

Why Crime Is Decreasing in the Soviet Union

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THE SOVIET UNION is converting into reality the age-long dream of the best minds of mankind: the building up of a classless socialist society. In solving this task, the Soviet Union, simultaneously with the abolition of classes and survivals of the past in the minds of people, is abolishing crime—one of the worst survivals of the past.

The October Revolution, which led to a radical break-up of old productive relations and to the elimination of private property in the means of production, could not but give rise to embittered resistance of all the forces of the old society, which were ready for any crime that might stop the victorious march of socialism. This resistance has found its expression not only in counter-revolutionary crimes, directly expressing the struggle of the remnants of hostile classes and their agency, but also in general crimes which equally reflect the traditions of the old order are a heritage of the past.

The tremendous successes of socialist construction could not but bring about a considerable limitation in the scope of crime. The improvement in the living conditions of the masses, the immense growth of culture, the abolition of unemployment and the elimination of poverty in the village resulted in a sharp reduction of crime.

Statistics conclusively substantiate this. Taking the number of persons convicted of criminal acts in the RSFSR during the first half of 1933 as 100, the number dropped in the second half to 93.1; at the end of 1934, the number of cases dropped to 69.9; in the first half of 1935 it fell to 60.7.

In the Ukraine, the number of persons convicted of criminal acts declined in the last quarter of 1935 to one-fourth the number in the first quarter of 1933. In Soviet White Russia, this number declined by 57.1 per cent. A similar picture of the reduction in crime is to be observed during the past three years in the other republics of the Soviet Union.

THE NUMBER of convictions in various categories of crime shows more clearly, perhaps, the sharp decrease in crime in the USSR. Thus, there has been a marked decline in the number of persons convicted for breaking the law of Aug. 7, 1932, on the protection of socialist property. Taking the number of convictions under this law during the first

half of 1933 in the RSFSR as 100, they dropped to 27.9 in the first half of 1934 and to 9.6 in the second half of 1935. In the Ukraine, the number of similar cases fell even more. A further drop is shown by statistics of succeeding periods.

Property crimes, particularly theft, which constitute more than 70 per cent of this category of crime, have declined equally sharply. Statistics show that convictions for theft declined 61.4 per cent in the first half of 1935 in comparison with the same period in 1933.

A striking reduction in the number of crimes against the person is also shown by figures. In 1926, the proportion of these acts in the total number of criminal convictions amounted to 26 per cent in the RSFSR. Beginning with 1929, the percentage decreased year by year until in 1934 it dropped to three per cent. The number of convictions for sexual crimes in the RSFSR today has dropped to 25 per cent of the number in 1929. During the same period, the number of cases of bodily assaults dropped 40 per cent and murder convictions 50 per cent.

The main sources of juvenile crimes were homelessness, neglect and adults' instigation and recruiting of children for criminal acts. The decision of the Council of Peoples Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the Party of the USSR on the "Abolition of Child Homelessness and Child Neglect," and also the law of April 7, 1935 on the "measures of fighting against crimes among juveniles" played a colossal role in reducing children's crimes. The law is directed most sharply against adult instigators and against those juvenile law-breakers closely connected with a criminal environment.

In the courts of Moscow Province, 54 cases of juvenile crime were tried in May 1935, in November the number dropped to 23 and in December to 21. In Voronezh Province, 88 were convicted of juvenile crimes in the second quarter of 1935, 77 in the third quarter of that year, and 34 in two months of the last quarter. A similar reduction in juvenile crime is observable in other districts of the country.

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THUS, as a result of the decisive successive successes of socialism in our country, the enormous rise in the standard of living and culture of the masses, and the elimination of hostile class elements, the Soviet Union has achieved a

Defending the Workers and National Defense

Working men of England have their own idea of National Defense. In his maiden speech in the House of Commons, William Gallacher, representing the miners of West Fife, has this to say:

"There were over 1,000 men killed in the pits last year and nearly 200,000 injured. Have you defended them?"

"Come with me to the mining villages, day after day you can see the terrible tragedy of the pit, and the tragedy of the mines' homes.

"Have you defended the miners' families in Wales, Lancashire, on the North-east coast and in Scotland? Have you defended these places—go and look at them—which give the appearance of a country that has been devastated by the enemy? Have you defended the miners?"

"We say not a penny for armaments. It is a crime against the people of this country to spend another penny on armaments.

"Every penny we can get should go in wages for the miners, towards the health and well-being of the mothers and the children and adequate pensions for the aged and infirm. We require every penny we can get to make life better for the working class.

"If the seven billion pounds which we spent during the war in ruin and destruction had been spent in making life brighter and better for the workers of this country what a difference it would have made."

To hospitals of the big mines of the Philippines every day brings its train of ambulances bearing bleeding bodies of the maimed, the dying and the dead. Is our government defending these men and their families?

Socialists in England don't like to see school boys performing military drill. Since Socialists are now in control of the Council of the City of London military men are refused the use of elementary school buildings for company training.

They have abolished O T C and Cadet Corps from all schools under their charge. School children are forbidden to attend Navy League lecture. Also, when an Anti-air-craft Brigade planned a march to stimulate recruiting the Council refused permission to use Battersca Park for this purpose.

substantial reduction in crime. The decrease should be specially noted in the rural districts as an evidence of the rooting out of petty proprietorship habits resulting from the strengthening of the collective farm order and the whole process of remaking the minds of these people.

The sharp reduction of crime, however,

ECHOES FROM THE FORGOTTEN . . .

"How did you get here?"

"I walked, of course," she said. "At two o'clock this morning I got up and with my radishes walked to Warsaw because everybody comes to buy here on Tuesdays and Fridays. These are the big market days and I had to be here at five o'clock. It takes me longer," she added apologetically, "because I am old now and cannot walk so well."

"But it snowed and rained last night —"

"Yes. It snowed and then it turned to rain. Just before I got to Warsaw it turned to rain and the roads were very muddy and it was hard walking."

"And you stay here how long?"

"All day until it gets dark and then I walk back to my village."

"How much do you make after a day's work like that?"

"Sometimes a zloty and fifty groschen and sometimes two zloty and sometimes not even fifty groschen."

"And on that you have to live half the week?"

"Me and my son. He is ill now and cannot get up from bed or he would be helping me," she added quickly.

does not in any way signify a tendency towards laxness in this field. Today, side by side with the struggle with acts against public property, which is the main force of resistance of the remnants of hostile elements, special attention is devoted to the fight with crimes against the person. In the Soviet Union, where the human being is looked upon as the most valuable capital, the person of the citizen, his property and his rights are placed under special protection. This is precisely the reason for the measures for punishing more severely certain categories of crimes such as ruffianism, wilful refusal to pay alimony and similar cases. The unusual results in the Soviet Union's struggle against crime have been obtained on the basis of the abolition of exploitation of man by man, the abolition of poverty and unemployment, and the rise in the standard of living and the culture of the population.

A tremendous role in the effectiveness of the Soviet juridical policy is played by the principles of coercive labor, the whole idea of which consist in changing the minds of people, who, in the past were enemies of a socialist society and, under the Soviet system of education, have largely become converted into new people who have forgotten their previous customs and habits.

We are confident that this fight with crime will, as a result of the victory of Communism, lead to the final and complete abolition of crime in the land of the Soviets.

"When you have so little, what do you eat?" I asked.

"Bread and potatoes. What else is there to eat? Potatoes are very cheap but the bread is dear. Sometimes if I make only fifty or sixty groschen after all day here I buy only potatoes and we have them. But if I am lucky to make a zloty, then we can have a bread too."

I had been taking her time which she might have used to sell her radishes and I gave her a zloty. She offered me the seven radishes she held in her hand.

"No, no," I said. "I have taken up your time so you keep this zloty."

"The whole zloty!" she exclaimed, holding it in her hand and looking at it with unbelieving eyes.

"Yes, of course. You keep it. Put it away. I guess you can use it. Life is pretty hard, isn't it?"

And suddenly those old eyes filled with tears and she began to cry.

"Ai, pana, pana," she sobbed, "no one knows how hard our life is".

THE desire for "something to happen—anything"—is widespread and there is a whole vast area in Poland extending from 100 to 200 miles from the Russian border and running about 1,000 miles from the northern frontier of Czechoslovakia to the southern frontiers of Lithuania and Latvia where the "anything" is being translated into action with organization behind it. This is the "pacification area," so named because Poland is trying to "pacify" the peasants. How the peasants feel and how they are being "pacified" is not being made public by the government or by the Polish press nor does the iron censorship permit news of it to seep out if it can be stopped.

"Pacification" first began in 1913 in the region immediately north of the Carpathian-Russ section of Czechoslovakia and has become increasingly brutal and ruthless. The men and women, both radical and conservative, who told me what is being done to the peasants there were as frightened as those who speak in Italy or Germany, for in Poland the authorities need only to suspect that you talked of these matters to find yourself on the way, without a trial, to the concentration camp at Bereza Kartuska.

Not far away was the Soviet Union where the peasants had been miserable but now news was seeping across the frontier that Russian peasants were eating again, that they had salt for their potatoes, that they ate meat, that they had bread, that things were getting better while in Poland life for the peasants was steadily growing worse. Peasants turned their eyes eastward where Soviet soil now offered a haven of plen-

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ty. A strong Communist sentiment developed and this resulted in the effort to "pacify" the region.

Battalions of soldiers swarmed on villages seeking the leaders but the peasants refused to surrender them and in desperate efforts to root out the "Reds" the officials introduced the custom of "common responsibility." This procedure is quite simple, soldiers surround a village where a Communist is suspected of being active and line up all village residents. The officers then announce that the village is "commonly responsible" for the existence of a Communist in their midst and unless he is surrendered within one our every fifth person, man, woman or child above fourteen, chosen at random, will be placed under arrest, beaten severely and then imprisoned on suspicion of being themselves Communists.

On my way to the village of Kolki in the Volhynia district, where I had heard children had been "pacified" for asking for free schools I talked with peasants who told me many things with anxious pleas not to tell that they had talked with me, pleas as anxious as any I encountered in Italy or Germany. Even government officials in Warsaw, sick of the occurrences in the "pacification area" talked. And I heard tales like the one when the military swept upon and surrounded the little village of Bobraka where a Communist was active. The threat of "common responsibility" was made and either because the peasants were terrified or because there was an informer in their midst the Communist was found and taken away to prison "and the *izba* (peasant hut) where he had lived was burned to the ground and over the cold ashes plows were drawn and the land was plowed so that no one would ever know even the ground where a Communist had lived."

There were many such tales as I went wandering around the Volhynia district, stopping at *izbas* that sagged from the weight of their snow-covered straw-thatched roofs and then I came to Kolki where an old and bearded peasant told me of what happened on May Day of 1935.

The new Polish Constitution had guaranteed free schools and there had been joy in the hearts of the "dark people". The illiterate and hungry peasants had heard that the educated did not hunger and they wanted to see their children educated so they "would not hunger as we are starving." When no schools were built the peasants began to demand them and at first shyly and with many apologies and then a little irritably they asked why the schools were not being built for the children and the