

INTERNATIONAL NOTES

Soviet Election to Be "Uncontested". — List of Candidates Reveals New Social Composition of Ruling Stratum.

By John G. Wright

With the official registration of candidates "elected" to run for the Supreme Soviet, Stalin has stripped his plebiscite of all the ornaments and pretences that have hitherto adorned it. In the first place, the elections will be uncontested. That is to say in 99% of the electoral districts, if not in all of them, only one candidate will run. In his graciously worded dispatch to the N. Y. Times, Denny ventures to guess that in a few isolated instances, more than one candidate may perhaps appear on the ballot. That still remains to be seen. Thus far, there has not been any official notice of a "contested" election in the Soviet press. From the data already available, the possibility of such elections being held is reduced to a dozen or so districts still to be heard from.

A breakdown of the candidates already registered, and in effect, already "elected", reveals that among them there is not a single rank-and-file worker or peasant. The candidates have been hand-picked exclusively from among the ruling tops in the party and government and from among the new aristocracy of Stakhanovists and "well-to-do" kolkhozniki, and the Stalinist "intelligentsia".

Breakdown of Candidates' List

1) Party and government functionaries	138	41+
2) Army, Navy, Air Corps officers	37	11+
3) G.P.U.	18	5+
4) Stakhanovists etc	50	15+
5) Kolkhoz aristocracy	55	16+
6) "Intellectuals"	21	6+
Total	319	96+

The remaining 12 candidates are "miscellaneous" i.e., they may be assigned to any one of the last four groups. It goes without saying that a few among those listed in groups 4, 5, and 6 may be party members. But these figures constitute incontestable proof that the "non-party Bolsheviks" compose in point of number a bloc as large as that of the "party Bolsheviks", with the G.P.U. and the military functionaries holding the "majority" in a bloc with either one of these two groups—an item which may prove of decisive significance in future developments. In our previous comments we had forecasted that the mechanics of the election would reveal Stalin's plan to shift his base from his previous supporters in the old bureaucracy to a new "base". In the above data, we observe the concrete realization of this plan. It is further to be borne in mind that Stalin has in addition "renovated" thoroughly his old "Bolshevik" base. Many of the "party" candidates appear in the lists with a significant notation that this or that candidate is "fulfilling the duties" of this or that party or Soviet functionary, i.e., the original incumbent had been purged, and a "substitute" appointed at the very last moment without even the formalities having been observed.

Fear Boycott of Elections

One should imagine that with a set-up such as Stalin has engineered, there is nothing for him to worry about. Yet the press continues to be filled with "alarm signals" that the "class enemy" will attempt to "disrupt" the elections, and "do dirt". Says Pravda: "It is impermissible to forget that the good nature and dopiness of several party and Soviet organizations is being utilized by enemy elements who are attempting and will continue to attempt in every way imaginable to do us dirt in the election campaign." (Nov. 15). This enigmatic language covers up the mortal fear of the ruling clique of a boycott of the elections. According to the provisions of the constitution each candidate must poll over one-half of the votes in his district to be elected. Should the voters stay away from the polls, or should they pursue the less dangerous course of going to the polls, and "scratching" the lone delegate, a very compromising situation would ensue. Pencils are no longer necessary in Stalin's election. But every man with a pencil is a potential threat. The dread of this possibility crops out in the campaign to turn out 100% of the votes; and much more directly in the speeches of the dignitaries themselves. Thus Kossarev a member of the Central Electoral Committee, recently issued an appeal to the youth regarding their role in the elections. He stressed their duty to expose and agitate against the enemy elements, and he indicated three infallible signs whereby any dutiful youth could immediately discover elements "hostile to the Soviet system, and the Communist Party".

We list them, as given by Kossarev: (1) Those who attempt to "talk the populace out of active participation in the elections" (i.e., the advocates of boycott!) (2) those who "attempt to put forward their own hostile candidates"; (3) those who "spread anti-Soviet anecdotes" and generally "carry on hostile agitation." Where? "Sometimes" says Kossarev cautiously, "even at political meetings," but as rule, he continues "in stores, baths, barber shops, street cars, foyers of movie houses, bazars and houses of prayer."

Diplomats in Grip of Purge

With the latest purge of the Soviet consulate in China, the list of foreign offices thus far affected now includes: Germany, Poland (Davtyan), Lithuania (Podolsky); Finland (Asmus); Latvia (Bredersky); Estonia (Ustinov—he committed suicide) and Spain (Antonov-Ovseyenko). While the head of the English embassy, Maisky is still intact, his staff has been riddled. A. Shuster, one of the embassy's secretaries is being held in Russia. The naval attaché, Antipa-Chikunsky; the military attaché A. K. Sirkov, and Ivan Cherny have been "recalled." Sirkov and Cherny were appointed in Putna's place. The arrest of Yurenev, one of Litvinov's most intimate friends raises of course the question of Litvinov's impending demise. A persistent rumor is circulating in the European press that a Moscow trial of ambassadors is now in preparation. It is said that Yurenev, Karsky, Krestinsky and Antonov-Ovseyenko have already "confessed."

Economic Crisis Grows With More Lay-Offs And Rising Cost Of Living

(Continued from page 1)

1929, crash. Seventy so-called representative industrial issues are down 100 points from the 1929 high, after having recorded a recovery of 30 points in 1937, according to the New York Herald-Tribune stock market chart of November 22. Leading railroad stocks have shown similar losses.

(8) Construction contracts have decreased in thirty-seven States in October as compared with the corresponding month of 1936, according to the Herald-Tribune index, and cotton sales slumped more than 100,000 bales in one month.

(9) All the large commercial banks have reported a halt in the demand for business expansion loans. Instead of extending credits the banks, to build up earnings assets, are purchasing Federal securities. This is the procedure followed by these institutions during the entire period of the last crisis.

(10) The National public debt, totaling more than 37 billion dollars is 20 billions higher than in 1932 and the government is increasing its monetary gold stocks, apparently in anticipation of inflation measures.

(11) Always ready to make the workers pay, the powerful industrial corporations have launched new drives to cut wages, increase hours and establish company unions. As a result, strikes have multiplied and militant trade unions are fighting with their backs to the wall before the savage onslaughts of Big Business.

(12) Department of Commerce figures show a slump in exports to China, Japan, Spain and other countries.

The foreign summary, while reflecting the seriousness of the situation, does not, of course tell the whole story.

Repetition of 1929

In 1932 the Democrats blamed the economic cataclysm, which brought distress to one-third of the nation's population, upon the Hoover administration and Franklin D. Roosevelt, then governor, promised a "New Deal" for the "forgotten man." Now, after four years of the "New Deal", America's workers and farmers are facing under Roosevelt almost a repetition of the bitter days of 1929-33. The "forgotten man" has been forgotten with a vengeance.

Mindful that statistics make very dull reading they are, nevertheless, necessary in any candid study of economic conditions and since activity in heavy industry serves as a barometer for judging trade gains or sluggishness, it is vital to make at least a brief survey of that sphere of opera-

tions.

The United States Iron and Steel Institute estimated on November 22 that steel ingot production was at 33 per cent of capacity.

The Iron Age of the same date pointed out... "that the automobile industry upon which the steel industry's hopes had been pinned for many weeks is not only taking less steel but its December production schedules have been revised downward to an extent that promises little aid for the mills unless orders should be placed sometime next month for January shipment." This blunt announcement foretells layoffs for thousands in the steel and auto plants in the East and Middle Western States, in addition to the 200,000 already dropped from the payrolls.

Ingot production has dropped from 4,543,246 tons in October, 1936, to 3,392,691 tons for the same month this year. Shipments of the United States Steel Corp. have been cut from 1,007,417 tons in October, 1936, to 792,310 in October last. And now a glance at conditions in the country's light industry.

Cost of Living Rises

According to the cost of living index of the National Industrial Conference Board, all items entering into the cost of living have advanced from the depression low of 71.5 in April, 1933 to 89.5, an increase of 18 points or 25 per cent. In this index the 1923 costs are used as a base of reference.

The cost of living index has five component parts, namely, food, housing, clothes, fuel and light, and sundries.

The cost of fuel and light has gone up about 1 per cent in the four-and-a-half-year period. The next smallest increase has been in sundries, a rise of 9.8 per cent.

In this period the cost of clothing in the family budget has jumped 30 per cent. The next largest increase in the cost of living subdivisions has been in rent. Taking the period from April, 1933, to October, 1937, the cost of housing has gone up 40 per cent.

Most striking of the increases in the essentials of life has been in food. At the high point for the business recovery, attained in May, 1937, the cost of food increased 42.8 per cent.

The index of the Department of Labor throws more light on how the cost of living has risen under the Roosevelt Administration, with, by no means, a proportionate rise in wages.

Higher Prices Coming

From March 15, 1933 until Oct. 12, 1937, the department's food

index has gone up 42 per cent. The index shows that the price of eggs has increased 90 per cent in this period. The cost of meat is up 70 per cent. Cereal and bakery products, at retail, are 36.6 per cent higher. Fruits and vegetables have increased 8 per cent and sugar and sweets are up 17.4 per cent.

With prices still rising, the public debt mounting, unemployment growing and Big Business demanding a reduction on the profits and other taxes, the government has taken preliminary steps for further devaluation of the dollar, if necessary. The consequence would be still higher prices, a slash in real wages and another blow to the workers' living standard.

On November 22, the U. S. Treasury reported monetary gold stocks of \$12,789,000,000 as compared with \$11,127,000,000, for the same date last year, indicating the government's inclination to amass the metal as a forerunner to possible devaluation of the currency.

Insistence by Wall Street upon the special session of Congress for a slash in taxes on corporation profits has quickly borne results. In his message to Congress, Roosevelt made it plain that government projects and home relief funds would be cut drastically and that the jobless and their families would be thrown upon the mercies of local charities and private business.

Big Business Reassured

Senate Democratic Leader Barkley announced on November 24 that "we will pass a tax revision bill before corporations have to file their returns on March 15." This statement carried double assurance that the government intended to raise its revenues by means that would be satisfactory to Finance Capital—means that, inevitably, would be against the interests of the masses of the people.

While thus reassuring Big Business, the Roosevelt Administration still seeks to hold the confidence of misled workers and farmers. Accordingly, Roosevelt has drafted a renovated "New Deal" program, which boasts a Wages and Hours Bill and a "crop control" plan.

The Wages and Hours Bill, if enacted into law, will be used as a bludgeon over the workers, even as is the Wagner Act today. Bosses may utilize the spread-work and hour-reduction legislation to slash wages and inaugurate the new speed-up methods. The law may culminate into another share-the-misery program, as first introduced by Walter C. Teagle of Standard Oil during the early days of the last crisis.

As to the crop control program, it is sheer insanity. Cotton and grain products would be curtailed or plantations levelled. Crops would be destroyed at a time when millions face hunger and many, utter starvation. While some farmers, especially those owning their own farms would benefit by the government aid and a slight increase in the price for raw material, the reduced output would offer the big manufacturers a golden opportunity to skyrocket prices and swell profits at the expense of the consumers.

It is patent that the flimsy patch-work legislation proposed by the administration will neither solve the new crisis nor make easier a severe winter for the nation's toilers.

(Wall Street's view of the economic situation will be dealt with in a forthcoming article).

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