

didates in proportion to his surplus: i.e., if the quota is 10,000, and his surplus is 2,000, then each of the remaining candidates gets one-fifth of whatever second preferences have been recorded for him on the successful man's papers. Usually a second man will be elected in this way. Then the man at the bottom of the list will be eliminated and *his* second preferences distributed: and so on, until all the seats have been filled.

This third system is the most practical immediate proposal in relation to conditions in Britain, for ensuring democratic representation in Parliament corresponding to the wishes of the electorate. It would provide the most favourable conditions for the return of a stable Labour and progressive majority in Parliament in the next elections and for the establishment of a stable Government upon that basis.

Constitutional changes in the U.S.S.R.

by JAMES FOX

BY two amendments to the 1936 Soviet Constitution of the U.S.S.R., the Supreme Soviet on February 1, 1944, granted to the sixteen main constituent Republics (the Union Republics) of the U.S.S.R. the right to form military formations, and to enter into direct relations with foreign states and to conclude agreements with them. To the citizens of a country which refused to grant home rule to Ireland while fighting one war, and is refusing even Dominion status to India while fighting another, these may seem remarkable enough concessions. To Soviet citizens they are logical developments of the policy of a socialist state which included in its first constitution the right of its members to secede, and which, in less than a quarter of a century, has turned the tsarist "prison house of nations" into a brotherhood of peoples.

The necessary amendments to the Constitution to give effect to the new rights were moved by the Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, V. M. Molotov. He said that the change was only possible because of the political, economic and cultural growth of the Republics on which the new powers were being conferred, and because of the strength of the Soviet Union as a whole. It was a

great sign of confidence to initiate these changes in the midst of war, when "the forces of our people are so greatly strained and when not every State would venture to undertake such important transformations."

On the question of allowing the Union Republics their own foreign representation, Comrade Molotov recalled that before the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was constituted in 1923, certain of the republics which formed it (R.S.F.S.R., Ukraine, Byelorussia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaidjan) had previously had separate representation, and that at the time when their powers were consolidated into one People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, Stalin said: "I do not preclude the possibility that subsequently we may have to separate certain Commissariats which we are now merging in the Union of Republics." In the years of war the international connections of the Soviet Union have risen to a higher level, continued Molotov. The foundation for the co-operation of the large and small democratic countries was laid at Moscow and Teheran. Since the Union Republics have a number of specific economic and cultural requirements which cannot be covered in full measure by All-Union representation,

the new step is in the interests not only of them, but also of the general strengthening of Soviet co-operation with other States. Molotov quoted speeches by Marshal Stalin on two important occasions—the 1936 Constitution, and the twenty-sixth anniversary of the Revolution, in 1943—where he instanced the national policy of the U.S.S.R. as one of its greatest successes, and closed by calling this further extension of rights to free national development an important blow to Fascism, which must be defeated not only in the military, but also in the moral and political field.

The legal change in the Constitution necessary to give effect to the above decisions is the transformation of the People's Commissariats for Defence and for Foreign Affairs from All-Union into Union-Republican Commissariats. The U.S.S.R. is a federal state, consisting now of sixteen Union Republics, which carry out all functions of government not reserved to the central government. Article 14 of the 1936 Constitution lists twenty-three subjects, such as foreign affairs, defence, foreign trade, planning of national economy, and other economic and legal functions, which are reserved to the central government. Article 15 states "the sovereignty of the Union Republics is restricted only within the limits set forth in Article 14." The link with the central government is maintained in various ways:—

(a) Certain subjects, such as foreign trade, railways and other communications, heavy industry in its various branches, come under All - Union People's Commissariats, situated in Moscow and dealing with the whole country. (b) Certain other subjects, such as agriculture, light industry, finance, public health, justice, are governed by Union-Republican Commissariats, also situated in Moscow, but exercising their powers through Union-Republican People's Commis-

sariats of the same name functioning in the sixteen Republics. These last are each responsible to its own Republican government and also linked to the Union-Republican People's Commissariat in Moscow, which is thus able to co-ordinate their activities.

The constitutional amendments of February, 1944, transform the People's Commissariats of Defence and of Foreign Affairs from All-Union (class (a)) to Union-Republican (class (b)) People's Commissariats. That is to say, there will be a Union-Republican People's Commissariat of Defence in Moscow charged with "the establishment of the directing principles of the organisation of military formations of the Union Republics," and sixteen Union-Republican People's Commissariats of Defence in Kiev, Tbilisi, Erivan, etc., and also working with the Union-Republican People's Commissariat of Defence in Moscow. Similarly, the Union-Republican People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs in Moscow is charged with "the establishment of the general character of relations between the Union Republics and foreign states," and is linked with the Republican governments in the same way.

The full meaning of this interaction between All-Union and Republican organs of government can only be understood when it is realised that the Constitution of the Soviet Union differs from that of Britain in an important respect; whereas in Britain local authorities, from the largest County Council to the smallest Parish Council, can only engage in activities which are specifically enjoined upon or permitted to them by statute, in the constitutions of the U.S.S.R. and of the Union Republics certain powers only are reserved for the higher organs of government, and any not so reserved are within the competence of the lower organs.

The devolution of further powers from the All-Union to the Union-Republican governments is thus fully within the tradition of Soviet government, which is based on the policy of "activisation"—that is, of drawing in and giving as much responsibility as possible to every citizen of the U.S.S.R. On the economic side, it has been possible to give more and more financial autonomy to local authorities because the backward areas, the old tsarist "colonies," have been levelled up by the initial policy of special assistance from federal funds; the Five Year Plans have spread industrialisation to some of the remotest parts of the country. It has now become possible for Union-Republican and local authorities to rely more and more on resources accumulated within their own borders. Through a policy of regionalisation agriculture is largely in the hands of local authorities in its administrative and financial aspects. It is incorrect to picture the U.S.S.R. as subject to rigid centralised control, though naturally, since the U.S.S.R. is a socialist country, the existence of planning and absence of conflicts of interests will lead to a general harmony and uniformity of policy.

The socialist nature of the Soviet system is often forgotten by foreign commentators, and though the reactions of the British press to the constitutional changes were almost uniformly favourable, some misconceptions crept in because this socialist character was ignored. For instance, the *News-Chronicle* (February 3, 1944) welcomed the "wider development of economic, social and cultural individualities in the Union Republics," and greeted the "new policy" as "the outcome of immense confidence on the part of Russia's rulers." *The Times* (February 4, 1944) also referred to "a fresh sign of confidence in the loyalty and the development of the non-Russian republics." The *Manchester*

Guardian complimented "the leader of the Russian Revolution, who has done for Russia what Augustus did for the Roman world when it had been brought to the verge of ruin by the civil wars." All, however, expressed a certain amount of uneasiness about the external effects of the change, though not all were as crude as the *Financial News*, which feared that the granting of "Dominion status" (*sic*) "might be interpreted as indicating a desire for further Dominions." Reports received in this country from the American press concentrate on the external effects—though the ignoring of the internal significance of the changes is strange from a country which is so insistent on "states' rights" that Congress hesitates to infringe them by allowing soldiers to vote. The New York correspondent of the *Daily Express* (February 3, 1944) remarks: "At the worst it is interpreted as power politics, with the eventual purpose of absorbing the reconquered countries into a Soviet Empire." The wilful inaccuracy of attributing imperialist motives to a socialist country is only paralleled by the delightful *naivete* of Mr. Walter Lippmann, who, writing in the *Sunday Times* of February 6, 1944, welcomed the decentralisation of the U.S.S.R. into a "federation of national republics," because it would then be "a more complex, and therefore a more cumbersome, and therefore a more comfortable political system to deal with." A companion picture to Mr. Lippmann's dream of the Union Republics' policy shooting off at such tangents that "Marsal Stalin's . . . political power will be diluted, because of the need to consult," is given by "A Student of Russia" in the *Manchester Evening News* of February 7, 1944; he weeps crocodile tears because "it is unthinkable that Soviet Georgia, for instance, should be able to imitate Eire and refuse to enter the war together with the rest of Russia."

"A Student of Russia" appears to be so little a student of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that he is unable to draw the lesson from Soviet policy towards the nationalities: a Socialist government would consider it had failed in its duty if an important constituent republic was unwilling to come in on the side of justice.

But, after all, the main question is, not what foreign dollar-a-liners think of Soviet policy, but what is the view of those most closely concerned, the Soviet people. Lacis, Deputy of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic, told the Supreme Soviet how at the request of Latvian patriots a Latvian Infantry Division was formed in August, 1941. The value of foreign representation is shown, continued Lacis, by the need to deal with people like Bilmanis, former Latvian Minister in U.S.A.,

who "abuses the hospitality of the great Trans-Atlantic power" by extolling the Latvian quisling General Dankers. A Ukrainian Deputy, Grechuka, President of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukraine, said that the Ukraine's "geographical situation and, above all, its economic importance, makes constant attention and extreme vigilance necessary, not only as regards its immediate neighbours, but also certain states much further away, whose wolfish appetites have always been whetted, and will be whetted again, at the sight of the Soviet Ukraine." Paleckis, Deputy of the Lithuanian S.S.R., summed up the Soviet attitude in a sentence: "We people of the young Soviet Republics are in a better position than anyone else to appraise the genuine independence which every Republic of the Soviet Union enjoys."

Town Planning

by Dr. H. S. PHILLIPS

THE apparent opposition between town and country has always interested students of urban planning. It is more than ever important today to realise that the more the "town" is socially and scientifically urbanised, and the more the "country" is properly developed agriculturally, by so much the more will the two tend to become unified.

Town and country will become more unified, not by artificial attempts to "ruralise" towns or to "industrialise" villages, but precisely by their own evolution to a higher stage of development. This evolution cannot be completed within an urban and rural economic structure founded on the continuation of unbridled private enterprise and ownership. Private land ownership makes the planned social development of the modern town virtually impossible due to legal and compensation problems. The private ownership of both land and factories

cramps agricultural potentialities and leads to slum-ridden, unplanned and ever-growing urban masses.

In appreciating the comparatively scientific conclusions which are drawn in the recent (Abercrombie) L.C.C. plan, the above observations need to be remembered. Professor Abercrombie appears to be an exponent of what, in technical language, can aptly be called "sub-centralisation,"—that is, the re-development of new planned centres of activity *within* the present built-up area. This policy stands out in opposition to "de-centralisation" as* this concept has come to be linked with "dispersal," which implies development away from or *outside* the pre-

* This terminology can be so confusing that I prefer to treat de-centralisation as dispersal throughout. It should be pointed out, however, that the Barlow Report and Abercrombie would refer to the L.C.C. plan as de-centralisation *as opposed to* dispersal.