

CHAPTER XIII

Riveting the Chains

'Production tribunals'—'Black Lists'—Disciplinary penalties for technical and administrative staff—Penalties for 'deserters'—For railway workers—For 'malicious organisers of production'—Trade Unions meet—Omnibus findings—Conscription for timber—For spring sowing—For fishing—For timber-floating—For the mines—Women to work on all tasks—Conscription for river and sea craft—Advertisements for arrest of runaways—Growing food scarcity—Rations in 1930 and 1931—Prices and wages—The Seven-Hours' Day vanishing—Stalin's Speech of June 1931—Collectivisation once more—Sufferings of *kulaks*.

CONSCRIPTION was now co-extensive with the population, but new regulations issued on December 17th by the Commissariat of Labour promised still further to harry the worker, and the manager as well. A specific obligation was laid on the latter to assist in the Socialist competitions and shock brigade activities at which some had looked askance. He was to provide 'specially favourable conditions' for shock workers, and for workers of long standing. Suggestions for improvement of output were to be encouraged, and workers' committees were to be informed of any proposed or actual engagement of staff.

A new disciplinary body known as the 'produc-

tion tribunal' was to be introduced, composed of workers in the undertaking. It was presumably intended to keep a watch not only on the workers, but on the manager.

To these tribunals appear to have been transferred some of the disciplinary powers not long before placed in the hands of managers. But the powers were strengthened. While hitherto any worker on dismissal, even for recognised incapacity, could claim a fortnight's pay as 'leaving grant,' he might now be dismissed without notice or compensation, if guilty of 'repeated or criminal offences against discipline.' More serious still, he would not be eligible for employment in industry or transport for six months. Even arrest of a worker was no longer to be included among the reasons for justifying absence from work.¹

Managers were also given power to fine a worker or to withhold wages either for time lost or for using defective raw materials, if he had not reported the defect to the administration.

An earlier regulation obliged all building labourers to remain at their task. Deserters from an industry, 'fliers' and 'graspers' (i.e. men desirous of better pay) were not to be permitted to do construction work, or to work in factories, but must go for six months to 'physical mass work.' As usual, the penalty for refusal would be loss of registration.²

Another form of discipline was the posting of

¹ *Industrial and Labour Information*, February 16th, 1931, pp. 198-9, quoting *Izvestia*, N.K.T., 1930. No. 36.

² *Labor Under the Soviets*, p. 393. Regulation dated December 1st.

'black lists' in factories, to ensure that men listed as 'deserters' should not be taken on elsewhere. They were even to be expelled from the trade unions, and so lose all civic rights.¹

New disciplinary penalties were also enacted against technical and administrative staff. They might be punished for being 'passive' towards Socialist competitions or shock brigades, or towards the suggestions or inventions of workers; if they were wasteful in their use of labour, especially skilled; if they employed more labour than the Plan required; if they 'enticed' workers from other undertakings, or if they did not give standard rates of pay.²

Yet another coercive measure said to have been proposed about this time was that workers who refused jobs should be threatened with eviction from their homes.³

That penalties alone, however, could not keep men in the mines, is shown by the announcement at this time that each miner in the Donets basin would be given a special allowance of 13 lbs. of wheat-flour a month, if he maintained the 'normal' output.⁴

The New Year opened with a Decree of the Central Executive Committee⁵ 'establishing' that

¹ Haensel, *Labor Under the Soviets*, p. 393, quoting *Izvestia*, January 4th, 1931.

² *Industrial and Labour Information*, February 16th, 1931, p. 199.

³ Haensel, *Labor Under the Soviets*, p. 393.

⁴ *Ibid.*, quoting *Izvestia*, January 4th, 1931.

⁵ The Decree was evidently the outcome of a Resolution passed at a Joint Meeting of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the Communist Party on December 19th, 1930. The resolution

the total number of workers and employees in 1931 must increase to 16 million persons as compared with 14 millions in 1930.¹ On the shoulders of Commissar Tsikhon was later placed the responsibility of making proposals within a month as to how this vast increase of labour could be secured.²

The task might well seem a desperate one. Railway transport, the spinal cord of the national economic system, was still quite incapable of fulfilling its function. A speech delivered by Rukhimovich, Commissar of Communications in the U.S.S.R., at the Fifth Plenary Conference of the Central Trade Union Council, stated that during the quarter October to December, the planned standard had not been carried out in any branch of the service. 'The work of the locomotive fleet' had considerably deteriorated. Labour discipline still was poor,³ 'shock' methods not enough developed. The organisation of the transport was bad in itself, was lacking in necessary funds, and transport and factory needs were not sufficiently co-ordinated. Some 10

among other things stated that 45.5 per cent. of the industrial workers had been transferred to the seven-hours' day and 67 per cent. to the continuous working week. These percentages were to be increased in 1931. It was stated that notwithstanding the non-fulfilment of the Plan for 1930 'in certain sectors,' the estimates of the Plan in the past economic year had been considerably surpassed (Cmd. 3775, pp. 198-200).

This must include seasonal and clerical and transport workers of all kinds. Even so it marks a big increase on the 10.9 millions for 1928-9 and 13.1 millions for 1929-30, given by Stalin in his Report to the Communist Party's Congress in June 1930. These figures give an idea of the conscription carried out.

¹ Decree dated January 10th, 1931, published in *Izvestia*, January 11th, *Slavonic Review*, pp. 742-3.

² In December there had been 54,500 cases of 'indiscipline' among railway workers. *Report on Russian Timber Camps*, p. 21, quoting the official railroad newspaper *Gudok* (*The Whistle*).

million tons of 'dumped freights' were lying in the country awaiting transport.¹

A Decree of the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the Communist Party, issued on January 15th, therefore, announced the introduction of various measures for improving the position, and called upon all Party, Soviet, economic, railway and other organisations to use their utmost endeavours to put the Decree into execution.²

A Decree published by the Commissariat of Labour three days later gave more particular details. All skilled railway workers³ 'who during the past five years had worked at railway transport' were recalled on transport service. Managers of all undertakings and institutions (except those engaged in transport and defence) were to release from their work within ten days any such men under their control. Any person retaining or concealing one of these workers would be liable to prosecution.⁴

This summons was quickly followed by a Decree of the Central Executive and the Council of People's Commissars, dated January 23rd.⁵ This announced that ten years' imprisonment would be the fate of those who by violation of regulations or poor

¹ *Izvestia*, January 28th, 1931, quoted in the *Slavonic Review*, April, 1931, p. 736.

² *Ibid.*, p. 737.

³ Professor Haensel (*Labor Under the Soviets*, p. 392), says that those who had even been porters were also called up, and that it was a criminal offence to hold back. The Birmingham University *Memorandum* says 'all workers,' p. 19.

⁴ *Slavonic Review*, pp. 737-8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 739.

repair work caused accidents or disorganised traffic.

‘In cases when such criminal acts are obviously of a vicious, premeditated character, the highest measure of social defence,’ in other words, the death sentence,¹ was to be applied, with confiscation of property.

The Decree proposed to all Central Executive Committees that this law should be incorporated in the Criminal Code of the Allied Republics.

The severity of this Order may be taken as a measure of the extent to which railway disorganisation was threatening the execution of the Five Years’ Plan. Yet the productivity of the railways further declined in the first quarter of the year.²

At much the same time as this tremendous pronouncement there appeared a Decree in which the Commissariat of Labour of the U.S.S.R. defined the ‘malicious disorganisers of production’ who had been denounced in the Decree of December 15th.³ These, among others, were persons who had (a) arbitrarily abandoned their work in State undertakings and institutions without timely notice or awaiting the arrival of a substitute, or before the expiry of their engagement; or (b) persons who arbitrarily resigned their work more than once in a year, even if engaged for no specified period; or (c) arbitrarily abandoned work to which they were appointed after training, if the work was given up before the end of the specified period; or (d) were

¹ *Ibid.*, note by the Editor.

² Birmingham University Memorandum, p. 11.

³ *Slavonic Review*, pp. 739-40, quoting from *Izvestia*, January 19th, 1931.

dismissed from their jobs for breach of labour discipline.

It was repeated that the penalty for these offences would be ineligibility to work in industry on transport for six months. Workers so dealt with would be put on a special register.

The register would no doubt be found useful in supplying labour 'for mass physical work.'

How completely the worker was becoming hemmed in by pressure on all sides was shown by the issue about this time of another regulation,¹ requiring that all workers and employees engaged in industry, transport, and building, should be supplied with 'labour record sheets.' The sheet of each worker was to record details of all employment to date, of promotion, wages, punishments or premiums, and, most important, how far he had shared in shock brigades or Socialist competition, or what inventions could be placed to his credit. The sheet was also to state the date and cause of any dismissal.²

A promise that trade union support for the worker would be even more ineffective in the future than it had proved in the past was given by the Central Council of the Unions held in January.³ On the plea that it was necessary to reduce the administrative expenses of the unions, it was decided that the number of salaried trade union officials

¹ Interview with Kraval, Assistant Commissar of Labour of the U.S.S.R., published in *Izvestia*, February 13th, 1931, *ibid.*, p. 740.

² This is apparently the 'labour card' mentioned on September 25th.

³ *Industrial and Labour Information*, February 23rd, 1931, quoting *Pravda*, February 6th, 1931.

should be reduced, and that members of shock brigades should be more extensively employed instead, on an honorary basis.

It was also noted that factory inspectors were inclined to demand means of safety and hygiene 'which are excessive or unnecessary,' and it was decided that voluntary inspectors should be appointed to work under the inspectors of the Labour Commissariat. Their rights and duties were to be defined by the Central Council, after consultation with the Commissariat, and they were to be elected by works committees from among trade union members, members of shock brigades, or engineers or technical staff. Prizes, but no pay, might be given them. The purpose of these proposals was evidently to tone down the activities of factory inspectors.¹

But the most ominous pronouncement was to the effect that in future rations were to be fixed according to the 'output and discipline' of the individual worker. The supply of provisions for workers was to be undertaken exclusively by the consumers' co-operative societies, and all provisioning plans of the 'Centrosoyus' and other co-operative organisations were henceforth to be drafted in consultation with the Central Council. Trade unions were to supervise the application of the plans, and each of the larger factories and State farms was now to have its own 'closed co-operative society,' from

¹ Mr. Baikaloff (p. 105), quoting *Trud*, June 22nd, 1928, says that few Russian factories are in good sanitary condition or adequately protected against accidents. In 1926-7 there were 1,452 accidents for every 1,000 industrial workers engaged for the whole year.

which alone the worker in the undertaking was to supply his needs.

On the other hand, the Council agreed to improve invalidity benefit for trade union members who had worked for over two years in one undertaking, and for workers and technicians who undertook not to leave their posts for two or three years.¹

By the end of January conscription was in full swing, and the Central Government Board of Collective Farms was ordering its constituent bodies to despatch members regularly to industry. To refuse to go was a criminal offence. It may well be believed that any response made was not a willing one. The collectivised peasant still had his home, and his family were with him, where they had not been conscripted. He was not dependent on a ration card, and sometimes could clothe himself to a certain extent from the flax grown on the farm.

Nor was he willing to go to work at timber, which now showed itself to be a great anxiety to the authorities. Thirty thousand workers had been conscripted for timber work in Karelia not long before,² but the Plan required no less than a million extra labourers for service in forests and on rivers, and 900,000 of these were to come from the farms and timber co-operative *artels*.³ Ten thousand students from forestry colleges and technical schools had

¹ Presumably this applied to trade union insurance schemes.

² *Pravda*, January 12th, 1931.

³ *Ibid.*, January 10th, 1931, quoted in *The Russian Conscripts*.

already been sent to the forests, besides some 3,000 workers of the Timber Trust. Members of local and regional Party and Soviet organisations had also been despatched,¹ but labour and transport were only 30 per cent. of the demand. The number of workers going to the forests from collective farms was 'insignificant.'²

Yet 'self-imposed' tasks of timber-felling were in full operation in the North, and judges both in the Northern and Komi Regions had been instructed to watch closely the execution of the lumbering programme in order to deal with any who delayed it. Poor and middle peasants refusing the task were to be sentenced to forced labour in the forests; *kulaks* who hindered were to be liable to heavy fines or compulsory labour, or even the death penalty. Where no 'task' had been organised, judges were to mobilise labour and food for working areas. All forced labour was to be worked in the forests.³

That desperate efforts were being made may be gathered from the fact that decrees were published by the Commissariat of Labour,⁴ requiring not only men but women and juveniles from the collective farms to go to the timber camps and to timber-floating. Men were to be replaced on the farms as much as possible by women.

Regulations of the Council of Labour and De-

¹ Probably the 1,000 members of the Young Communist League, mentioned by *Izvestia* on January 4th as mobilised for work on timber.

² *Izvestia*, February 7th, 1931; *Slavonic Review*, March 7th, 1931, p. 741.

³ Circular issued by the Northern Regional Court, December 30th, 1930. Official publication, *Legal Practices of the R.S.F.S.R.*, Nos. 17, 18.

⁴ *The Russian Conscripts*, p. 2, quoting from *Izvestia*, January 25th, February 10th and February 28th, 1931.

fence, dated March 23rd., dealt with the despatch of peasants and of workers in industrial Co-operative Societies for timber collection.¹ This endorsed two decrees of January 28th and March 3rd.

With the approach of spring, arrangements were once more made to conscript labour for sowing. The total area under cultivation in 1929-30 both of grain and of industrial crops had passed the pre-war figures,² but the Plan for 1931 soared far beyond these. The 'self-imposed task' method, now firmly established for lumbering, rafting, and various industrial operations, was therefore brought into use for sowing. The same penalties for refusal were fixed as in the case of timber.³ In case, however, any villages should escape 'imposition,' it was decreed that all agricultural workers residing in towns or villages should be swept out to the farms, while from Moscow alone 1,000 'specialists' were to be transferred.⁴

A Decree⁵ published in *Pravda* on February 10th required all State, co-operative and social establishments or undertakings to despatch to the spring sowing within three days 60 per cent. of the agrarian specialists, technicians, veterinary surgeons and mechanical engineers employed by them, except those working on agricultural machinery. They would be 'compelled to work' at the sowing

¹ *Izvestia*, March 28th, 1931.

² Birmingham University *Memorandum*, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18. The *Memorandum* states that these 'self-imposed obligations' are frequent and often affect large groups of the population.

⁴ *Izvestia*, February 10th, 1931.

⁵ Issued by the Commissars of Labour, Agriculture, and Finance on February 10th, 1931.

for two months. In case of extreme necessity they might be kept until May 1st.

Non-observance of this decree would bring criminal or administrative prosecution. All students in agricultural institutions were also mobilised for the same purpose.¹

And within the collective farms a significant reorganisation began to take place. In order to ensure the utmost possible supervision of labour on the farms, members were to be divided into 'brigades' of forty or sixty people each, under a 'brigadier' appointed by the farm management. Each member was to have his fixed daily task, and was to be paid entirely on piece-work. The daily task was to be based on the quantity and quality of output of the best workers.² Probably the brigadiers would be drawn from men trained while in the Red Army to be managers or section-leaders on collective farms.³ Military discipline would thus be ensured.

Nor was the vigilant Central Committee unmindful of the importance of Russia's fishing industry. It therefore decreed the 'mobilisation' and transfer of specialists and workers for this purpose,⁴ and students were despatched from the Fishing University in Moscow to Archangel and the Far East to help to organise 'mass work for the spring fishing.'⁵

¹ *Labor Under the Soviets*, p. 392.

² *Izvestia*, February 8th, 1931.

³ Mr. Counts (*The Soviet Challenge to America*, p. 207), says thousands of soldiers were trained for this in 1930.

⁴ *Pravda*, February 15th, 1931.

⁵ *Slavonic Review*, p. 742, quoting from *Izvestia*, March 7th, 1931.

In March Labour was, again needed for timber-floating. A Decree of the Commissariat of Labour of the U.S.S.R. issued on March 4th,¹ announced that a special central Commission had been established in Moscow to secure the necessary labour. All the decisions of this Central Commission and its local bodies were to be final, 'and cannot be appealed against.' Timber-floating trusts were to present statements of their needs for 'specialists' within five days, and within ten all State and co-operative and public undertakings and institutions were to send to the Commissioners lists of specialists in timber-floating in their employment. Specialists despatched would, as a rule, be required for not more than sixty days.

Rumblings, however, came from the mines. It was reported from the Don basin that out of 31,000 collective farmers 'recruited' between August and December 1930, over half had left. Of 22,000 casual labourers recruited during the same period no less than 70 per cent. had gone.² Special flour allowances evidently had proved of little avail. The Supreme Economic Council had now instituted a system by which miners would be paid according to the amount and quality of their work.³

A thousand qualified workers were sent to the Donets coal area in January,⁴ and in February 250 Communists were despatched.⁵ It may well be

¹ Ibid., p. 742, quoting *Izvestia*, March 7th, 1931.

² *Ekonomicheskaya Jizn* (i.e. *Economic Life*), March 1st, 1931.

³ *Pravda*, February 20th, 1931.

⁴ *Pravda*, January 31st, 1931.

⁵ Ibid., February 14th, 1931.

wondered if even the enthusiasm of these workers would survive the conditions they would find.¹ In one area houses were only available for 40 per cent. of the miners, and men had to walk some miles to their work. In another, where a seven-fold increase in output had been ordered, houses were hardly to be found.²

March, however, brought another extension of conscriptive methods. An article in an official organ announced that the interests of Socialist reconstruction and defence 'demand that women should work in all branches of industry and agriculture without exception. . . . In the basic industries which are of military importance, women should be put on to skilled labour. Statements to the effect that women may only be employed on light tasks which do not require skilled labour must be stopped once and for all.'³

As we have seen, this policy was already being put into operation in timber felling and floating, and on the collective farms. Women were also smelting the ore from the rich Galata copper mine in the Urals.⁴

And in January, all men who had served at sea or on rivers at any time during the last ten years, had

¹ Conditions in the Don Basin have lately been severely criticised by Comrade Kossarev, Secretary-General to the Young Communists. (*Trud and Komsomolskaya Pravda*, July 6th, 1931.)

² *Izvestia*, May 30th, 1931. By the summer no less than 700,000 miners were suffering from the shortage of houses (*Za Industrializatsiju*, June 19th, 1931).

³ *Ekonomicheskaya Jisn*, March 28th, 1931.

⁴ They were doing this over mine workings that Mr. J. L. Thomson, an American engineer, said might collapse at any moment (*Saturday Evening Post*, June 27th, 1931). His account of the mines is terrible.

been called up for permanent work on the water. The organisations hitherto employing these men were to dismiss them within five days and without the leaving grant to which the Labour Code entitled them. The same conscription was applied to all retired captains, engineers, mechanics, petty officers and firemen. All who attempted to evade or assist others to evade the order were to be prosecuted under Article 61 of the Criminal Code.¹

This Decree was to apply not only to the transport of timber, but also to all other river and sea freight. It is, therefore, of special importance in connection with Premier Molotov's assertion that forced labour does not enter into any commodities for export. Read in conjunction with earlier Decrees, it shows that forced labour is not only handling Russia's exports on river and rail, but is now actually carrying them to foreign ports.

And while official Decrees were conscripting labour for one industry after another, official newspapers were as busily engaged in calling on citizens to apprehend runaways who had fled from their work.² In some factories the 'turnover' during the last few months had been as much as 30 or 40 per cent.³

But undoubtedly the heaviest link in the chain which enslaves the Russian worker, and one which grows steadily heavier, is the scarcity of food.

¹ *Izvestia*, January 25th, 1931.

² *The Russian Conscripts* gives numerous instances of these advertisements. One appears as front piece.

³ Stalin's speech on June 23rd, quoted in the text.

Rationing, as we know, has been in force for over two years. A ration card in April, 1930 entitled workers only to make the following purchases at State-controlled prices:¹

	MANUAL WORKERS.	NON-MANUAL WORKERS.
Bread	1 lb. 12 ozs. per day	14 ozs. per day.
Meat	9 lbs. 11 ozs. per month	4 lbs. 13 ozs. per month.
Sugar	3 lbs. 4 ozs. per month	2 lbs. 9 ozs. per month.
Tea	$\frac{1}{8}$ ozs. per month.	$\frac{1}{10}$ ozs. per month.
Butter	$10\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. per month.	$10\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. per month.
Fierring	2 lbs. $10\frac{1}{4}$ ozs. per month.	1 lb. 12 ozs. per month.

Milk was to be given to children only, one-half litre ($3\frac{1}{2}$ gills) twenty-five times during the month, but its supply even then was irregular. 'Maccaroni, kasha, and some other items could be obtained only on presentation of a co-operative membership card.'² Anything beyond the ration had to be purchased on the free market at prices of which some idea is given on pp. 168-9. As early as 1929 no butter, flour or cloth might be procurable for weeks at a time.³

By the summer of 1930 matters were much worse. Even men doing heavy manual labour were on a diet 'practically confined to black bread, cabbage, and raw tomatoes,'⁴ and there was 'scarcely a single article' which was not rationed. The bread

¹ Hoover, p. 253. He says, however, that the ration was constantly changing. I have converted grammes to the nearest English measure.

² Ibid., p. 253. 1 litre = 1.759 pints.

³ Haensel, *Economic Policy of Soviet Russia*, p. 51.

⁴ Mrs. Grady, *Saturday Evening Post*, July 11th, 1931.

supply was best. Lack of fish and preserves, and in part the shortage of textiles and soap, was said to be due to exporting. 'The consumption of cloth is reduced to the extreme limit per head of the inhabitants. Meat, too, is only supplied to the bearers of cards and in quite insufficient quantity. The situation is the same for shoes, milk, pharmaceutical products, cigarettes and tobacco. The only chemical product which chemists deliver without limit is aspirin. As for soap, this is scarcely to be had at all.'¹

The autumn brought some improvement, but still everything was rationed but black bread and potatoes, and there were long queues for the purchase of clothes and boots. By December increased scarcity had created a third rationing category which in Leningrad might buy neither clothes nor boots that month.

In January an Ordinance of the Commissariat of Supply further subdivided the categories as follows:

1. Manual workers and technical staff of all State industry, of railways and some municipal undertakings, officers of the Red Army and political police; and the forces guarding railways and factories.
2. Manual workers engaged in storage and on State farms; members of artisan co-

¹ Letter from the engineer Nicolaus Basseches in Russia, to the *Berliner Börsen Courier*, July 6th, 1930.

operatives, and students in technical colleges.

3. Officials in State, municipal and co-operative undertakings, and their families; families of persons in groups 1 and 2; students of non-technical universities, colleges and schools; State pensioners and persons retired from the Army.
4. All children born in 1917 and after.

No food cards were to be given to proprietors of nursing homes, physicians practising privately or any private traders. Clergy and any artists or writers working for the Church were also banned, with any person whose occupation was not considered useful to the State.

The Ordinance provided for further differentiation according to the degree of utility to the Five Years' Plan of a worker's factory, or of the industries of his region or province. Four lists were created for this purpose.¹ Thus there might be no less than sixteen categories of rations.

In March there was a rearrangement of categories which placed members of the learned professions in the lowest group but one, and created a special first category for shock workers and other workers in undertakings having shock brigades.² It was later stated that if workers failed to complete the task imposed on them, their rations would be

¹ *Kooperativnaja Žizn (Co-operative Life)*, January 20th, 1931.

² *Snabshenie, Torgovlia, Ko-operatcia (Supply, Trade, Co-operation)*, March 27th, 1931.

cut down accordingly.¹ Thus was the system of rations depending on output extended to the ordinary worker.

By April the manual worker's meat ration had fallen to 500 grammes (a little over 1 lb.) a month, and the butter ration to 200 grammes (or about 7 ozs.) 'given very seldom and irregularly.' The ration also included 'small quantities of corn and vegetables.' 'Even bread supplies,' it was said, 'are very irregular.' The conditions of other classes of the population were said to be 'much worse.'²

The regulation requiring each worker to purchase his rations at the shop or restaurant attached to his factory has further limited his chances of procuring them.³ The food supplied in a factory restaurant is part of his ration, and is often grossly inadequate in quantity and inferior in quality.⁴ Complaints on this subject are many.

But the lot of the intellectual worker, as may be imagined, is harder still. A recent letter from one of these deplures the deterioration in the quality of bread, now half wheat and half rye, the absence of 'groats,' such as semolina or buckwheat, the substitution of salted meat for fresh, and the lack of game

¹ *Izvestia*, April 7th, 1931.

² Letter from Mr. Yúgoff, a member of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, to the *Socialistichesky Vestnik*, May 9th, 1931.

³ It is said that a worker's family in 1929-30 had to buy on the free market 26·3 per cent. of all food produce and 15·9 of all goods including manufactured products. Others, of course, were even more dependent on the high-priced market ('The Foreign Trade of Soviet Russia,' *The Statist*, June 6th, 1931).

⁴ *Izvestia*, July 14th, 15th, 18th and 24th, 1931.

Prices charged in the Soviet Union for certain Commodities, December, 1930¹

COMMODITY	IN CO-OPERATIVE STORES			ON THE "FREE MARKET"		
	Moscow	Leningrad	Rural Districts	Moscow	Leningrad	Rural Districts
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Cereals						
Wheat flour						
Quality 50% per cwt.	1 8 0	1 10 0	—	32 7 0	—	—
per st.	3 5	3 9	—	to 37 15 0	—	—
Quality 85% per cwt.	19 6	—	19 0	to 4 14 4½	—	—
per st.	2 5	—	2 4½	10 16 0	—	12 3 0
Rye flour	10 0	1 1 6	10 9	1 7 0	—	1 10 4½
per lb.	1	2	12 9	—	—	2 14 0
Buckwheat	19 6	1 3 9	—	—	—	to 2 16 0
per lb.	2	2½	—	13 10 0	10 16 0	—
Semolina	2 3 0	2 3 0	—	to 21 14 0	1 11	—
per lb.	4½	4½	—	to 3 10½	—	—
				21 12 0	10 16 0	—
				3 10	1 11	—

Butter	per cwt.	16 8 0	16 12 0	20 4 0	124 0 0 to 135 0 0	135 0 0 to 162 0 0	94 10 0
	per lb.	2 11	2 11½	3 7	1 2 1 to 1 4 1	1 4 1 to 1 8 11	16 10½
Eggs	per gt. hundred ²	18 6	18 0	1 12 0	5 2 0 to 6 8 0	7 0 0	3 16 0
	each	1½	1½	3	1 1	1 2	to 4 6 9 7½ 8½
Foals	per cwt.	19 0 0	—	—	43 0 0	54 0 0	—
	per lb.	3 4½	—	—	7 8	70 0 0	—
Bacon	per cwt.	15 8 0	—	—	65 0 0	59 10 0	—
	per lb.	3 2 7	—	—	11 7	10 7½	—
Sugar ³ (soft)	per cwt.	3 2 6	—	3 10 0	13 10 0	—	—
	per lb.	6½	—	7½	2 5	—	—
(refined)	per cwt.	3 11 0	3 15 0	4 1 0	18 18 0	21 12 0	—
	per lb.	7½	8	9½	3 4½	3 10	—
Apples	per cwt.	6 9 0	8 2 0	8 2 0	12 3 0	—	—
	to	8 2 0	—	—	—	—	—

¹ Parliamentary reply by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, House of Commons, January 26th, 1931. The reply was given in cwt. only. The reduction to lbs. is without making any allowance for sale in small quantities. Prices are calculating the rouble, at 2/1½d.

² i.e. ten dozen.

³ The Moscow correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, June 9th, 1931, writes of a recent private market quotation of 8s. 8d. per lb. for sugar.

and poultry, which are 'all exported.' Textiles were much scarcer than in 1930, and only one cake of soap was to be allowed every three or four months. In the provincial cities conditions were said to be even worse.¹ It is no doubt in response to complaints such as this that the Soviet Government has recently promoted professors and other holders of high educational posts to the category of manual workers for rationing purposes.²

Yet many Communists were being supplied with excellent fare at low prices³; wheat exports were pouring out of the country; and some 3 million tons of wheat were in reserve.⁴

It is clear, therefore, that the scarcity of food and other necessaries has greatly increased since the issue of the ration card reproduced above. The preceding table gives an idea of the prices charged for some articles of food in the co-operative stores and on the free market respectively. The co-operative prices are fixed by the Government.

Other recent prices on the free market are as follows:

Milk, 3s. 6d. per quart.⁵

¹ Letter dated May 23rd from Moscow in the *Socialistichesky Vestnik*, June 13th, 1931. In the previous winter, in the industrial centre of a mainly agricultural district, persons in the third category had to exist on 11 ozs. daily of bread, three-quarters black, and on a monthly allowance of 7 ozs. each of macaroni and millet, and 17½ ozs. of onions. The highest category had 1 lb. 9 ozs. of bread daily, two-thirds black, and a monthly allowance which only differed from the third in including 2 ozs. of tea and 1 lb. 9 ozs. of sugar. Of butter, margarine, oil, meat, rice, fish, soap and potatoes, all rationed, there was none. No kerosene had been available for some months. The usual monthly allowance of this had been one litre.

² Riga correspondent, *The Times*, July 1st, 1931.

³ Mrs. Grady, July 11th, 1931, quoting a leading Communist.

⁴ Mr. Lubimoff, Soviet delegate to London Wheat Conference, May 1931.

⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, June 9th, 1931.

Cheese, 12s. 4d. per lb.¹

Black bread, 1s. 2d. to 3s. 2d. per lb.²

Fresh sausage, 6s. 10d. to 9s. 1d. per lb.

Beef, 3s. 3d. to 13s. per lb.

Mutton, 4s. 4d. to 5s. 5d. per lb.

Fish (better grade), £1 3s. 2d. per lb.³

Soap, 19s. 3d. per lb.⁴

The fixed prices for vegetables have also been very high, but in consequence of complaints have been recently lowered: radishes from 2s. 3d. to 1s. 10d. per lb., spinach from 2s. 1½d. to 1s. 1¾d. per lb., and lettuce from 1s. 6d. to 1s. 1¾d. per lb. The former prices represented 80 per cent. above the cost of production.⁵ A cucumber cost 7½d. at the fixed price; an onion 3¾d. on the free market in Moscow.

Purchases at these prices must be made from a wage⁶ which, though the claims made on it for rent may be low, is heavily depleted, not only by high prices, but by compulsory deductions for State loans and other purposes. For a loan of 1,500 million roubles to help to finance the Plan, issued on June

¹ Mrs. Grady, June 20th, 1931. Mr. Frank Owen, Liberal M.P., states that it was 16s. a lb. in Rostof in May 1931.—*News Chronicle*, June 25th, 1931. The *Manchester Guardian* Moscow correspondent speaks of cheese at £1 3s. 2d. per lb.

² The prices for black bread, sausages, beef and mutton, are as given in a letter from a Swiss engineer who returned from Turkestan at the end of 1930. They have been converted from French francs. The *Manchester Guardian's* correspondent writes of sausages, costing 11s. 7d. per lb., and meat, "when it can be had at all," at 6s. 4½d. to 12s. 9d. per lb.

³ *Manchester Guardian*, June 9th, 1931.

⁴ Letter from Moscow, May 23rd, 1931.—*Socialistichesky Vestnik*, June 13th 1931.

⁵ *Trud*, June 21st, 1931.

⁶ The average wage for all industries in 1930 is officially given as 77 roubles per month, or £8 5s. 2½d. (Cmd. 3775, pp. 185-7). This included averages of 96·65¹ per month (£10 5s. 3d.) in Moscow, and 99·76 (£10 11s. 10d.) in Leningrad. Wages for permanent workers on State farms were only 42·4 roubles (£4 10s. 1d.) per month, and for seasonal workers 32·4 roubles (£3 8s. 10d.) per month.

1st, 1931, workers were required to give no less than three weeks' pay,¹ and a recent unpublished order has required up to 25 per cent. of the salaries and wages of the better-paid State employees, both in Russia and abroad, to be paid into the State savings bank, where the sum must remain at the disposal of the Government. Moreover, successive inflations since 1929 have seriously lowered the value of the rouble, while the poor quality of many of the standard commodities² is a further drain on the worker's purse.

And in every direction the chains are tightening.

Piece-work has now been made universal even on the railways;³ night shifts are to be as long as day ones, though paid one-seventh higher; wages are to be paid out of working hours, and activities other than directly productive ones during such hours are sternly forbidden.⁴ Workers are to be made financially liable for keeping machinery and factory overalls in good condition, and managers have been empowered to transfer workers for a month from one factory or task to another. Any worker refusing to comply may be dismissed, a penalty which would prevent engagement in State industry or transport for six months.⁵ Thus has the Labour Code of 1922 further been reduced to shreds.

¹ *Za Industrializatsiju*, July 10th, 1931.

² There are frequent references to this in the Soviet Press. Rubber over-shoes, for instance, are said only to have one-third of the pre-war wear. American statistics have shown that something like 40 per cent. of some industrial products have had to be scrapped.

³ *The Times*, July 8th, 1931.

⁴ *Trud*, May 27th, 1931, quoted in *The Times*, July 8th, 1931.

⁵ Decree of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. and the Council of People's Commissars, *Pravda*, June 5th, 1931.

Finally, the seven-hours' day which was to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, but which, as we have seen, only reached a minority of workers, is being withdrawn. The Communist Party has decided that an hour's 'compulsory practice' to improve each worker's technical qualification is to be added to the seven hours without any extra pay,¹ and the 'docile' Trade Union Council is engaged on popularising the proposal.²

It is significant that the change to the eight-hour day is to begin in the heavy industries, on the development of which the Plan lays so much stress.

Stalin's speech at the Economic Conference on June 23rd brings little assurance of any relief to the worker. He admits that the peasant can no longer be recruited voluntarily for industry. In future, therefore, collective farms must enter into regular contracts to supply the various trusts with the necessary workers—a system which will make these farms more than ever traps for the ensnaring of men and women for forced labour. Further efforts are to be made to tie down skilled workers to their factories by greater differentiation in pay between skilled and unskilled, and between severe and lighter tasks. Housing and food supplies, says the Master, are to be improved, but evidently on the basis of quantity and quality of work only.

¹ *The Times*, June 2nd, 1931, and *Industrial and Labour Information*, June 22nd, 1931, quoting *Trud*, May 27th to 31st, 1931.

² *The Times*, July 8th, 1931, quoting *Trud*, June 23rd.

Though the speech suggests the temporary abandonment of the uninterrupted week and a return to a working week of six days with stoppage on the seventh day, it is clear that these proposals are made only in order to fix responsibility for damage to machinery and poor quality of work, by ensuring that workers take charge of the same machine week by week. The proposal to split up large trusts seems also intended to fix responsibility on individuals rather than on boards of directors.

Stress is further laid on the need for more experts and skilled workers. More technical schools are therefore to be added to the hundreds already in existence; non-Communists are to be given opportunities of promotion to managers' posts if they will be faithful to the interests of the working classes 'as interpreted by the Communist Party'; and experts of the older generation are no longer to be despised. As so often before, the need for lowering costs of production and for developing the heavy industries is emphasised—all the more because agriculture, owing to collectivisation, needs financial assistance from the State.

The latest pronouncement of the Dictator, therefore, far from indicating any intention of abandoning the Five Years' Plan, proposes to secure more completely for its service the methods of payment according to the value of the work done, of promotion by merit, and of fixation of individual responsibility, which 'capitalist' producers everywhere have found most successful in obtaining efficiency.

And it may well be believed that as long as the

Plan continues, the presence of armed guards in factories and the fear of losing the precious ration card which alone stands between them and starvation will be the main factors in keeping workers tied to their posts.

But still more terrible is the lot of those who are not working for the State. The 'collectivising' policy is again being rigorously pressed, the number of 'poor' and 'middle' peasants forced into collective farms having risen from 35 to 55 per cent.¹ between March 1st and July 1st of this year. Exorbitant taxation is imposed on those peasants who do not collectivise their possessions,² and failure to pay is visited with confiscation and deportation. A crowning infamy is that as alleged, deportees are now required to sign a statement to the effect that they go of their own free will.

The recent extension of collectivisation to the province of Ingria has meant the expropriation and deportation as *kulaks* to Siberia and the far North of thousands of peasants of Finnish extraction, to whom special rights of local autonomy had been officially promised in 1920. The men work in the mines of the Kola Peninsula or, in Siberia, on timber felling; but these latter are said to be destined for the gold mines on the Yenisei River. Rations in

¹ *Pravda*, July 18th, 1931.

² Sworn statements of Ingrian refugees who have recently escaped to Finland. A man owning about 6½ acres, whose income was officially returned at 1,850 roubles, was taxed 3,861 roubles in 1930 (for variously described taxes). He was also obliged to surrender farm products for trifling sums. Another had to give up 400 litres of milk annually for each of his two cows and one heifer. As the cows milked badly, and the heifer not at all, he was fined 300 roubles. He had to pay a *kulak* tax besides of 1,060 roubles, and other taxes. Other instances are given.

May for men workers were 2 lbs. a day of black bread and hot soup twice daily—others had only 12½ ozs. of 'soiled bread' per day, seven 'small herrings every ten days, and a few grammes of pearled grain.' . . . The barracks in which men, women and children were packed 'were small and dirty, lacking all sanitary accommodation.' The working day was fourteen to fifteen hours.¹ Almost all the children and old people had died within a month or two of reaching Siberia.

And in the forests deported children from the age of twelve have been doing compulsory labour, as usual, with an allotted task.²

Relatives of sentenced persons who themselves escape arrest also meet a tragic fate. 'Thousands and thousands of us,' writes one of them, living in one of the most fertile parts of Russia, 'have died of starvation. . . . They take even the biscuits. They find us everywhere we hide. . . . We got in at harvest more than 100 puds of wheat, and now we perish of hunger for lack of bread. It is impossible to buy it; the markets are shut; the cattle are eaten; the horses have died for lack of forage; the pigs have been commandeered. . . . The men whom they find about are tortured and beaten.'

To people suffering like this, of what avail is the recent decree promising the deported *kulaks* enfranchisement if they will serve the State faithfully

¹ Letter from a deportee certified in sworn statement by a theological student at Helsingfors, June 7th, 1931.

² Letter received from a deportee, and shown to the writer.

for five years?¹ How many can hope to see that day, and what is enfranchisement worth when liberty of speech, of writing, of public election, is suppressed? How long can such things endure?

¹ *Pravda*, July 4th, 1931.