

# RUSSIA TO-DAY

By

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*Speaking from 3YA on September 17, Mr. Lawn sought to dispel some of the popular fallacies concerning Soviet Russia, and in the course of his remarks described that great State as it really is. He delivered a thought-provoking lecture which we publish herewith in full.*

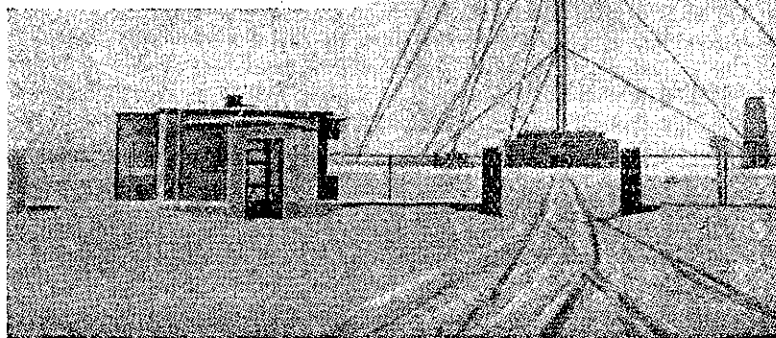
WRITING of Russia in September, 1925, Mr. J. M. Keynes, the noted English economist, said: "It is extraordinarily difficult to be fair-minded about Russia. . . . A fog of prejudice separates us from what is going on in the other world where the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics rules and experiments and evolves a kind of order." Another writer, a former member of the Rhineland Commission, concludes an account of his visit to Russia two years later with these words: "The picture of Soviet Russia in the minds of ninety-nine out of a hundred people is out of date. Since 1919 most of us have read the news of Russia with a bloody picture of the revolution in our minds, and, skimming the details, have interpreted what we read in terms of those dramatic words which issued from that revolution—Bolshevism, Communism, Proletariat, Red Army, and so on. Most of our knowledge of Russia simply isn't so to-day. It is a country with immense possibilities and a wonderful future."

Anyone who has noted from time to time the information about Russia that has appeared in our own daily newspapers and in our reputable magazines, must have been struck by the amazing contradictions in successive reports and the way in which prophecy after prophecy has been disproved by actual events. Most exaggerated statements have been made from time to time about the certain failure of the revolution, the dreadful conditions of widespread oppression and slavery, and the impossibility of successful reconstruction of the country. We have gradually come to regard any statements about Russia with an attitude of suspicion, and the more alarming the prophecy, the more we are inclined to disregard it.

Gradually there is emerging from the fog of prejudice and ignorance a body of well-attested evidence of trained investigators who describe various aspects of life in Russia in an objective and impartial way. Some excellent books are coming to hand, and valuable articles are appearing from time to time in various scientific magazines. I have just been glancing over the titles of a few of the books and articles that have come under my personal notice lately and append a list.

Reading the accounts of these impartial investigations one cannot help being struck by the remarkable progress that is being made not only in the economic reconstruction of Russia but also in the remoulding of social, political and religious institutions. John Dewey, one of the most able writers on education, describes these changes as "the most profound and extensive revolution humanity has ever known." There is no doubt that the changes taking place in Russia are going to play an important part in human progress. There are many people who still think of Soviet Russia as a sinister, evil, disruptive force, and fear the effects of its successful development.

*Snow a foot deep lies under the aerials of Warsaw's wonder station—a giant with a power thirty-two times that of 2YA. The systematic development of radio is part of the Five Year Plan.*



Personally, I believe that out of the widespread turmoil and disorder and economic depression that now prevails, there will emerge a new world civilisation richer than any in the past. I have a profound faith in the ability of the human race to raise itself to higher and higher levels of moral, cultural and material welfare. We have to think in terms of change and endeavour to direct inevitable changes along paths of orderly reconstruction by intelligent co-operation. Thinking along these lines, one finds an inexhaustible field of interest in the study of Russian conditions.

**B**UT apart altogether from what we might call the purely academic attitude of mind that finds interest in the study itself, it is of practical importance that we should try to formulate clear ideas about Russia based on reliable information. As citizens of a democratic country, we help to shape the foreign policy of our Government through our direct and indirect influence on our legislators. Diplomatic and trade relations with Russia must enter into that policy, and wise statesmanship is largely dependent on an intelligent and well-informed people.

To interpret Russia, it is well to contrast the present conditions with those of pre-revolution days and consider the stages through which the people have passed since then. The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (U.S.S.R.) covers an area of approximately one-sixth of the land surface of the globe. It contains 182 nationalities, speaking 149 different languages. It has a population of 160 millions, increasing faster than that of all the rest of Europe combined. In the days of the Tsars the great mass of the people were illiterate peasants, subjected to cruel oppression and miserable conditions.

In contrast to the misery, squalor and ignorance of the masses were the (Continued on page 30A)