

Letter from Moscow

Nineteen Eighty

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THE Russians, though proud of the 20-year plan for peace and plenty and confident that they will make it, are not overwhelmed because they have got used to taking things, small or big, in their stride. And living in Moscow, we foreigners, too, are not startled — the plan is in the course of things. From the literary point of view, however, the document is not inspiring; it is pedestrian.

The main points which one noticed skipping through the huge document on a hot Sunday morning are ;

By 1980 there will be free housing and later, free gas, water and heating; free public transport and gradual introduction of free lunches at factories and offices and for collective farmers engaged in production; free maintenance of children in nurseries and boarding schools (if parents wish); free, hot school meals and clothing; free maintenance of disabled people; free education at all educational establishments; free medical services, including the supply of medicines and the treatment of sick persons at sanatoriums.

By 1970 Russia will gradually go over to a 34 to 36-hour working week with a 30-hour week for miners and others doing arduous work. Between 1970 and 1980 there will be a transition to a still shorter working week.

The Party says that during the next 20 years incomes will rise more than 3½ times.

By 1970 industrial output will go up by 150 per cent, while by 1980 it will increase by not less than 500 per cent. Russia then will have the highest output per head in the world. Productivity of labour in industry is to increase by more than 100 per cent by 1970 and by 300-350 per cent within 20 years, mainly through automation.

Electrification of the country will be completed. The annual output of electricity will be brought up to 900,000 — 1,000,000 million kilo Watt hours by 1970 and to

2,700,000 — 3,000,000 million kW by the end of the second decade. By that time the country should be able to produce 250 million tons of steel a year. Automation and mechanisation will be introduced on a sweeping scale.

In agriculture, the task is to increase the aggregate volume of production in 10 years by about 150 per cent and in 20 years by 250 per cent. Productivity of labour in agriculture will rise not less than 156 per cent in 10 years and five to six-fold in 20 years.

The collective farm villages will grow into amalgamated urban communities with modern housing facilities, public, amenities and services and cultural and medical institutions.

The Party's Role

The task of the Party is to create the material and technical basis of communism, to bring about a stage when the principle of distribution according to needs will be introduced and there will be a gradual transition to one form of ownership — public ownership.

The Party stands for peace and co-existence. It believes that the working-class in other countries can achieve power by peaceful means. This of course depends to a large extent on whether the ruling classes resort to violence or not.

One idyllic paragraph is worth quoting for the benefit of Vinoba Bhave and Birla : "It may well be that as the forces of Socialism grow, the working-class movement gains strength and the positions of capitalism are weakened, there will arise in certain countries a situation in which it will be preferable for the bourgeoisie, as Marx and Lenin foresaw, to agree to the means of production being purchased from it and for the proletariat to " pay off " the bourgeoisie."

Another passage dealing with the national liberation movement says : "The national bourgeoisie is dual in character. In modern conditions the national bourgeoisie in those colonial, one-time colonial and dependent countries when it

is not connected with the imperialist circles is objectively interested in accomplishing the basic tasks of an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. Its progressive role and its ability to participate in the solution of pressing national problems are, therefore, not yet spent. But as the contradictions between the working people and the propertied classes grow and the class struggle inside the country becomes more acute, the national bourgeoisie shows an increasing inclination to compromise with imperialism and domestic reaction !"

The programme declares that the Soviet State has begun to become a nation-wide organisation of the working people in a Socialist society. So that "millions of workers may learn to govern", it proposes that at least one-third of the sitting deputies to any Soviet should withdraw to make way for new blood at each election, held every four years in the case of the Supreme Soviet and every two years for local Soviets. A similar practice is recommended for the Communist Party itself. But particular Party workers may, by virtue of their extraordinary abilities; continue for a longer period if they secure not less than three-quarters of the votes cast by secret ballot. These measures will rule out the possibility of excessive concentration of power in the hands of individual officials.

The document says that if the international situation makes an increase in defence expenditure necessary, the programme may be held up. But a relaxation of tension and in particular, disarmament, would make it possible greatly to surpass the plans.

Samar Sen

After many years in the Soviet Union, Shri Samar Sen now returns to India. This is his last despatch from Moscow. *Ed.*