being set up.

In the course of our enquiry about the ideal land tenure for our country, the question suggests itself—whether we will adopt the sovhoz as the basis of our land economy? The reply is an emphatic 'No'.

In the sovhoz the peasant works on land merely as a wage-labourer just like any other labourer to-day. It is none of his business to determine which crop to grow and in which plot of land, how to tend it and when to harvest it. All this is done by the State and its officials who do all the thinking and all the planning to the minutest details; the labourer—the erstwhile peasant—is there one amongst hundreds and thousands, with no right to question, but to work as he is told to do.

We are opposed to the operation of industrial concerns or economic enterprises by the State or its officials, except where it is unavoidable in the national interest, as, for example, the basic industries or public utilities, because this neither raises the masses from their proletarian state which is the avowed aim of socialists and acceptable to all reasonable persons, nor unlooses their creative energy, nor gives them a feeling of responsibility. On the contrary, it aggravates all these existent evils, and the workers have even less rights in relation to their employer—the State—than to the private capitalist, millowner or landlord. Under a system of State farms, with one big capitalist substituted for the few hundred or thousand who actually rule the country—

side to-day, the land-worker would be reduced, at least as far as individual freedom is concerned, to a position worse than that under the existing landlord-tenant system, for the State will be at once an employer and a law-maker. To-day the State has to keep up some sort of impartiality, for the tenant is after all a citizen, tax-payer and soldier. This fact the revolutionary Marxists try to confute by representing the State as "the dictatorship of the proletariat", by pretending that the State is identical with the workers and that there can be no antagonism between them. Actually their system leads to the rule of a new class, viz., officialdom in place of the old privileged classes—taluqdars, financiers, princes and the like. In such a State, all power is vested in the bureaucrats who run the administration and the managers who run the industry and State farms. And the annihilating effect of officialdom or bureaucratization upon the individual is well known. That reform is disastrous which condemns the natural striving for independence of an individual to be crushed under the steamroller of officialdom. One has simply to realize the picture of hundreds of millions of India literally working under the cold-blooded control of an unimaginably vast and complex bureaucracy, and to dismiss the scheme outright. It is a devastating thought—that of one man or few sitting at the top and undertaking to direct and control every operation of agriculture throughout this big country. It will amount to building a society—and we must beware of building one—in which nobody counts for anything except a politician, an official, the manager of a factory or a farm.

Comparing individualism and socialism, Lewis Mumford writes:—

"Masquerading under the noble slogans of the rights of man, pretending to continue its old war on despotic power, individualism established itself as the claim of

small groups of privileged people to exploit the work of other men on the basis of a monopoly, partial or complete, of land, capital, credit, and the machinery of production. For the single despotism of the king, it substituted a multitude of petty, and not so petty, despots: industrialists, financiers, robber barons. 'Socialism', on the other hand, has meant in practice the unlimited capacity of the government and the armed forces of the State to impose obedience and co-operation upon its subjects in times of war: pushed to its extreme, it becomes the state-deification of fascism and the unity of war-dictatorship. 'Individualism' rested on the doctrine of the "free market" in which price exercises the functions of an Almighty Providence. 'Socialism' rested on the doctrine of the closed frontier, in which every human activity within, thought itself, is subjected to State monopoly. The inequalities of the first and the uniformities of the second were equally opposed to a good society."⁶

While abolishing the 'robber barons' and inequality in the country-side, we should take care lest we establish dictatorship and State monopoly of all human activity, including agriculture.

Further, though it may be open to dispute whether, with efficient management, extensive farming on large farms supplied with modern machinery is or is not profitable, yet there is no doubt that intensive agriculture, such as we will have to resort to in the old soil of India in order to produce food for her ever-increasing millions and also to withstand over-sea competition of new countries like Australia or even the U. S. S. R. and the U. S. A. (which can live for a time on capital of fertile soil and sell their products at less than their real cost), has proved and will prove unremunerative if undertaken on a

⁶ "The Culture of Cities", 1938, p. 455.

large scale with paid labour and that is what a sovhoz amounts to.

The next question, therefore, that arises in the course of our investigation is: Shall we adopt the kolhoz (collective farm) ?

CHAPTER IV

SHALL WE ADOPT THE COLLECTIVE FARM ?

No national policy towards agriculture can be complete, adequate or even safe which does not consider the fact that agriculture is not merely an industry or a business, but also a way of living for three-fourths of the Indian people and that it, therefore, involves questions of profound social significance and calls for the earnest application of constructive statesmanship. As pointed out by the *Businessmen's Commission on Agriculture*, such statesmanship must take thought of the place agriculture is to occupy in the nation's future economy, of the relation between urban and rural populations, of the type of civilization we should hope to develop and of the conservation and wisest use of the basic national land resources.

"At present the farmer's unique position is to combine a way of living with a chance of material profit. A degree of success in both is essential. The first aim cannot be surrendered to the second ambition without revolutionizing the undertaking and surrendering what has seemed dearest to the farmer's heart. His pursuit guarantees a freedom of conduct and a self-direction of the aims and joys of life that is denied to every other occupation. His privilege exacts its own price. The farmer cannot successfully insist upon unique freedom, and at the same time challenge the material advantage of his less favoured fellowman who in turn pays his price for his peculiar advantage".¹

¹ "*Businessmen's Commission*", p. 17.

This way of living, this freedom of conduct and the farmer's sense of personal attachment to a particular piece of land endangered as a result of continuous work on it from early youth, are, however, being rapidly collectivized out of the Russian kolhoznik and replaced by the purely materialistic sentiments of the industrial proletarian. In character and way of life he is gradually acquiring the ideas and philosophy of the factory worker. Even now the young specialist, at least, regards his kolhoz in the same light in which an industrial worker regards his factory; land is no longer an integral part of his personality as it was of the peasant hitherto. The aim that the leaders of communism had in view is very well expressed by the following quotation:—

"The great importance of the collective farms lies precisely in that they represent the principal basis for the employment of machinery and tractors in agriculture, that they constitute the principal base for remoulding the peasant, for changing his psychology in the spirit of proletarian Socialism. Lenin was right when he said:—

'The task of remoulding the small farmer, of remoulding his whole psychology and habits is a task of generations. Only the material basis, the technique, the employment of tractors and machinery in agriculture on the mass scale, electrification on a mass scale, can solve the problem in relation to the small farmer, can cure, so to speak, his whole psychology' (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Russian edition, Vol. XXV, p. 239)"².

Farming in the kolhoz is becoming more and more a specialized profession with its inevitable moral and psychological disadvantages. As the kolhoznik gradually turns from a peasant farmer into a mere mechanic

² (Vide Stalin's speech on "*Problems of Agrarian Policy in the U. S. S. R.*" delivered on December 27, 1929).

or a specialized worker in some single branch of agriculture, he will lose many of the good, as also some bad, qualities of his ancestors. Van Der Post, a South African economist, says of specialization:—

“Through division of labour the individual becomes a mere cog—and that a very small cog—in the industrial machine. As Herckenrath has expressed it: ‘the machine which had to be the willing slave of man subjects to itself this so much nobler composition and makes it but a machine.’ The individual’s work, therefore, becomes largely mechanical or automatic, and so monotonous, with the result that he loses all pride and interest in the final product of the industry in which he and so many others are engaged. No longer can he point with pride to the product of his labour. No longer is that work a form of expression of his individuality. On the contrary, his contribution to that product is lost amongst the contributions of a large number of other specialists and consequently he is no longer concerned about that product, but rather about his wage and the hours of his labour. Division of labour, therefore, to a large extent destroys individual initiative”.³

Possibly, let us concede for argument’s sake, mechanized and large-scale farming is a more efficient method of producing crops than the methods of the small peasant proprietor, but to some minds mere having more to eat and more to wear are not the most important things in life, nor essential to happiness. To many in this country and elsewhere a particular *way of living* may have more meaning than, and a *good life*—as the Greeks called it—not synonymous with mere abundance of material things and comforts that mechanization may offer. A certain degree of prosperity is undoubtedly essential to a full life, but that full life, and not prosperity alone, is the end which we should aim at.

³ *Economics of Agriculture*, p. 112.

It must be admitted that collectivization has broken the muzhik's apathy and resignation, his sense of helplessness and of a blind patience with the world about him. The notion that Nature is always unconquerable no longer plagues him. The collective has unified, drilled and disciplined the peoples of the U. S. S. R. as nothing else could.

Yet it is doubtful how far the sturdy individualism, bred by the self-reliant type of life that the peasant follows these days, but which is being hounded out of him by the kolhoz, is an absolute, unmixed evil. It may be a quality to be devoutly guarded.

We concede that incalculable has been the contribution of the collective in the Second World War to the defensive strength of the nation by bringing engines and machines to the most far-away villages and familiarizing tens of millions of people with their operation. The entire rural population has become machine-minded—an indispensable asset to a country involved in a modern war. In this connection we must not forget, however, that Germany fought equally well, if not better, without mechanizing her agriculture. And who will dispute that humanity may after all suffer intrinsically from this mechanization, from making man a mere appendage of the machine?

The difference in the way of life of a kolhoznik and that of the peasant farmer in other lands can be gauged by one development, viz., since the kolhozy are supposed to provide for their superannuated members, the idea of any filial duty towards aged parents is discouraged and fast disappearing in the U. S. S. R.

The communists pride themselves on the fact that in the U. S. S. R. all distinction between country and town has been obliterated, that there is little to distinguish life in the kolhozy and sovhozy from the life of the workers in the towns. This change may be desirable in the eyes of many, but if, as a result of the pea-

sant's transformation into an industrial land-worker—big sovhozy of the Grain Trust are even to-day called "Wheat Factories"—he enters into an unwholesome competition for mere material profit, if he succumbs to the temptation of ease and amusement, worst enemies of urban life, well! that will be an evil day for the U. S. S. R. City life has a charm, but in the long run it is fatal to a people.

We have to think many times before we industrialize our agriculture in its entirety and begin to measure success or failure by the material outcome alone; in other words, before we exchange our peasant for the collectivized industrial land-worker or exchange a producer for a specialist. Instead of a high degree of specialized skill, an all-round competence is better preparation for breaking through stale routines and for facing emergencies. Money, goods, vacant leisure, cannot possibly make up for the loss of a life-work; although it is plain that money and goods, under our present standards of success, are called upon often to do precisely this.

As hinted above, it cannot be denied that freedom of conduct or the opportunity to live by one's own direction and individual initiative which are the pride and peculiar characteristics of agriculture everywhere as practised hitherto, have been wrested from the Russian peasant under the existing dispensation of the communists. Freedom of the worker varies inversely to the size of the economic unit or organization in which he works, and the kolhoz, as we know, is a large unit. As a member of a collective farm the peasant has, therefore, much less liberty and economic freedom than as an individual farmer; in becoming a kolhoznik he has exchanged comparative liberty for a planned system in which personal initiative is practically excluded. He has much less voice in how he shall utilize his land—

rather the land that was his till yesterday—and how he shall dispose of its products. In a collective enterprise it is not, and in the nature of things cannot be, for the individual to choose when, how and in which plot of land he would like to undertake the operation of irrigating, ploughing, sowing, harrowing or weeding, harvesting or winnowing, and what part of the produce he would like to sell or what proportion should be reserved for consumption. It all depends upon the vote. The peasant must submit to a collective plan and a collective will. He must cultivate the land as laid out by the agronomist, by the management of the kolhoz, by Moscow. The members of a collective farm are divided into groups or brigades. Often the brigades are sub-divided into teams. Each brigade under its leader works in a particular department of the farm as the management directs, in the fields, the market garden, the orchard or the stock farms, as the case may be. For the performance of the specified day's quota of work the collective farmer is credited with one work-day unit. This unit is the equivalent of the average amount of work that can be performed by a collective farmer in one working day, as fixed by the standard quota set for each type of work. These quotas are fixed for each collective farm in accordance with the condition of the machinery, the draught animals, the soil, the difficulty of the work, the degree of skill required, and so on. The work-day units are calculated and recorded by the brigadier and by the quality inspector, after the work has been inspected. According to the standard rules there are seven classes of kolhoz workers, ranging from the president, senior tractor-drivers, etc., who are credited with two labour days for each day actually on duty, with the proviso that tractor-drivers, etc., perform a certain minimum task in the time, to watchmen, cleaners, etc., who score only half a day for each day on duty.

At the end of the year the management may award

a brigade an increase upto 10 p.c. on the labour days for good work or it may receive a like deduction for bad work. That is, it is somebody else and not the kolhoznik who has to decide for himself, be it the brigadier, the managing committee of the kolhoz, the general meeting, or even the Party Secretary or the President of the village soviet. True, the rights of the kolhozniki are often over-ridden by the kolhoz management and rayon authorities.

In theory the kolhoznik should enjoy greater economic security than the former independent mujik, but in practice his position as a member of a collective enterprise is not as secure as it seems. The kolhoznik may be, and apparently often is, expelled from his kolhoz without any compensation and at the caprice of local party bosses. But he is not free to quit his kolhoz and seek employment elsewhere; for one thing, the Soviet passport regulations would prevent his entering and residing in the chief industrial districts and large towns without police authorization, and for another, the kolhoznik who leaves his kolhoz without permission forfeits everything he leaves behind.

In theory, again, the kolhozniki are perfectly free to refuse to take employment in industrial enterprise. But in accordance with usual practice, the number of kolhozniki to be employed in industry is planned. According to Hubbard, a decree of 21st July, 1938, provides that in some 32 territories the president of the rayon planning commission, and in the remaining territories the president of the provincial planning commission, shall plan the recruitment or conscription of surplus kolhoz labour. From the beginning of 1939 territories were to be allotted to separate commissariats, which presumably means that the enterprises belonging to each commissariat have the exclusive right of enlisting labour in their particular territories. The conditions of recruitment lay down that, when groups of ten or more kolhoz-

niki are despatched together, they shall be in charge of a politically trustworthy and reliable leader. They certainly have little or no choice as to the sort of work they will do, nor the enterprise in which they will work; and whether they have the option of accepting or refusing employment is a question that must remain open.

As for the position of the kolhoz vis-a-vis the State, it is sufficient to state that the State Planning Commission called the Gozplan, assisted by the rayon and provincial planning commissions, plans all production; every collective farm receives a plan which stipulates the acreage of various crops, the agronomic measures it must apply, the harvest yield for the various crops, etc. The State brooks no interference with its plans, for otherwise the socialist society based on a planned system of production shall revert into a capitalist society. The State, through the various commissions, not only decides what the kolhozy shall grow, but also how and when labour shall be applied and how much of the gross revenue shall be saved, that is, re-invested in means of production; the kolhoz has the right only to decide matters of purely domestic import, such as the proportion of the surplus produce to be sold and the proportion to be distributed among its members, and the percentage of the net revenue to be set aside for communal purposes, such as club-rooms and creches.

Regarding the manner in which the State exercises effective control over the theoretically free kolhozy, John Strachey, a well-known socialist, writes—"In agriculture, however, the Producers' Co-operatives or kolhozi enormously preponderate. And as they sell a great part of their produce upon the market, in which competing bidders exist, they might feel unwilling or unable to produce the quantities and types of produce required of them by the commission. The commission and the Government have, it is true, a number of methods of

influencing them. They may vary the incidence of taxation; they may act upon the relative prices which governmental agencies will bid for different kinds of produce; and they may vary the prices and the quantities of the industrial products supplied to the villages, which are the ultimate inducement to the collective farmers to produce a surplus above their own needs (plus taxation and payment for the services such as tractor ploughing, seed selection, etc., which governmental agencies perform for them)".⁴

As a further proof of the external regulation to which the kolhozy are subject, it is well to remember that apart from all the internal accounting every kolhoz has to render at the very least eleven returns at intervals ranging from days to six months to the Commissariat of Agriculture, showing the progress of field work, the state of crops, sowing and harvesting operations, etc.

There is another important aspect of the matter which deserves attention; the system is undemocratic. The collective farm, wherein the self-regulated individual who is the very essence of democracy has been eliminated, is the off-spring of, and itself aids in the perpetuation of, totalitarianism. Freedom to the individual for full expression of his personality is one of the supreme values of democratic life, but collectivization cannot be undertaken except by discarding this fundamental postulate altogether. A collective farm can exist only in a socialist society whose ultimate basis is a planned system of production. "A collective farm is a large enterprise. And a large enterprise cannot be managed without a plan. A large agricultural enterprise embracing hundreds and sometimes thousands of households can be run only on the basis of planned

⁴ "The Theory and Practice of Socialism", Chap. IV.

management. It stands to reason that without systematic intervention on the part of the Soviet government in the work of the collective farm development, without its systematic aid, such an enterprise cannot be put in proper shape".⁵ This brings us to the State Planning Commission, the decrees and the umpteen year plans which in turn lead us to a one-party system. The U.S.S.R. has not been able to shake off the one-party system, or, in other words, to allow individuals who differ from the ruling group to function as a party, even more than twenty-five years after the Revolution.

The communist argues that his dictatorship, though indispensable, is only incidental to the transition from an individualist to a collectivist state of society, and destined like the State itself to disappear in due course. The dictatorship, however, shows no signs of disappearing; it is digging itself deeper and deeper. It will be a miracle, indeed—a far greater miracle than the Orthodox Russian Church ever believed in—if a Party which has tasted absolute power for so long will voluntarily abdicate and retire to become one with the mass of the people. The Party had declared that as soon as the propertied classes were dispossessed and classless society achieved, its dictatorship would end and the fullest democracy would exist in the U.S.S.R. It seems the time will never arrive when the Party would have *fulfilled its purpose*: democracy, instead of being established within the State, has been replaced, even within the Communist Party itself, by a one-man dictatorship. They have removed their opponents by "purges"; they themselves can be removed only by purges. As Professor Aldous Huxley remarks:—"Such a highly centralized dictatorial State may be smashed by War or overturned by revolu-

⁵ (Vide Stalin's speech delivered at the joint plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the C. P. S. U. (B) on January 11, 1933).

tion from below; there is not the smallest reason to suppose that it will wither away."

Let us now see whether the kolhoz has been a success in the economic sense.

The Bolsheviks saw, and quite rightly saw, that salvation lay in making the peasants more productive. The Imperial Government had come to the same conclusion years before and the Stolypin land reforms aiming at the establishment of a peasant proprietary were the result. The Bolsheviks, however, decided to increase the productivity of the peasants by replacing the peasant structure of agriculture by large-scale exploitation of the land aided by all the resources of science and machinery. Mechanical power and machinery, they argued, had radically altered circumstances. They were quite clear that the Party's agrarian policy must be based on large farms, technically and scientifically equipped, and on the squeezing out of the capitalist elements from agriculture. The average Russian peasant farm being too small for mechanized farming, they abolished it and created the kolhoz often covering thousands of acres and planting hundreds of acres to the same crop. Thus it is that they hoped to make agriculture capable of expanded reproduction, of accumulation and to bring agriculture in line with large-scale, socialized industry.

But while as a matter of social and economic selection the whole movement of manufacturing industry is towards large-scale production establishments⁶; the

⁶ Owing to the substitution of coal by hydro-electricity and the discovery that a finished article can be produced by putting together at the assembling centre standard parts manufactured severally at different places, the movement even in manufacturing industry towards large-scale units and concentration of property in few and fewer hands is likely to be reversed; these latest developments in industrial evolution seem to point that the future lies with small work-shops, i.e., with decentralized economy.

movement in agriculture, as will be seen later, is in the direction of the multiplication of the small farm. In Western Europe the production of large farmers has been showing smaller proportional returns than that of the small holders. The author of "*The Land and the Peasant in Rumania*" says on page 254:—

"The progress in the science of agriculture has shown that the laws of industrial production do not also hold good for the production of food-stuffs. In agriculture production follows a natural process which does not allow an indefinite division of labour; and this form of intensifying production has been proved to bring in returns which, for a number of reasons, diminish in the proportion in which the size of the agricultural undertaking increases, as illustrated by the so-called circles of Thunen. More recent inquiries have shown that this is true not only of the total output which was often conceded but also of net production. It might be useful to quote here one inquiry, because of its clear results and of the great competence of its author. The Director of the Swiss Peasant Secretariat, Professor Ernest Laur, who is a member of the League of Nations Committee on Agricultural Questions, having worked over returns on capital for various categories of Swiss farms over a period of twenty years (1901-21), has obtained the following averages, in Swiss francs:—

Size of farm in hectares.	Value of Total production per hectare.	Value of sold produce per hectare.
3-5	1180	795
5-10	1005	740
10-15	900	700
15-30	825	660
Above 30	710	595 ?

The table indicates a gradual increase in the nett profits, as well as in gross production, from the least intensive to the most intensive groups, and Laur concludes that "agricultural economics must discard the conclusion which political economy bases upon the law of diminishing returns". While agreeing with the main conclusion of Laur, we respectfully differ from him if he means to lay down that agriculture can be intensified *ad infinitum*. There will always be reached a point in the size of a holding beyond or below which intensification of agriculture will cease to pay, i.e., the sum total of the costs of labour and capital applied per unit of land will exceed the value of the quantity of product.

The returns of the Danish Agricultural Economic Bureau also show that the profit per acre was usually highest on the smallest holdings. "The superiority in this respect, viz., that of average net output, of the small farm is beyond doubt", says A. H. Hollmann, Professor at the Agricultural College in Berlin in the twenties.

The Russian Communist Party, however, has always declared that in agriculture as well as in manufacturing, large-scale enterprises have competitive advantages over small ones and tend to supplant them. It did not recognize the existence of a special form of evolution characteristic of agriculture and different from that of industry. It did not recognize that in agriculture small-scale farming had better prospects of development than small-scale production in industry.

To the argument that the stability of small-scale farming, i.e., its ability to hold its own in the struggle against large-scale farming, proves that the Marxian thesis on the advantages of large-scale production over small production does not apply to agriculture, Stalin has only this reply to make, viz., that it is primarily or mainly the fact that he owns his little plot of land, the existence of private ownership of land, that ties and will continue to tie the peasant to small-commodity farming;

that because of nationalization of land in the U.S.S.R. this factor no longer operates in his country. Then, strangely enough, he goes on to point out that "the significance of the collective-farm movement in all its phases—both in its embryonic phase and in its more developed phase when it is equipped with tractors—lies in that it is now possible for the peasant to till waste and virgin land. This is the secret of the tremendous expansion of the crop area attending the transition of the peasants to collective labour. This is one of the bases of the superiority of the collective farms over individual peasant farming".⁷ But as the reader will note, the superiority of the large farm in this respect is beside the point, and the argument in favour of small-scale farming remains unanswered. To say that small-scale farming has been able to hold its own in the struggle against large-scale farming because the peasant owns his holding, simply begs the question.

It was the introduction of the steam engine for technical reasons that had caused the industrial revolution and led to a change from individual domestic work to collective factory work. But the communists forget that this industrial revolution, although it brought about something like a hundred or two-hundredfold increase in men's capacity to produce wealth in manufacturing industry, did nothing, could do nothing, of the kind in agriculture. The reason is obvious:—

"The manufacturing process", says Van Der Post, "is a mechanical process producing articles to pattern in succession from the same machine. The agricultural process, on the other hand, is a biological process and its products are the result not of man-driven mechanism, but of their own inherent qualities of growth. In the case of the industrial

⁷ Vide Stalin's speech on *'Problems of Agrarian Policy in the U. S. S. R.'*, dated December 27, 1929.

commodity, therefore, standing room for a machine and its operator will suffice in order that it be multiplied indefinitely. In the case of the agricultural commodity, on the other hand, standing room is required for each article that has to be produced".⁸

Sir Pheroz Kharegat, I. C. S., Vice-Chairman of the Imperial Agricultural Research Council of India and a member of the Indian Delegation to the Allied Food Conference held from May 18 to June 3 at Hot Springs, Virginia, in the U. S. A., is reported to have stated at a press conference on 24th July, 1943 that "the use of machinery in cultivation could not by itself increase production. Farmers in this country who knew their business produced an average of forty maunds of wheat per acre. Countries like the U. S. A. and Russia which used machinery on a large scale could not equal that figure. India could raise her production without the introduction of machinery such as tractors". Then he proceeded to emphasize the need of fertilizers.

We may be allowed to further reinforce our argument by the following quotation from a very high authority:—

"The production from the farm business in China and in the United States is remarkably equal in quantity *per unit of land*, although the methods of obtaining these products are entirely different. In the United States the chief means has been the use of capital as well as labour; in China it has been by the use of labour, for the most part human labour, and with very little capital. The resulting production *per unit of labour* in the United States is apparently at least twenty-five fold greater than in China. Because of the dense population and the high cost of capital, it is evident, therefore, that the great national resource of China is her man-power. What she has to do is to learn how to make the most

⁸ *Agricultural Economics*, p. 62.

of this immense resource, because, on the whole, neither human nor animal labour is used to its full capacity.”⁹

It may be stated that ‘capital’ in the above quotation is synonymous with machinery and that the average holding in the U. S. A. is 157 hectares or 388 acres while that in China is as small as in India. Lewis Mumford, while discussing the planning of population has this remark to make about the agricultural yields in China:—

“In crowded countries like China and India, the population has in fact pressed close upon the food supply, and security has alternated with famine, despite the immense superiority of Chinese agriculture over most European and American agriculture in the yield it obtains per acre.”¹⁰

Also, finally, the attention of the reader is invited to tables given in the last chapter of this book giving production of various crops for various countries; they do not show that the yield of large mechanized farms of Australia, U. S. A. or U. S. S. R. per unit of land is higher than that of small farms of Japan, China, Italy, Germany or other countries of Europe where little or no machinery is used, at least, where there is no M. T. S.

However, to come back to Russia; the particular question before us is—Has large-scale exploitation of the land, has collectivization and all it implies, increased the average yield of the Russian arable land? Stalin, when he made the admission regarding the Sovhozy on January 7, 1933, also admitted that out of nearly 250,000 kolhozy only a few thousands were making both ends meet. The kolhozy, however, it must be admitted, were only beginning to get into their stride by 1932. But the Russian yield even after 1932 has not come up to the German or Danish standard. The mujik of the pre-

⁹ (Vide “*Chinese Farm Economy*” by John Lossing Buck, p. 423).

¹⁰ “*Technic and Civilization*”, 1934: p. 262.

revolution era was proverbially inefficient and unproductive and the average per acre of the rich Russian soil in those times was a third of the English or German, and a quarter of the Danish yield. But the yield of the collective farm does not register an increase of more than 20% in any case on the production of the mujik.

According to the author of "*Economics of Soviet Agriculture*", as impartial a writer on Russia as any can be, average yields in quintals per hectare for all grains in 1933-35 compared with those in previous three quinquennials and a decade may be expressed as follows:—

1901-10	81	Private Estates.
	6.5	Peasant Farms.
1909-13	7.3	
1925-29	7.4	
1928-32	7.8	
1933-35	8.6	
	7.8	

No yields for later years have been published officially. Two figures for 1933-35 have been given above, as the garnered yield calculated by the new method adopted by the Government of the U. S. S. R. in 1933 is at least 10 p.c. better than if it is measured by the old empirical methods.

The inefficient administration of the M. T. S. and the inefficient use of machinery are in the main responsible for the continued low standard of crop yields in Russia; when tractors break down, or stand idle for lack of fuel, sowing is delayed, and when harvester combines are not properly handled they allow a lot of grain to escape. These are the disadvantages of concentrating machinery at one centre under State control, for if a M. T. S. is badly managed, its machinery in bad order and inefficiently organized, the whole district suffers. Fuel, etc., also is often consumed in quantities

a good deal more than the planned standard which raised the cost of mechanization.

The Report delivered by N. Voznesensky at the Eighteenth All-Union Conference of the C.P.S.P. (B) on February 18, 1941, says—

"The achievements of the agriculture of the U. S. S. R. are considerable. However, they might be greater still if we drew upon our additional potentialities and eliminated shortcomings and the toleration of shortcomings on the part of the organs of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture and the People's Commissariat of State Farms. The following, at least, must be regarded as shortcomings of this kind:

- (1) Tractors and harvester combines standing idle even during the busiest periods of the agricultural year.
- (2) Losses of grain and industrial crops, especially owing to delayed harvesting.
- (3) Rather excessive losses in stock-breeding, and non-fulfilment of the programme of stock productivity.
- (4) The fact that a part of the collective farmers do not work the necessary minimum number of days, which has the effect of retaining hidden labour reserves in agriculture".¹¹

One may hope that these things will be set right sooner or later. Nevertheless, the enormous amount of capital invested in the means to produce agricultural machinery, in land improvement, in supplying chemical fertilizers, etc., has resulted in a disproportionately small improvement in the yield of the soil and there is no reason to suppose that had a similar amount been sunk in small, private farms, the result would not have been

¹¹ "U. S. S. R. speaks for itself", p. 40.

much better. To say the least, the economic soundness of the whole experiment is open to question.

It may not be out of place to mention here that animal husbandry is the most difficult branch of agriculture to collectivize and is the least successful under collectivization. This is why far greater concessions in the matter of keeping private livestock have been given to collective farmers in areas devoted largely to animal husbandry, as opposed to those in areas devoted to grain production. Government aid in supplying machinery is of little use in animal husbandry; the advantages of machinery are not sufficient to off-set the disadvantages involved in collectivization.

Speaking of the comparative costs of animal and mechanical power, Leonard E. Hubbard says:—

“The apotheosis of the machine leads to its use out of season as well as in season. It was the experience of the German farm concession (the celebrated Drusag which until 1932 farmed some 27,000 acres on the Kuban) that ploughing with animal power was often more economical than ploughing with mechanical power. Animals (they use oxen a lot in the North Caucasus) were very cheap to keep and wages were low; a unit consisting of eight yoke, a four-furrow plough and two men, or a man and a boy, to guide the leading yoke, ploughed a hectare as efficiently and at a smaller total cost than a tractor. The latter, of course, came into their own when speed was a factor; for instance, when autumn rain made the soil just right for sowing winter grain. The Russian, however, is inclined to think that, because the tractor turns over the soil at a prodigious rate and with lots of cheerful noise and bustle, it is doing it more economically and efficiently than any other method. In 1935 the official standard consumption of tractor fuel in spring ploughing one hectare was 21·6 kilos (vide an article “*The Production Cost of Grain in State Farms*” in “*Planned Economy*”

No. 2, 1937) and in 1934 the price of one litre of benzine was about equal to the price of 10 kilos of grain, 21 kilos of benzine would be about 23 litres (one litre of water weighs 1 kilogramme, and the specific gravity of benzine is approximately 0.90), equal in cost to 230 kilos of grain. The quantity of corn and hay consumed by horses during the process of ploughing one hectare could not be more than the equivalent of 30 kilos of oats. According to the same authority, the total consumption of fuel in producing and, presumably, harvesting and threshing one hectare of spring wheat in 1935 was 57.3 kilos, equal in cost to 63 litres, or 630 kilos of grain, or very nearly the whole crop. If these figures are correct, it is no wonder that the State farms were being run at a loss."¹²

Almost all our economists have suggested that the mechanization of agriculture is an imperative necessity. But "to judge of the advantages and effects of the use of mechanical traction, it must be borne in mind that while in the case of tractors, variable costs are high and fixed costs low, in that of draught animals the variable costs are trifling and fixed costs are considerable. In other words, the tractor, though expensive when in actual operation, costs little when idle, while the cost of keeping draught animals, though scarcely higher when they are at work than when they are resting, is continuous since they have to be fed and cared for, whether working or not. Hence the use of tractors is most profitable when a great deal of work has to be done in a short time. Animals, on the other hand, are more economical when the work is divided fairly evenly over the entire year"¹³ (*"European Conference on Rural Life"*, 1939. Document No. 5, pp. 19-20)".

And, last of all, even if we grant that mechaniza-

¹² "Economics of Soviet Agriculture" pp. 260-61.

¹³ European Conference on Rural Life: 1939, Document No. 5, pp. 19-20.

tion is the key to plenty, we must remember that it is in the U.S.A., Canada, Australia and the U.S.S.R. alone that mechanization is convertible with the big tractor and harvester-thresher. In Europe, on the other hand, mechanization seems increasingly likely to take the form of the electrification of the country-side and the use of labour-saving machinery, leaving the structure of the small-holding unaffected. There the manufacturers of agricultural machinery had begun to turn out before the last War machines suitable for use on small holdings, while possessing the advantages of large machines. That is, a large farm or collective is not a condition precedent to the use of machinery.

Whether collectivization can justifiably be claimed as a success is a matter of opinion and depends on what is meant by success. There are both losses and gains, but whether the losses will be outweighed by gains is still in doubt, except to those who hold that personal determination and individuality are inherently bad.

It may be accepted without question that so far as social services are concerned, the Soviet peasant is better provided for than the Tsarist peasant. While elementary education at least was clearly within the reach of the greater part of the population, even in the years immediately before the last War, to-day very nearly 100 p.c. of the population is literate. Health services in the country have been immensely increased and the Bolsheviks have made rural life infinitely fuller than in the old days with clubs, libraries, cinemas and the like. Many of the collective farms have their own electric power stations, clubs, theatres and moving picture houses, laboratories, schools, nurseries, kindergartens, hospitals, athletic fields and wireless centres. Farm life, it is claimed, is coming rapidly to urban standards. Finally, inasmuch as collectivization made possible to secure from the peasantry a larger share of the products of agriculture, it enabled the Government

of the U.S.S.R. to press forward with an ambitious industrialization programme without incurring foreign debt. But if we draw a sort of balance-sheet of success and failure, we are entitled not only to compare conditions of to-day with what they were at the close of the Tsarist regime as is usually done by the Soviet propagandists, but to take into consideration the very reasonable assumption that, had the Tsarist regime continued, economic and social conditions would have continued to improve as they did during the decade before the War. That, if the energies of the leaders of a nation are directed towards its regeneration, equally good, if not better, results are possible in all spheres, existence of private property in land and absence of the collectives notwithstanding.

The use of machinery and the employment of scientific methods of farming, as we have seen, have not yet had a striking effect on the yield of the land and it is questionable whether Kolhozniki in the mass are better off or enjoy a higher standard of living than they would have done had they remained small peasant farmers.

‘Lenin himself was responsible for the following figures as given in his *“The Development of Capitalism in Russia”*:—

*Money Expenditure Per Peasant Household in
the 1890's (In roubles)*

	<i>Personal consump- tion</i>	<i>Farm Ex- penditure</i>	<i>Dues & taxes</i>	<i>Total</i>
Average money ..	81·27	102·23	34·20	219·70
Percentage ..	37·3%	46·9%	15·8%	100%

‘Another authority, viz., P. Sokovnin, quoted by G. Pavlovsky in *“Agricultural Russia on the eve of the Revolution,”* page 93, gives the gross money-yield of

average-sized peasant holdings as ranging from Rs. 118 in the Ukraine to Rs. 204 in New Russia; and a Soviet publication in 1924, viz., "*Perspective of the Development of Agriculture in the U. S. S. R.*", page 3, puts the average income from agriculture per head of peasant population before the War at Rs. 52. If only 37% of the gross income of the pre-War peasant was available for personal consumption, and if the average family consisted of six members it may be reckoned that the average sum per head available for purchasing goods for personal consumption was about Rs. 13. The expenditure on personal consumption goods per kolhoz family in 1937, an exceptionally good year in which the harvest was 79% better than in 1936, was Rs. 659, or counting 4·8 members to a family, about Rs. 137 per head. But taking quality as well as quantity into account, the pre-War rouble had at least ten times the purchasing power of the Soviet rouble in 1937. It must also be remembered that while the figure for 1937 is the total income available for purchasing consumption goods, the pre-War figures of peasant income quoted refer to income from farming only and exclude outside earnings.¹⁴

The standard of living is extremely low compared with that of Western Europe; as regards consumption of food, clothing and the ordinary necessities of life it is certainly no higher than the average standard among the peasants of Eastern Europe.

Collectivization has also failed to iron out differences. Differences in density of population and in fertility of soil have not been overcome. The average prosperity of kolhoz in districts such as the North Caucasus and South-East Russia where the area of crops per head is large, is higher than in the Central agricultural regions where the area per head is much smaller.

¹⁴ "The Economics of Soviet Agriculture", pp. 239-41.

But the actual differences in the well-being of the kolhozniki are much greater than can be accounted for by local and natural conditions, and are the result much more of differences in the efficiency and honesty of kolhoz managements and local party and Government officials than of differences in productive resources and capacities.

Still another reason. The collective farm does not promise to be the final organization that will endure—an organization with which either the kolhozniki or even the communists shall remain satisfied for long.

Having condemned the notion of work for mere personal gain, the Bolsheviks tried to inculcate the concept of work for abstract ideals. However, in spite of the honour attaching to the pioneers of communism and the World Revolution, not the peasants alone, but the industrial workers also, proved deplorably unresponsive to intangible rewards. The Bolsheviks had to take account of psychological realities and to concede that it is impossible in practice to root out the instinct of private ownership altogether or to fashion the world on the entire elimination of all incentive for private gain. The knowledge that the total sum to be divided amongst more than a hundred or two hundred workers of the kolhoz depends upon how hard they work, has proved too thin and diffused an incentive to be effective. That is why the decision had to be taken that the share of each member shall be calculated on a piece-work basis, i.e., shall vary according to the quantity and quality of the work and, again, that is why the kolhoznik has been allowed a home, a piece of land and animals and poultry, etc., that he might call his own—something to develop his pride in. Even so, "the farmer will not", write Sydney and Beatrice Webb, "be easily weaned from his habit of seeking always to do less work than his fellow-members, on the argument that only in this way can he hope to get even with them or they will, of course,

be seeking to do less work than he does”.

In recent legislation affecting agriculture, one finds a growing and very apparent change-over to a policy of rewards for good work from a policy of threats and coercion. For instance, following the example of the Stakhanov movement in industry, the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. (B) and the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. adopted in 1939 the system of additional payment of the labour of collective farmers in the Ukraine Republic who secure more than the planned yields of agricultural crops and productivity of livestock. Thus it is hoped to rally the collective farm peasantry in the effort to achieve the further progress of Socialist agriculture.

As regards the kolhoznik's right to private, property, its abuse had become so widespread in the spring of 1939 that a special decree was issued on 27-5-1939 entitled, *"Concerning Measure for Protecting the Communal Land of Kolhozy from being Squandered"*.

This decree began by stating that gross breaches of the Communist Party's policy and the collective farm statutes were being committed, in that many kolhozniki had in practice reverted to individual enterprise, taking little or no part in the activities of their kolhozy. Not only were the private allotments larger than the collective farm statutes permitted, but were so interspersed among the kolhoz farm land that it was often hard to say which field belonged to the kolhoz and which to the individual kolhozniki. Extra land was obtained "by the fictitious separation of the kolhoznik's family, so that the dvor fraudulently obtains allotments for each separate member". They contrived to add to their personal holdings by improving plots of swamp or brush-land or by some agreement with the management of their own collective. Apparently, too, kolhozniki, who for some reason could not and did not wish to work their allotments, were in the habit of

renting them to other kolhozniki able to make use of extra land. The decree specifically forbids the allotment of more than the maximum amount of land per dvor and directs that all private allotments shall be segregated from the kolhoz land by definite boundaries. Leasing of land by one kolhoznik to another is prohibited and the leasing of hay-fields and woods by the kolhoz to kolhozniki or other private persons will result in the kolhoz president being expelled and charged with a breach of the law. This decree further abolished the so-called Khutor, i.e., the individual homestead, separated from the village by an old law of 1906. The peasant must now live in the central village so that he can more rigidly be disciplined, and, regardless of his will or his pleasures, can more easily be broken from his individualistic habits of life and work.

As a result of the illegal extensions of private property, many kolhozniki found little time to work on the kolhoz; these sham kolhozniki earned perhaps twenty or thirty labour-days in the year and a few did not trouble to earn any at all. At the same time they enjoyed all the advantages and privileges of membership of a kolhoz, the chief being the much lower rate of taxation compared with the authentic independent peasants. The decree directs that in future every able-bodied kolhoznik must earn a given number of labour-days in the year, viz., in the cotton regions, 100; in a number of specified provinces, including the Ukraine and the Central and Southern agricultural regions, 80 labour-days. Those who do not earn this minimum will be expelled.

The fact that even as late as in 1939 more than ten years after the decision to base agriculture on the collective farm, it was necessary to legislate against excessive private enterprise among the collectivized peasants shows that the principle of collectivization has not met with the entire approval of the peasants. They have remained

the incorrigible individualists that they were, incapable of recognizing their own gain in any enterprise, however considerable, which has to be shared with so many others.

Thus it is obvious that the kolhoz cannot be a permanent feature; it is a passing phase. The concessions so far made to individualism do not appear to go a long way enough; they do not constitute a sufficient incentive for honest, efficient co-operative effort. The kolhoz can continue in its present state only if official pressure is continually and vigilantly exercised: as soon as it is lightened, independent peasantry is bound to reappear. Also, the Marxist themselves regard the kolhoz as a transitional stage; they had maintained at the time of controversy over the Stolypin reforms that the idea of a socialist peasant society was an illusion. Their programme envisaged large state farms on which the former peasants would labour for a socialist remuneration in the same way as labourers in industry. There are some, however, who look upon the Commune as the final and ideal farm organization when anarchism would have been realized and the State disappears as a coercive apparatus altogether. That is, the collective farm of to-day cannot remain what it is; it must be converted either, if official pressure takes its logical course, into a sovhoz, or, if human nature of to-day undergoes a transformation, into an agricultural commune. The latter, however, is a dream and a consummation which will, perhaps, never materialize; while the former is a possibility and an apprehension which may be actualized at a not distant date.

As regards the practicability of introducing the kolhoz in India, the Russian experience should warn us to the contrary, viz., that Indian peasants cannot be won for communism.

The artel appears to go very far back in Russian history and even to date from the origins of the Slav race. For centuries past, unions of manual workers, usually builders' co-operatives, have been formed to carry out certain work in common under conditions of friendly rivalry and with a minimum of capital. In some parts of the country peasants organized themselves in artels to carry on such branches of peasant activity other than agriculture as home industry, lumbering, carting, etc. The principles governing their organization, which are very much on the lines indicated by Owen, Fourier and others, were adopted somewhat vaguely as an economic ideal by the Nihilists of the eighteen-sixties.

Not only this but possession of land has been in some sense joint and communal throughout Russian history. The village mir, which we have alluded to before, was a distinctive and peculiar attribute of traditional Russian civilization. In the study of collectivization and the peasant's attitude towards land proprietorship in Russia, it is well to bear in mind, therefore, that in the old days under the mir he had no chance to acquire the sense of landownership that the peasant elsewhere in the world has. In the old Russian commune he had only worked his allotment; but never owned it or even possessed it as exclusively his. Indeed he had but little inducement to improve it, because in the periodic redistributions he often acquired new parcels and the ones he had worked had gone to someone else in the village.

The idea of peasant ownership came to the fore only in the latter half of the last century. It was after a long agitation beginning with the Emancipation Act of 1861 that on November 22nd, 1906, as we have seen, an ukaz was promulgated depriving the mir of its authority and giving the peasants a right of separation from the commune, which laid the foundations of a class of true peasant proprietors. In 1928, therefore, when

the Government of the U.S.S.R. embarked on compulsory collectivization, peasants whose ownership of land had some history behind it were a small fraction of the entire peasantry, viz., 10·7 per cent; the vast majority having come into ownership, which, by the way, was never openly recognized by the communist government, only in 1917 when the big landlords, the Church and the Crown were liquidated. This being the case, although the proposal to reamalgamate the land into large collective farms struck the peasants as a whole as a retrograde step, yet it had some appeal to the old type of peasant who was accustomed to regulate his life according to the village mir. That is, joint land-holding of a sort having had its roots in the soil, the transformation to a collective system in Russia was not nearly as revolutionary as it sounds to foreign ears, or, as it would be, for example, in India where individual possession, and even ownership, of land has a very long history and is very deeply rooted in the minds of the rural population.

Here long before the arrival of the British, i.e., at least as early as the period of Raja Todar Mal in the North and Malik Ambar in the South, the arable land of the country had "acquired most of the substantial qualities of private property". Writing of the "Mirasdars or Peasant Proprietors" in his report to the Governor-General submitted in October 1819, Mountstuart Elphinstone says:—

"A large portion of the royats are the proprietors of their estates, subject to the payment of a fixed land-tax to Government; their property is hereditary and saleable, and they are never dispossessed while they pay their tax, and even then they have for a long period (at least thirty years) the right of reclaiming their estate on paying the dues of Government".

Sir Charles Metcalfe also in his famous Minute on the Indian Village Communities date 7-11-1830 testifies

to the attachment of the Indian peasant to his particular plots in the following words:—

"If a country remain for a series of years the scene of continued pillage and massacre, so that the villages cannot be inhabited, the scattered villagers nevertheless return whenever the power of peaceable possession revives. A generation may pass away, but the succeeding generation will return. The sons will take the places of their fathers, the same site for the village, the same position for the houses, *the same lands will be reoccupied by the descendants of those who were driven out when the village was depopulated*".

(Italics are ours).

The coming of the kolhoz is, therefore, a purely Russian event that must be seen, understood and evaluated as such. "The kolhoz is the collectivized farm emerging out of a primitive peasant economy which has neither wholly lost nor forgotten the collective characteristics of serfdom and feudalism. It could not be developed out of a system of middle-sized tenant farms, such as existed in Great Britain, or out of a developed and civilized peasant proprietorship like that of France, or, again out of the homestead farming characteristic of the United States and Canada."¹⁵ Nevertheless, as we have seen, collectivization was bitterly resented by the peasants as a class even in Russia who had hoped one day to enjoy the land in individual ownership and the resentment can hardly be said to have died down yet. True enough, large blocks of peasants still do not like it.

Collectivization presumes abolition of private property as a condition precedent which in its turn cannot be brought about without a violent revolution which may prove to be far bloodier in India than it was in Russia. However much one may enthuse over the pros-

¹⁵ "Practical Economics" 1937: G. D. H. Cole, pp. 49-50.

pect when India will be covered with kolhozy and sovhozy from one end of the country to the other we are under no illusions but that the Indian cultivator, in whose interest largely it may be proposed to bring it about, will resist collectivization and the centralized control which it necessarily implies. As for those who dream of a proletarian revolution we cannot do better than quote Frederick L. Schuman, Professor at the university of Chicago. Discussing the possibility of an anti-Nazi revolution in Germany, he writes:—

“It must be remembered, moreover, that even a well-organized, disciplined, revolutionary proletariat cannot, of itself, initiate a social revolution with any chance of leading it to a successful conclusion. The economic and military power of the enemy classes must first be broken. In all recorded instances of proletarian revolutions which have achieved some measure of temporary success, the plutocracy and aristocracy have been demoralized by catastrophic defeat in foreign war—for example, the Paris Commune of 1871, Russia in 1905 and 1917, Hungary and Bavaria in 1919. In each of these cases a portion of the shattered military forces of the State went over to the revolutionary cause. Even under these circumstances victory is impossible unless other major social groups rally to the proletariat. Only in Russia has such final victory been won. Here the lower middle classes were small and weak, and the peasants fought with the workers for the revolution. Elsewhere such attempts have been drowned in blood by the old ruling classes, supported passively, if not actively, by the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie”.¹⁶

On the absence of an organized middle class as a factor in the Russian Revolution, Maurice Hindus writes as follows:—

“After the Czarist Government fell, there was no

¹⁶ “Hitler and the Nazi Dictatorship”, 1935, p. 496.

group in the country powerful enough to hold the nation together on the basis of the old conditions, so that when the Bolsheviks promised land to the peasants and peace to the soldiers, both of which groups were in a desperate mood, they swept away all opposition and leaped into power. If Russia had had a middle class of any size, the Bolshevik Revolution might never have become an active fact, or, if it did, it surely would have failed. For this has actually been the fate of Bolshevism in all lands having a semblance of a middle class".¹⁷

There is little prospect of the Indian soldiery coming out on the side of the proletariat and, surely, there is a bigger class in India than in Russia having a stake in the land. To wait for the collective farm as a solution of the land problem in India, therefore, amounts to waiting for such a revolution; that is, it amounts to waiting till the Greek kalends.

Our socialist and communist friends have to realize that even if nationalization and collectivization be the ideal tenure it is a very remote ideal indeed and time has not yet arrived to establish it in India. In advocating socialization, at least immediate socialization, of land, they are committing the mistake of appraising India in terms of the psychology and the living conditions of Old Russia and are not allowing for "difference in political experience, social background and emotional response". It is for reasons such as these that Edgar Snow and Maurice Hindus, the two well-known pro-communist or pro-Russian writers of America, while lauding the kolhoz to the skies, do not advocate its adoption by their own country. All their propaganda is meant for foreign consumption.

There is still another very important consideration to be borne in mind while discussing the practicability of mechanized farming in this country, viz., India has

¹⁷ The Great Offensive.

no petrol, and we cannot cover the sky of India with a network of electric wires for the purpose of supplying motive power to the tractors, combines and threshers. We will, therefore, have to depend on a foreign country for petrol so that our teeming millions may have bread. It will be lunacy to do so. The Nazi hordes in the last World War rushed towards Caucasus not without reason; they wanted to capture the oil-wells and thus, by cutting the vital artery of the Russian economy, to starve the enemy to surrender.

Finally, instead of being a boon collectivization will be a curse for India.

As the use of machinery makes it possible for a smaller number of workers to cultivate a larger area, a large farm served by tractors, combine harvesters and threshers, employs less labour than small farms covering the same area worked by hands and draught animals. When machinery is employed, labour is necessarily saved. In $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours a tractor ploughs $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and a combine harvester harvests $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres in half an hour. A labourer who formerly ploughed hardly one acre with a pair of bullocks will be able to plough at least 12 acres a day with a tractor. In the U. S. A. the use of agricultural machinery in the last 40 years has led to a fall of 33 per cent in the number of farm workers.

In the U.S.S.R. in 1927, 25·6 million independent peasant farms contained 111·5 million hectares of arable land, or 4·36 hectares per dvor, and, according to the census of 1926, 114 million persons lived by agriculture thus giving an agricultural population of over 103 per 100 hectares of cultivated land. In 1937 after collectivization of agriculture there were a little more than 18·5 million kolhozniki dvory cultivating 110·5 million hectares which at 4·8 members per dvor works out at 88·8 million persons or 80 per hundred hectares of farm-land. There is thus a fall of 23 persons per 100 hectares of land in a decade owing to mechanization of agriculture.

Even so, writes Sir E. John Russell, Director of the Rothamstead Agricultural Research Station, after his visit to Russia in 1937:—

“The number of workers per 100 hectares is usually large according to Western ideas, especially if one assumes that much of the work is done by tractors and combines. On the farms I visited it was about two to four times as many as would have been needed in England, but the yields were less and the work not so well done, indicating a considerable difference in efficiency of the workers of the respective countries”.

Thus agricultural labour in the U.S.S.R. is still far in excess of absolute requirements. If agricultural labour were rationalized and machinery economically and efficiently operated, it would probably be found that about half the present available labour would be sufficient for the present type of farming. The Government of the U.S.S.R., however, as and when it considers necessary and feels itself competent to do so, can employ this surplus labour to bring new land in Siberia and Central Asia under cultivation. Of a total arable area of about 1,037,400,000 acres, only about 333,450,000 acres have as yet been brought under cultivation. But in an old country like India where man-power is running to waste and where there are no vast areas of virgin soil waiting to be broken up for the first time, big mechanized farms of the kolhoz or sovhoz type would be nothing short of a calamity; industrialization alone would not absorb tens of millions of workers that would be released from land. According to Mr. Hubbard, “since 1928 industry in U.S.S.R. has absorbed probably between 12 and 15 millions of rural population, but since 1932 the rate of increase in wage-earners in all branches of activity has slowed down. Since industrial labour is steadily increasing in efficiency and productivity, it is unlikely that the demand will expand at the same rate as during the first Five-Year Plan, when the total number of wage-earners

doubled"¹⁸. Even in the U. S. S. R., therefore, throughout that buoyant period of economic expansion when tremendous cities and vast industrial enterprises were springing up all over the face of that country during successive five-year plans, only one million persons—not more than one million and a quarter in any case—were being absorbed into gainful employment each year, whereas in India the rate of increase in population alone comes to five millions a year, not to say of the existing hundreds of millions who cannot be said to be gainfully employed to-day. The number of the latter, according to Dr. Radha Kamal Mukerjee, is estimated to be about 15 per cent of adult workers, mostly in villages.

Typical of the view that reduction in employment in agriculture caused by mechanization will be compensated by a rise in employment in other directions is the comment of Dr. W. Burns made in his Note on "Technological Possibilities of Agricultural Development in India" submitted to the Government of India on September 30, 1943:—

"Use of machines (sic) may mean fewer men per operation", says he, "but not per acre. There are numerous examples in which modern progressive farming has actually restored the numbers of men employed upon the land. Mechanization, in addition, creates several new classes, those who make, those who manage and those who repair the machines. It employs, in addition, men groups who are the suppliers and distributors of the spares, the fuel and the lubricants. Mechanization, particularly if it involves the transference of machines from one place to another, involves the improvement of roads and here, again, a large prospect of employment is opened up." (p.127)

Dr. Burns has not given any example where mechanized farming has resulted in increased employment on

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 284.

the land, and I do not think anybody will agree with him that the new occupations which he has pointed out can find employment for the vast numbers that would be displaced by the use of machines in agriculture. In this connection it will be well to remember that the stage passed long ago 'when reduction in cost was achieved by the economies of large-scale production, i.e., by extensification—when reduction in cost of production by utilization of machine-stimulated consumption giving rise to increased demand, increased production and, therefore, increased employment'.¹⁹ Now industries seek economies mainly in internal organization often achieved by increased mechanization. That is, thanks to advance in technology, we require proportionately fewer men to produce additional wealth, with the result that manufacturing industry is to-day not able to employ the same percentage of people as it formerly did. In the U.S.A., England and Wales, Japan and Canada in years between 1921 and 1931, percentage of total working population gainfully employed in industry respectively fell from 30·8 to 28·9, 32·3 to 31·7, 19·4 to 18·1 and 23·8 to 17·3. For Germany the corresponding figure for 1925 was 38·1 which came down to 36·2 in 1933. Even in India while the number of factories between 1911 and 1936 increased from 2,700 to 9,300, yet according to Dr. Radha Kamal Mukerjee the percentage of industrially occupied people to working population fell from 11 to 9·4. The rate of growth in all the older branches of machine production is in fact going down slowly; some economists hold that this is generally true of all industry since 1910. And nobody contends that socialization is any specific against the onslaught of technology.

Let us see a bit more in detail what two eminent economists have to say about relative proportion of industrial employment in India.

¹⁹ "Gandhism Reconsidered": Professor M. L. Dantwala.

"The following table", says Dr. Mukerjee, "shows the disparity between population increase and industrialization. A grave economic situation, in the face of increasing population pressure, is indicated by the decline of the relative proportion of industrial employment during the last three decades.

	1911	1921	1931	Percentage of Variation 1911—31—
Population (in millions) ..	315	319	353	+12.1
Working Population (in millions)	149	146	154	+ 4.0
Persons employed in industries (in millions) ..	17.5	15.7	15.3	-12.6
Percentage of workers in industry to the working population	11.0	11.0	10.0	- 9.1
Percentage of Industrial workers to total population	5.5	4.9	4.3	-21.8

"That de-industrialization is going on is indicated by a fall in the number of actual workers in the principal industries since 1911.

<i>Number of actual workers</i>	1911	1921	1931
1. Textiles	4,449,449	4,030,674	4,102,136
2. Industries of Dress and Toilets	3,747,755	3,403,842	3,380,824
3. Wood	1,730,920	1,581,006	1,631,723
4. Food Industries	2,134,045	1,653,464	1,476,995
5. Ceramics	1,159,168	1,085,335	1,024,830

"The increasing population, indeed, is not being absorbed in industries at all It is only in the sugar industry, which has been aided by a tariff, that

the employment of workers has rapidly increased. But sugar employs on the whole only 200,000 workers. Even with an addition since 1931 of 1·2 millions as industrial workers, who will be employed by the sugar, textiles, leather, match-making and food industries, the number of industrial workers will not exceed 16 millions. On the other hand, the working population will probably increase by about 20 millions. Thus the occupation maladjustment is expected to be even greater in the future."²⁰

The following table showing the increase in the numbers employed in large-scale industrial establishments since 1921 is given by Nanavati:—

Year	<i>Number of workers in large scale Industrial Establishments (million)</i>	<i>Percentage to the total working population</i>	<i>Percentage to Total population</i>
1921	1.56	1.70	.50
1931	1.57	1.02	.41
1941	2.03	1.20	.54

"This total may be compared with the annual increase of population which works out at between 4 and 5 millions. It is thus obvious that large-scale industries, however rapid their development and however great their expansion, cannot possibly absorb the growing numbers of the population and help further in reducing the already existing surplus population on the land. Moreover, as these industries are necessarily urban, they benefit the country-side but little, except by way of an increased demand for raw materials for industries and for food from the large city population. This indicates the limi-

²⁰ "Food Planning for 400 Millions": R. K. Mukerjee, pp. 204-205.

tations of large-scale industry so far as the Indian situation is concerned."²¹

It may be stated here that while we need basic and some other industries which have to be on a large scale, and without which we can neither become a great nation nor defend ourselves, it is small and medium-scale industries alone that can find employment for the vast number of people, who are in India far more readily available than capital, and who to-day either have no work or are under-employed. Our unemployment and under-employment can be relieved only by industries using what are called cruder methods of production than by those using technically more advanced or rationalized methods. What we want is not the substitution of the hand worker by the machine but the development of rural industries which would not supplant labour so much as supplement it. That small industry gives more employment than big industry is illustrated by the following table²² relating to the manufacture of textile fabrics in India by four different methods of production.

<i>Method of production</i>	<i>Capital investment per head of worker</i>	<i>Output Ratio per head</i>	<i>Amount of labour employed per unit of capital</i>
	Rs.	Rs.	
1. Modern Mill (large-scale industry) ..	1,200	650	1.9
2. Power-loom (small-scale industry) ..	300	200	1.5
3. Automatic loom (cottage industry) ..	90	80	1.1
4. Handloom (cottage industry)	35	45	0.8

²¹ "The Indian Rural Problem" (1945), p. 347.

²² An article entitled "Village Industries and the Plan" in "The Eastern Economist", dated July 23, 1943, quoted by Nanavati and Anjaria in "The Indian Rural Problem" (1945), p. 348.

"Mechanization", says Mahatma Gandhi, is good when hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India. The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabiting our villages. The problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year".²³

Pointing out the comparative role of small and big industry in India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru writes in a foreword to "*China Builds for Democracy*" (1942) by Nym Wales, as follows:—

"Gandhiji has, I think, done a great service to India by his emphasis on village industry. Before he did this, we were all, or nearly all, thinking in a lopsided way and ignoring not only the human aspect of the question, but the peculiar conditions prevailing in India. India, like China, has enormous man-power, vast unemployment and under-employment. Any scheme which involves the wastage of our labour power or which throws people out of employment is bad. From the purely economic point of view, even apart from the human aspect, it may be more profitable to use more labour power and less specialized machinery. It is better to find employment for large numbers of people at a low income level than to keep most of them unemployed."

This observation of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru is as true of agriculture, as of industry. Apart from natural conditions, population is the most important single economic factor determining the nature and type of agriculture that may be practised in a country. A country of a large, sparsely peopled area, like the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A. or Australia, will have an agricultural system very different from one, large or small, with a comparatively dense population like India, China, Germany or

²³ Harijan dated 22-6-1935.

Belgium. Our problem, therefore, being essentially different from that of U.S.S.R., the kolhoz has no place in our agrarian economy; only such an economy will suit us as will provide employment for the maximum number of workers, i.e., will make the fullest use of India's biggest capital—the labour-power. Hands must have precedence over the machine employment over plenty (even if we equate mechanization with plenty).

The objection that unrestricted use of machinery will create unemployment is met by the socialists with the argument that the collective farmers, who would include the whole rural population, could work only for, say, three hours a day and take holiday for the rest: that in place of so much poverty and starvation of to-day we shall have a perpetually rising standard of life. It is doubtful, however, whether this can be regarded as a national gain. That a rich idler's mind is a devil's workshop, cannot be denied.

"Leisure is good and necessary up to a point only. God created man to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, and I dread the prospect of our being able to produce all that we want, including our food-stuffs, out of a conjurer's hat"—says Mahatma Gandhi. Too much leisure demoralizes society and, as hinted at previously, it will be an evil day for India when its peasantry succumbs to the temptation of ease.

The socialists forget that the chief benefit the rational use of the machine promises is certainly not the elimination of work; what it promises is something quite different—the elimination of servile work or slavery. A peasant's work, however, on his own farm neither deforms the body, nor cramps the mind, nor deadens the spirit, i.e., it is not a type of work which the machine was intended to eliminate. A peasant proprietor, whose cause we advocate in the following chapter, is not a slave to anybody; his work is not servile. We are not opposed to use of all machines by the peasant; machine that does

not deprive man of opportunity to work, but lightens his burden and adds to his efficiency—machine which is the willing slave of man and does not make him but a machine, is to be welcomed. We shall, therefore, use all the latest gifts of science and technology in order to lighten and make more productive the toil of the farmer—but not at the cost of his independence or disappearance of his very farm, of course. “If we could have electricity in every village home”, Mahatma Gandhi has said, “I shall not mind villagers playing their implements and tools with electricity.”²⁴ It is the tractor, the combine harvester and the power-driven thresher running a big collective farm that eliminate work and enslave the peasant, and it is to these that we are opposed.

We may remind the reader here that it was the introduction of the steam-engine for technical considerations that led to a change from individual, domestic work to collective factory work, but to-day when electrification and standardization have made enormous difference to industry and a decentralized economy with more humane conditions of work in smaller groups on the basis of voluntary co-operation, or even singly in individual homes, is an immediate possibility in the sphere of manufacturing industry, it will be an irony, indeed, if we shift over to a forced large-scale, mechanized agriculture with its attendant evils of bureaucracy, centralized control and destruction of individual initiative, especially, when mere mechanization does not add to production. With electric power a small machine shop may have, as in Japan where 70 per cent of the industry was carried on in small workshops in pre-war days, all the essential devices and machine tools—apart from specialized automatic machines—that only a large plant could have afforded a century ago; so the industrial worker to-day can regain most of the pleasure that the

²⁴ Harijan dated 22-6-1935.

machine itself, by its increasing automatism, has been taking away from him. "There need not be", says Dr. Shridharni²⁵, "for instance, large factory towns with their attendant slums, cesspools, dirt and disease. Henry Ford's vision has met Gandhiji's nostalgia for nature at least half-way. India can apportion her industries and distribute her new factories over the country-side, so that even the industrial workers would retain the healthy touch of soil". Shall we reverse the process in agriculture and, by mechanizing his avocation, take away the pleasure from a peasant's life which his fellow-worker in industry is now regaining?

²⁵ "The Mahatma and the World", 1946, p. 235.