

# Industrialized Soviet Backs Red Army

By George Padmore

**H**OW is it, many people are asking, that the Soviet Union, despite the fact that its chief arsenals, European Russian and the Ukraine, were destroyed, is able to produce at this decisive moment a superiority of arms and war weapons? The answer lies in the fact that the Soviet Union is the only country in the world where erstwhile subject territories of imperialism have been transformed from backward regions into highly industrialized centers.

Long before the Russian revolution, Lenin stressed that the granting of the right of self-determination to the subject races and oppressed nationalities was in itself merely a gesture innocent of meaning unless they were given assistance in exercising the right in practice. This was possible only if they were rendered aid in achieving a higher standard of civilization as speedily as possible. The essential prerequisite for this condition was the control of the State authority by the proletariat, who would abolish capitalism and socialize the means of production; that is, the land, the factories, the mines, and so forth. Lenin never regarded the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship as just an end in itself but as the necessary circumstance for bringing about the fraternity of peoples and nationalities in building the new civilization along socialist lines.

Hence the consolidation of the various administrative units into a multinational state, the U. S. S. R., provided the political instrument through which the Bolsheviks were able to tackle the economic and cultural problems inherited from Czarism. However, the transition towards industrial development presented formidable difficulties. The superstition and ignorance of centuries had to be uprooted; the struggle against abject poverty and disease had to be attacked. Nomadic tribes had to be encouraged to settle; age-old religious and tribal feuds had to be adjusted. But the outstanding problem raised by the necessity to push forward industrial development in a country overwhelmingly agrarian was that of the creation of a skilled working class.

Such a class hardly existed outside the old industrial cities of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov, and Odessa. In the former colonial regions of the Czarist empire there were oppressors and oppressed, feudal landlords and serfs, but not a middle class and a proletariat. The Russian capitalists had been content to exploit such wealth as was easily

*War-time production is being carried on in sections of the Soviet Union which, until a few years ago, were backward farm districts and waste lands. Planning and cooperation, says this author, have wrought the miracle*

accessible, and had not developed the natural resources of Central Asia even to the limited extent that British imperialism has done in Africa and India.

## The Cities Grow

Within the Soviet Union as a whole the urban population at the outset was some 19 per cent. The proportion in the Tartar Republic, for instance, was 11 per cent, in Kazakstan it was 8 per cent. In the Autonomous Republics of the Chuvash and the Yakut in the R. S. F. S. R. some 5 per cent only. And even these and other outlying urban populations were largely Russian. Little more than 300 out of every 10,000 occupied persons in the Soviet Union were engaged in industry. This figure dwindled to tapering point in the Central Asian and Trans-Caucasian territories, where it ranged down from between 85 to 9. Here again it was made up chiefly of emigrant Great Russian workers. Russian workers in Turkmenistan accounted for more than a quarter of the Russian population there, scarcely 2 per cent of the Turkmans being industrial workers. Even in the Ukraine, among the most industrialized of the subjected territories, there was little difference in the proportions between urban and rural laborers. The town workers were mainly Great Russian, the Ukrainians almost exclusively peasants. Moreover, Central Asia, because of climatic and soil conditions was sparsely populated. Even in 1939, the combined populations of the S. S. Republics of Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Kirghizstan, Kazakstan and Turkmenistan numbered only 13 millions; less than the British West African colony of Nigeria, which has a population of 21,000,000.

In such a situation it was left for the Bolsheviks to do for the Soviet East what capitalism has accomplished in Africa, India, and elsewhere; that is, to break down tribal and feudal society, but to go further than imperialism and raise up the primitive races from tribalism and the pre-capitalist forms of social production to higher standards of life with-

out passing through the hazards of the intermediary capitalist stage.

The process of proletarianization went on simultaneously with the industrial revolution in these Asiatic territories. This was first started with the assistance of the Russian proletariat of Moscow, Leningrad and other advanced sections, who were used by the Communist Party and the Soviet Government to create cadres from the native populations of the backward national regions. These cadres were then used to train further numbers of indigenous workers in skilled labor. Besides the expert technicians and some skilled operatives from the existing Russian proletariat and from abroad, chiefly Americans, vast numbers of unskilled Asiatic workers were recruited from the indigenous populations.

## Riches from the Earth

The Gosplan set up in 1921 made a survey of the natural resources of the whole of the vast area of the Soviet Union and the redistribution of industry so as to utilize the wealth of the land at the source. No longer were the Asiatic sections of the country to be skimmed to feed the industrial centers of the erstwhile dominant people, the Great Russians. Wherever riches could be wrested from the earth, there the industries would be placed. This is in marked contrast to the system of Imperialism, which uses colonial areas as agrarian hinterlands for the benefit of the industrialized metropolitan country, thereby keeping the natives backward and poor.

Never before in history was there such a gigantic program of planned development. To enable the former colonial areas to catch up quickly with the more industrialized parts of the Union, the largest proportions of the capital investment was allotted to them. Inasmuch as these Asiatic territories are fruitful sources of raw materials, the Soviet Union as a whole would gain doubly from this policy. The more backward areas would be brought to the level of the more advanced, so paving the way for the further progress of all, while at the same time they would be laying the basis of those heavy metallurgical industries of which the Union stood most in need. In helping forward the level of development amongst the former colonial peoples, the Russians were also helping themselves. The good of one verily reacted to the good of all, as demonstrated today.

The policy of devoting the greater

aggregations of capital investment to the former colonies had its reward in the enormous excess of output in the basic industries over the estimates of the Five-Year Plan. Such results are impossible of achievement under Imperialism. Certainly nowhere in Africa could one envisage the establishment of production on the Soviet scale or basis, all redounding to the common good. In Africa, the proletarianization of the native peoples has gone hand in hand with the expropriation of land, the imposition of head tax and the opening up only of mining industries and the building of railways and docks. These fields of capital investment as well as large-scale farming offer the best profit to the European capitalists who dominate the blacks. But such raw materials as are drawn from Africa are carried to Britain to feed the metropolitan industries, leaving Africa barer and poorer. The same applies to India.

The innovation of the Soviet policy of advancing the industrialization of the remoter national territories was made possible only because it had abolished capitalism and dissolved the previous oppressor-oppressed relationship between the imperialist metropolis and the colonial periphery. No detailed analysis is required to observe the immediate advantages of establishing industry at the source of raw materials. There is the avoidance of waste, and of unnecessary transport; there is greater speed in producing the finished article from the basic raw materials.

### Industry in the East

During the second Five-Year Plan (1932-37) Soviet industry definitely shifted eastwards, and these Asiatic regions achieved a greater industrial development than the western sector. The non-ferrous metal industry of Kazakstan is fast becoming the chief center for the whole of the Soviet Union. Here are found 60 per cent of the Union's lead resources, 50 per cent of its zinc. This republic ranks first in the Soviet Union in copper, lead, nickel and zinc. In fact, Kazakstan is extremely rich in mineral resources. Deposits of gold and other rare minerals like antimony, mercury and cobalt are found in considerable quantities in the Altai region. There is a lead-zinc industry at Chimkent, which is indispensable to the Soviet economy, and lead refineries also at Ridder and Ust-Kamenogorsk. A large chemical combine has been established at Aktyubinsk, in Northern Kazakstan, which also has important chrome deposits. Rubber, salt, and phosphorous industries are highly developed in this republic, and for the first time its coal resources are being worked. Resources of coal and oil in this territory rank third

for the entire Union. The coal mining center is at Karaganda, which produces more than 8 million tons a year, as against 90,000 tons ten years ago.

It was in this republic that the great railway project, the Turk-Sib (Turkistan-Siberian railway) was completed within four years. Kazakstan, "the country of desolate steppes and no roads," was laid with 7,000 kilometres of railroad, traversing the length of it. This railway, opened in 1930, together with branch lines, connects the basic industrial and agricultural districts of the republic. More railways have been built here than in any other central Asian republic. When Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, skilled workers in vast numbers were drafted from the Ukraine and Donbas to these areas. Chimkent, for example, formerly a nomad village, is now the capital of South Kazakstan with a population of 74,000. It mines two-thirds of the country's lead and zinc.

### Central Asian Industrialization

Of the central Asian republics, Uzbekistan is the most thickly populated, and Tashkent, the capital, is taking first place among industrial towns in this part of the Union. Its population of 585,000 is approaching that of Pittsburgh, to which it may be compared. Near Tashkent were discovered the Angren coal-fields, and about fifty miles from the town, at Almalyk, are located the biggest copper mines, for Uzbekistan is the third largest producer of copper in the Soviet Union. It also has large deposits of wolfram and molybdenum, besides resources of oil, much of which is being refined locally. In 1938, the output of

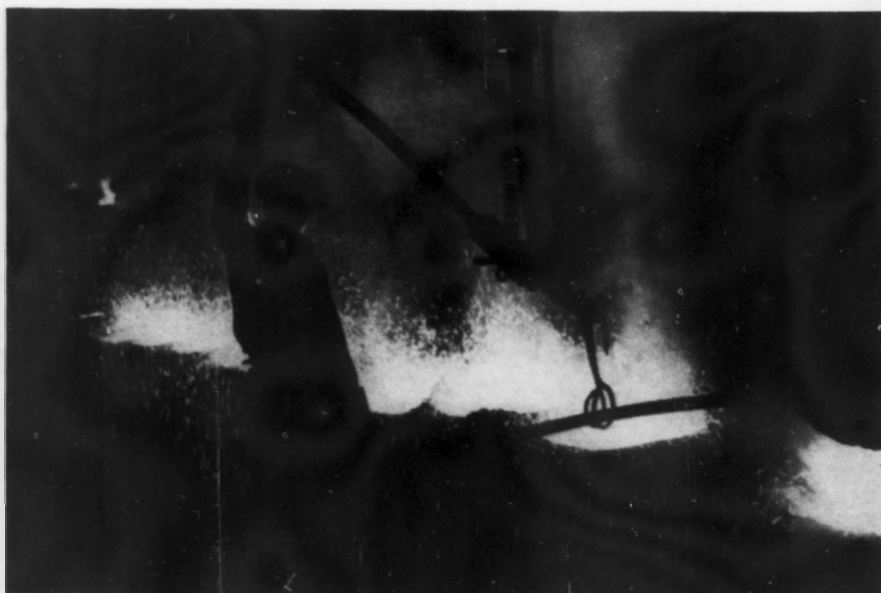
crude oil was 250,000 tons.

The Trans-Caucasian republic of Azerbaijan, with Baku for its capital, is one of the richest oil producing regions in the world. Before the Revolution, this oil was exploited by foreign interests and little of the benefits or profits went to the native inhabitants. Today the Azerbaijan people own the oil wells and refineries themselves, running them in the interests of the whole country.

Chuvashia, which is the Autonomous Republic nearest to Moscow, possessed in 1913, a total of 29 industrial enterprises, primarily lumber and food concerns. While the main trend of development is still towards the lumber and food industries, headway is being made in chemical and non-ore mineral industries.

Central Asia is the great cotton growing center of the Soviet Union. In the days of the czar the cotton was just carved off in its raw state, as with that of the great African cotton growing regions of Sudan, Uganda and Northern Nigeria, which cannot produce even a handkerchief. The aim of the Five-Year Plan was to build up the cotton industry in the cotton growing districts, so that new spinning and weaving combines at places like Tashkent, Stalinabad, Ashkabad and Fergana help to turn the raw material into yarn and cotton piece goods. Cotton growing is the major industry of the region, especially in Turkmenistan, and fertilizers for the fields are now for the first time being manufactured in Central Asia itself. This is as the result of the erection of a big hydro-electro-chemical plant at Chirchik, near Tashkent, shortly before Hitler

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*Sovfoto*  
A worker pouring molten steel into molds at the Magnitogorski plant, located in the southern part of the Ural mountains. It is an outstanding example of the industrialization of areas of the Soviet Union which are rich in natural resources

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invaded the Ukraine. Now this industry is able to clothe the Red Army.

Important for all this, of course, was railway construction across Central Asia, which was planned to link up production and industrial centers. Stalinabad was connected with the Central Asia railroad, and the trackage laid covered several thousands of miles.

### Cooperation the Keynote

For Central Asia, all these achievements in industrial construction are particularly distinctive, since prior to the Revolution it was entirely devoid of any kind of industry. But before any plans could be undertaken, geological surveys were made under the Gosplan, revealing the important and valuable range of minerals existing in this region. Large deposits of sulphur and potash were found in Turkmenistan; bismuth, gold, and platinum in Tadjuikistan; and many rare metals in Kirghizstan. Then the geographical allocation of industry had to be planned, which, in view of the fact that raw materials derived largely in the Soviet East, meant that heavy industry had to be transferred there.

The Urals-Kuzbas combine was formed to utilize the vast reserves of coal at Kuznetsk in Siberia and link it up with the iron ore of Magnitogorsk in the Urals, each area exchanging with the other the raw material which it lacked. Trucks from Kuznetsk taking coal to Magnitogorsk returned thence with iron ore so that both districts, making full use of their own natural resources, with the aid of each other, maintained heavy industries in two distinct areas, to the benefit of the whole Union. Such collaboration as this is absolutely impossible under private capitalism. The Kuznetsk-Karaganda-Magnitogorsk resources are now being used exclusively for the Soviet Union's war industries. This is the Red Army's main arsenal.

Agriculture in the Soviet Union has been subject to the same thorough revision and development as industry. In fact, the metamorphosis which has taken place in the outlook of the great mass of Asiatic peasants and nomads is perhaps greater than that of the industrial worker. For it must be remembered that where the principle of private property obtains every peasant is a potential landlord. Therefore, the effort to collectivize the land, so essential to the Soviet regime with its socialist objective, met with considerable sabotaging opposition from the wealthier peasants (kulaks), particularly as the circumstances forced its adoption by ruthless



Harvesting the grain on a large collective farm in the Kiev region of the Ukraine

Sovfoto

measures from the Soviet administration.

When the time comes for the African territories to be collectivized under a socialist regime there will not be the great difficulty of overcoming an individualistic peasantry, as there was in the Soviet Union. The native peoples of Africa still find it difficult to understand the system of capitalistic individual tenure which the European is trying to impose upon them. Even against the law, they still in the majority of cases work their lands communally, and will not have to be taught to forget a system which they have not succeeded in acquiring.

### Land Plus Machine

Naturally, with the collectivizations of farming there went hand in hand an increase in the sown area. Uzbekistan grows well over 50 per cent of the Union's raw cotton, and large-scale irrigation schemes, such as the Fergana canal, are constantly enlarging the area under cotton. The Fergana valley is, indeed, one of the great natural gardens of the world, and produces excellent crops of cotton, rice, and fruit, which is also dried on a large scale in local factories. Silk is also produced on quite a large scale, and there are cotton and silk mills at Tashkent.

Inasmuch as machinery plays a leading part in the work of collective farming, even the Central Asian peasants can be classified today as proletarian. The machine and tractor stations, which are the most important means of aiding the national policy of the Union, are the strongest proletarian influence on the agricultural populations of the eastern nationalities. They supersede at a bound all the archaic and social survivals of the semi-feudal era and strike directly at backwardness. Farming, through the medium of machinery, draws the millions of peasants into new ways of living, and

in its results proves to them the superiority of the iron tractor over the wooden plough. Not only has it resulted in an agrarian revolution, but has changed the psychology of the people from an individual to a collective outlook.

State farms have played and still play a most important part in reconstructing agriculture in the backward national regions. They are organized principally on land which had remained uncultivated for centuries, and have changed the areas into cultural bases in a comparatively short time. They have become the economic cultural centers for the surrounding districts, and it is not too much to say that they have literally transformed the economy of the national regions. By 1939 there were 3,957 state farms occupying an area of 168,000,000 acres.

These farms in particular play an important part in the development of technical crops and cattle breeding. The specialization of agricultural areas introduced by the Soviet develops the agriculture of the national regions in accordance with their different natural peculiarities and the industrial needs of the territory in relation to raw materials. In the former desert land of the Ararat valley of the Caucasus, an irrigation system now produces large supplies of cotton. One scheme, from Lake Sevan, "is turning many hundreds of square miles of semi-desert into rich, green farmland . . . Around Batum, a place of heavy rainfall, the opposite is taking place. Dangerous swamps have been drained and are now covered with groves of citrus fruits."

In the more backward regions of the east and of Central Asia, the livestock raising problem was closely connected with the effort to settle the nomadic peoples, who predominated in particular in Kazakstan, Uzbekistan, Tadjuikistan, and a number of other places. The new

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been three revolts against this servitude. The first attempt is really unknown but our author thinks it might have started with the early Israelites. The second began with the Moslems under the tutelage of Mohammed. The third has hardly begun but its beginnings are first discerned in the American Revolution and the creation of "the American system."

Mrs. Lane's book is a curious mixture of erudition, insight, metaphysics, and oversimplification. She is a presbyter instructing us in the basic principles, and like most preachers and teachers in order to drive home her moral truths she has had to oversimplify what is at bottom a very complex problem. Or rather problems, for freedom is not one problem but many. Hence Mrs. Lane writes as a *simplista* and her book has in consequence the usual shortcomings of *simplismo*. Here is one little detail. As she interprets the Civil War, it was not fought over the issue of Negro slavery at all but over tariffs and state rights. The poor Negro never enters her picture at all. She also ignores in her elucidation of the "American tradition" the truth that there are basically two American traditions; one of tolerance, liberalism, and freedom; the other of oppression, intolerance, and race hate, and the two traditions have always been parallel.

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use of machinery in farming, the collectivisation, and the establishment of state farms has delivered these lately nomadic peoples from the extreme hardships of their former existence. In Kazakstan alone, some 200,000 people of nomadic origin were settled on state farms during the first Five-Year Plan.

The whole Soviet system has revised and completely altered the social status of the people of the former colonial territories. Before the Revolution, most of the land was held by the Orthodox Church, the autocracy, and large Russian landlords. It is not remarkable that as the largest single owner of land, the Church had a vested interest in saving the Tsarist Empire, and lined up with the reactionary forces when the cry of "Land to the peasants!" went up. In

Moslem regions where the beys reigned supreme and the people were as serfs, the native landlords have been eliminated and co-operation between the people is the new note in the Soviet East.

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### Schomburg Collection Gift

The original manuscript of the recently published biography of George Washington Carver by Mrs. Rackham Holt (Doubleday, 1943) has been given to the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature of the New York Public Library. This manuscript and the galley proofs with the author's corrections will be displayed at the Schomburg library, New York City, through June 15. Also shown are the galleys of Richard Wright's *Native Son*, and the original letters of Booker T. Washington, Paul Laurence Dunbar and Frederick Douglass.