

The decided betterment in the living conditions of the agricultural population brought about a sharp decline in the death rate of the rural population since the revolution. Thus, the death rate in rural districts amounted to 28.6 per 1,000 persons in 1911-13, to 21.7 in 1926, to 21.8 in 1927, and to 18.7 in 1928.

Even more clearly is this process of the improvement in the conditions of the great mass of the peasantry illustrated by the decided reduction in the infant mortality rate. During the period 1911-13, in the European part of the empire, the infant mortality rate (for infants up to one year old) was 266 per 1,000; in 1926 the infant mortality rate among the rural population was 174, in 1928—156. The foregoing figures bespeak a considerable betterment in the standards of living of the village masses, resulting in a notable decline in deaths among infants, in increased longevity, and in a corresponding gain in the natural growth of the population. In 1911-13 the annual natural growth in population amounted to 16.9 per 1,000, in 1926 it reached 24 for the village population, and in 1928—26.3.

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Along with the general growth of agricultural production, the great mass of the peasantry, the poor and middle groups, were confronted, in all its magnitude, with the problem of the conditions which would enable them to progress to the higher level of socialized production.

The more rapid development of production for sale signified the taking advantage of market conditions by the larger producers primarily. This is clearly brought out by a comparison of the results accomplished by the various groups of peasants: