

Salting away anti-Soviet myths: the

Every now and then there appear letters in your paper arguing the pros and cons of the Soviet system of government as compared to the Western, or shall we say the American system. It seems to me that many of these letters are lacking rather seriously in a number of ways. More often

than not they are politically motivated and are thus based more on emotion than on fact. Also, it seems rather strange that most people make such com-

parisons completely out of context of the historical frame of reference. For the benefit of your readers, let me make a few points.

Prior to the first world war, the czarist holy Russian empire ranked with the most backward, corrupt, illiterate and oppressive countries in the world. Further to this, with the help of the British, French, Canadian and US troops, who were sent there in a last valiant attempt to perpetuate this holy Russian empire, the revolution ruined what little industrial

base there was, to the extent that in 1921, Soviet Russia had to start essentially from scratch.

At that time, the USA was already well on the way to becoming a powerful and dominant industrial power.

Then came the second world war. The Soviet industrial base in the European part of the Soviet Union was reduced to rubble and over 20 million of its people lost their lives. This population loss is nearly as great as the present population of Canada. Countless others were injured. On the other hand, the US industry came through the war unscathed. Indeed, in some respects the US benefitted from it. Witness the increase in the US gold reserves in the course of that war.

In this context, it would seem reasonable to expect the Soviet economy to be lacking in some respects. Witness even today the rather low male to female ratio in its population, a situation that is a direct consequence of the second world war.

Be that as it may, it is of some interest to compare the production figures for some commodities in the two countries. Unfortunately, the most recent figures available to the writer are from the 1978 United Nations Statistical Yearbook, but it is expected that if anything, more recent figures would place the Soviet Union in a more favorable light.

In millions of tons, the production figures for some agricultural commodities and some other soft goods in the Soviet Union for 1978 are as follows, with the comparable US production figures given in brackets: barley 62.10 (9.74); corn 9.00 (179.89); cotton 2.64 (2.36);

eggs 3.54 (3.96); milk 94.50 (55.31); oats 18.50 (8.65); potatoes 85.90 (16.36); rice 2.10 (6.25); soybeans 0.68 (50.15); wheat 120.80 (48.95); wool 0.46 (0.05); fish 9.35 (3.10); beef and veal 7.10 (11.30); pork 5.1 (6.1); mutton and lamb 0.89 (0.16); butter 1.48 (0.49); cheese 1.52 (1.91); sugar 8.89 (5.52); silk 43.67 (0.00) million square meters.

In millions of head, the domestic animal population in 1978 was as follows, again with the comparable figures for the US in brackets: cattle 112.69 (116.27); sheep 141.03 (12.39); pigs 70.51 (56.58); horses 5.82 (9.55); asses and mules 0.49 (0.005).

A couple of observations may

commodity.

But a comparison of agricultural production in the two countries may not be all that relevant, for this depends rather heavily on the amount of arable land in the two countries, on the latitudes in which this land is located, on the quality of this land, and on the climate. So let us take a quick glance at a comparison of some production figures in other industries.

In millions of tons, the production figures for some industries in the Soviet Union for the year 1977, with the comparable figures for the US again given in brackets, are as follows: coal, including brown coal and lignite, 663.28 (630.29);

... in 1977 the Soviet Union produced 14.32 million tons of salt as compared to the US production of 38.95 million tons. Further, the US has been producing consistently more salt than the Soviet

Union. The first is that Soviet grain production has approximately doubled since the days of the holy Russian empire. Another point is that 1978 was a better than average year for the production of wheat in the Soviet Union. But having said that, it is of interest to note that over the past decade, the average Soviet wheat production has been running at about double the average production in the US. And yet the Soviet Union continues to import other large quantities of this

petroleum 545.80 (402.49); iron ore 131.42 (35.04); bauxite 4.60 (2.46); copper 1.10 (1.30); nickel ore 0.168 (0.013); pig iron 107.39 (75.40); steel 146.68 (113.70); cement 127.06 (72.63); magnesium 0.065 (0.032); zinc 0.72 (0.41); asbestos 2.46 (0.092); salt 14.32 (38.95); diamonds 9.9 (0.0) million metric carats.

Viewed in the historical frame of reference, it would have to be conceded that the Soviet Union has accomplished a monumental task and has laid to



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