

Obsession with Socialism

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I AM attempting underneath to answer some of Anant R.S.'s criticism (*RJH* II: 1-2, June-September, 1987) by quoting an article from the December 1987 issue of the Russian magazine *Sputnik*. The journal comments: "Problems posed by health service [in Soviet Union] of late have come in for criticism. The truth is that the health service has been obsessed by the quantity of services [the widely available and almost free medical care referred to by Anant] rather than quality of these services." Anant's reference to "these stupid civilisations [of capitalist countries] spending more on health-care" can be well answered by the *Sputnik* article and I quote "Health service has been dominated by conservatism in economic management, thus creating serious problems". Further, the article says, "the success stories of principles of medical aid as practised in USSR should not be ignored. But what was good yesterday will not necessarily be found satisfactory tomorrow". As for Anant's attempt to locate "the indicator to find out what percentage of medical needs are being met and in what manner", the *Sputnik* article has quoted the USSR Minister of Public Health as saying, "we will dismiss specialists for whom medicine has been a random choice of career and who refuse to treat the job seriously". (And this, Anant, in spite of the Soviet Union's population of 1.2 million doctors—the largest number as compared to any country in the world.)

In the words of Anant: "A rough opinion in a proper direction is better than a precise obsessed opinion in a wrong direction." The "information" needed to "draw valid conclusions" is well provided in the *Sputnik* article: "By 1990 almost a million people will have died of lung cancer in the USSR and most of these smokers". (So much for the healthy

Soviet way of life as compared to the unhealthy American way of life.)

With reference to the "wrong work environment and wrong social environment", Anant should note the following sentences in the *Sputnik* article: "A quarter of water supply is without adequate cleansing"; "from 1965 to 1985 the incidence of lung cancer doubled in Soviet Union"; "forty per cent of sixteen-year olds smoke"; and "medical specialists pay little attention to the propagation of a healthy way of life as a whole".

In the end, I would like to quote five more sentences from the *Sputnik* article to start, if possible, another 'Dialogue':

- (1) "In Soviet Union, it is intended, by ^{to increase} ~~to double~~ the volume of Pay Services available."
- (2) "It is worth considering the question of large enterprises or big organisations paying at least partly for the treatment of their employees (workers)."
- (3) "It would be just to levy a specific tax on smoking. Such additional charge (income) could be used for the treatment of smoking related diseases."
- (4) "The present situation [in the Soviet Union] can no longer be tolerated by the party, the government and the people. Nor indeed by us in the medical profession."
- (5) "The patient should also have a right to choose a doctor whom he trusts?"

The Soviet Union is restructuring all spheres of its economy, culture and life. It is high time Anant also 'restructured' his obsessions. Remember, all that glitters is not gold.

(Contd from page 107)

10 samples but also from the discussion with the centre workers about their methodology. Therefore, it cannot be proved with the number of drop outs that once they realise the problems they are no more interested in it.

The follow-up monitoring is done to note down the problems but with little care of the clients. The problems such as amenorrhoea are found to be frequent, but the tendency of the centre is to justify the problem rather than giving remedies for it.

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