

COMRADE STALIN ON HOW TO TEACH

Comrade Stalin related the story of his first attendance at a study circle for propagandists. He was between seventeen and eighteen years of age and, therefore, the old propagandists subjected him to careful scrutiny.

After attending the circle meeting, he was convinced that the teaching was being conducted in too boring and uninteresting a fashion for the workers, that the workers were not being drawn into the discussion of the problems. The material studied was a textbook on political economy. The circle leader dealt first with the clan system, then with the slave-holding system, then with feudalism, and finally with the capitalist system.

Although the circle leader knew his subject, the lesson was dry and dull.

Comrade Stalin proposed a slightly different approach to the matter and put forward his own plan of study, which he proceeded to follow.

At the first lesson, Comrade Stalin posed the following question before the students: "Why are we poor?" The workers themselves, who had to answer this question, began to think aloud. "Why are we poor?" "Because we possess no capital." "Why do we possess no capital, while the merchants and manufacturers do?" The workers became interested, and were drawn into the discussion. When, at the end of the lesson, Comrade Stalin summarized the problem and drew his conclusions, much that they had been told before became clear to them. The workers then understood the problem, and saw clearly the mechanics of capitalist society, of the exploitation of the working people, and of the way surplus value was wrung from them.

At the second lesson, Comrade Stalin faced the circle members with the following question: "Why are we without rights?" The workers became interested in the problem, began to discuss it and pursued their discussion for several hours, clearing up their understanding of the political oppression that existed in Tsarist Russia.

At the third lesson, Comrade Stalin faced the circle members with the following question: "How are poverty and disfranchisement to be destroyed?" Comrade Stalin told the workers of the tactics and methods of the proletarian revolutionary struggle. All this stimulated the interest of the circle members. The workers understood why it was necessary to have a knowledge of the past in order to understand the present, why it was necessary to understand the origin of classes. The lessons helped the workers to master the laws of social development and of the rise and fall of classes.