

SOVIET DEMOCRACY

Principles and Practice

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SOCIALIST PEOPLE'S POWER: PRACTICAL PREREQUISITES

Every state, like every man, has its biography, which is called history and which begins, like a human biography, with its birth. The Soviet state, now known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, came into being on October 25 (November 7—new calendar), 1917, as a result of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia.

The state of the working people had to overcome formidable difficulties and withstand severe trials as it matured and gained strength. Ever since its birth innumerable comments have been made on the fact of its emergence and on the revolution that gave life to it. Some of these comments are emotionally coloured, inaccurate and downright biased. Many are objective, like this one by the noted British historian Edward Carr, who said about the October Revolution that "... it was one of the great turning-points in history, comparable with the French revolution and perhaps surpassing it in significance."¹

¹ E. H. Carr, *Studies in Revolution*, The Universal Library, N.Y., 1964, p. 210.

The socialist revolution in Russia, headed by the party of Lenin, was accomplished by the working people in their own interests. The landlords, factory owners, tsarist officialdom and all other oppressors were ousted and power was placed where it belonged – in the hands of the working man.

The working people became the common owner of the wealth of the country, including everything created by their labour. In other words, private ownership was replaced by public ownership. The new character of property presupposed a new character of its administration.

The previous revolutions, even historically important ones, had given little to the masses of working people without whose participation they could not have been carried out. At any rate, immediately upon its coming to power the new exploiting class had invariably seen to it that the working people would not be able to exert any appreciable influence on the political life of their country.

A socialist revolution involves vast numbers of people in the conscious making of history. Freeing them from oppression, it brings them into political life, getting them to participate in the discussion and solution of problems of state-wide importance. Formerly downtrodden and deprived of all rights, the working man becomes an active participant in the revolutionary process, aware of his social importance.

The Principal Tasks of People's Power

The people of Russia were the first in the world not only to accomplish a socialist revolution but also to embark on the building of a new system, a new democratic society.

The working class with its political vanguard, the Communist Party, became the bearer of this democracy. Expressing the will and interests of all the working people, the proletariat resolutely removed everything that hindered the difficult pioneering job of building socialism. This involved, first of all, suppressing the class enemies of the working people, the exploiters, who refused to relinquish their power, profits and privileges without a fight. It was a matter of life or death for the new-born socialist state.

The proletarian state can accomplish the tasks involved in the struggle against its enemies and construction work only through the organized efforts of the working class and the peasantry, i.e., through promoting democratic action. The struggle against the enemies of the new system, however vitally important, is of a temporary character, whereas construction is the main, long-term aim of the new power.

The revolutionary state builds the national economy of the republic and a fundamentally new system of economic relations which become the material basis for its consolidation. It plans socialist production and exercises control over the measure of labour and the measure of consumption. Its leaders act, not arbitrarily, but on behalf and on the authority of the collective owner of the land, factories, machines, etc., that is, the people. The public system of organization and management of the national economy is an essential condition of government by the people.

Another condition without which socialist democracy is unthinkable is the constitutionally guaranteed right of every able-bodied person to work and to be accordingly remunerated. This is the basis of socialist equality.

The establishment of socialist economic relations proceeded alongside the establishment of new relations between people and new legal norms.

The hierarchy of social estates was replaced by revolutionary equality: by a special decree all the residents of the country were declared to be citizens of the Russian Republic. The church was separated from the state, and the school from the church. Religion became the private concern of each person. Women were finally made fully equal to men. All the peoples of the former Russian empire, big and small, received equal rights.

All the class privileges that had restricted access to cultural activities were abolished. The schools, institutions of higher learning, libraries, and museums threw open their doors to the working people so that they could equip themselves with all knowledge necessary for the building of a new life. The spelling out, by a worker or peasant, of "We are not slaves" on the blackboard meant that his illiteracy both political and otherwise had ended.

There were many fortresses, some of which were taken by assault while others surrendered only after a long siege. Socialism cannot be built in a vacuum, without using the achievements of the material and spiritual culture of the preceding social system, the products of the labour and intelligence of countless generations of working people. But there is a heritage which must be renounced, although this cannot be done overnight. The callous "mine" was gradually giving way to "ours". The principle "self comes first" was retreating under the pressure of collectivism. Man's social, economic and spiritual emancipation made possible the gradual elimination of selfishness, national strife and many other ugly products of the age-old reign of social injustice.

In the meantime, socialism had to use the forces and material that were "at hand" while building and learning at the same time.

Encircled as it was by capitalism, socialism had to establish itself quickly and fundamentally. Its democratic system, which was to hasten the development of new social relations, had to accord with the new conditions of production.

It is in place to note here that socialist democracy is not established by an act of willpower. Its formation is an objective process whose course and character depend on the internal and external conditions of the life of the country. A description of these conditions, if only a general one, will help towards a better understanding of the nature of the new democracy, the character of the socialist system.

The Reference Point

The new-born Soviet state had to fight against fearful odds.

The year 1913 is often chosen as the reference point for making a comparative analysis of the economic development of the Soviet Union. True, sometimes this incurs the reproach that the reference to 1913 is made to exaggerate the economic achievements of socialism. The reproach is unjust. 1913 was the last year of peace in the history of pre-revolutionary Russia. The country had reached its highest stage of development, although inconsiderable compared to other countries. Despite its vast size Russia's industrial potential ranked fifth in the world and fourth in Europe. Its stock of implements of production equalled one-fourth, one-

fifth and one-tenth of that in Britain, Germany and the United States, respectively. Russian-made goods accounted for a little over four per cent of the industrial output of the world, and the volume of its industrial production equalled 12.5 per cent of that of the United States and less than one-third of that of Germany or Britain.

It may sound unbelievable, but in Russia, with its tremendous stocks of minerals, the factories of the capital city of Petrograd imported coal from Britain, phosphates from Morocco and potassium from Germany. Sometimes even stone was imported. For instance, the façades in the capital's Nevsky Prospekt were lined with sandstone from the Rhine and the Teatralnaya Square in Moscow was paved with blocks from Sweden.

Underdeveloped as it was, this economy inherited by the young Soviet state in the last years of the First World War was ravaged during the civil war and foreign military intervention launched against it. The severity of the dislocation can be seen from the fact that in 1920 heavy industry output was one-seventh and agricultural output almost one-half of the 1913 figures. The rouble depreciated to 1/13,000 of its prewar value. The loss of human lives exceeded 20 million. Such were the results of the imperialist policy of remapping the world, the results of the actions of internal and external counter-revolution.

After visiting Russia in 1920 the English writer Herbert Wells wrote: "It was not communism that plunged this huge, creaking, bankrupt empire into six years of exhausting war. It was European imperialism. Nor is it communism that has pestered this suffering and perhaps, dying Russia with a series of subsidized raids, invasions, and insurrec-

tions, and inflicted upon it an atrocious blockade." ¹

In short, if 1920 and not 1913 is taken as the reference point, the historical truth will be revealed with tragic clarity: socialist construction was started practically from zero.

The Forerunner of Five-Year Plans

It was precisely at that time of severe trials that the Soviet state adopted a plan whose far-sightedness and realism were not readily appreciated by many. Known as the GOELRO plan, ² drawn up on the initiative of the founder of the Communist Party and the first socialist state, Vladimir Lenin, it was the forerunner of the future five-year plans. It opened up the prospect, unimaginable not only in Russia but even in economically advanced countries, of electrification of industrial development, of construction work unprecedented in scope and especially in pace.

The plan was dismissed in the West as utopian, "a gamble by the Soviets."

But it worked. What was achieved under the GOELRO plan became the basis for large-scale energy development. Its importance for the industrialization of the country, for its economic and social development cannot be overestimated.

¹ Herbert G. Wells, *Russia in the Shadows*, N.Y., George H. Doran Company, 1921, p. 37.

² GOELRO is the abbreviated name of the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia which worked out in 1920 a long-term plan for the electrification of the country and the first plan for the development of the national economy envisaging the creation of large-scale machine industry capable of reorganizing, on the basis of electrification, the whole of the national economy.

In 1975, the last year of the ninth five-year plan period, the Soviet power industry generated 1,038,000 million kilowatt-hours of electricity. In the current, tenth five-year period (1976-80) power production is to be brought to 1,340,000-1,380,000 million kilowatt-hours. The Unified Power Grid now being established in the USSR already covers a vast territory of 6.5 million square kilometres populated by about 200 million people.

But before the end of the plan a period of almost six decades will have elapsed, not long by historical standards but packed with spectacular achievements, marked at every stage by the revolutionary energy of the masses who realize that they are working for themselves. The new power generated by emancipated labour refuted the prognostications of sceptics and ill-wishers.

The importance which was attached to the GOELRO plan is attested to by the following fact. To the GOELRO plan, drafted at a time when Lenin compared Russia to a man beaten within an inch of his life, was attached a drawing. In the centre of it was depicted a heart designated "electrification", and from it stretched lines to five squares identified as "food", "clothing", "housing", "culture", "transport".

In this way those who stood at the source of socialist economic planning showed the great importance attached to electrification.

The principles of systematic, proportionate development of socialist industry formulated in the GOELRO plan were made the basis of the first five-year plan for the Soviet Union's economic development which was adopted in 1928. Since then for half a century now, the words "five-year plan" have been known throughout the world as a synonym of Soviet economic achievements.

Chapters of a Great Book

The five-year plans are not only economic development programmes. Their provisions concern all areas of the life of society, culture included. The cultural revolution played a tremendous role in the realization of the first five-year plans.

Vladimir Lenin, who presided over many initiatives in the world's first socialist state, attached tremendous importance to the spiritual development of men of labour and held that the new society was in duty bound to pay them back the cultural debt of centuries. But such a debt could not be repaid to the workers without the help of the workers themselves. The organization of universal education in the country was not the concern of the intelligentsia alone. And if today 80 out of every 1,000 gainfully employed people in the country have a higher education and 739 an incomplete higher or secondary education, credit for this goes in equal measure to the workers, the peasants and the intelligentsia—to government of all the working people and for all the working people.

In 1923, a union called Down with Illiteracy was established. In 1929-30, schools to teach adults reading and writing were already attended by more than 32 million people.

The first generation of the Soviet intelligentsia made up of workers and peasants was born. More and more workers were able to use blueprints and calculations which a short while ago would have been incomprehensible to them.

Their labour and skill enabled the country to build the Dnieper hydropower station in the south of the USSR; the first auto works in Moscow; the giant, by the standards of the time, Magnitogorsk metallurgical combine in the Urals; and to work

the mines in the Kuznetsk coal basin in Siberia. To their energy and enthusiasm the country owes its accelerated programme of industrialization.

The combined pressure of the cultural revolution and industrialization succeeded in eliminating unemployment, this scourge of the working man in the capitalist world. The last labour exchange in the USSR was closed down at the end of 1930.

There is hardly any need to explain the importance of this victory won by the Soviet people's power. The reason the socialist state geared its economic development to industrialization can best be explained by Lenin's well-known statement: "In the last analysis, productivity of labour is the most important, the principal thing for the victory of the new social system... Communism is the higher productivity of labour—compared with that existing under capitalism—of voluntary, class-conscious and united workers employing advanced techniques."¹

Machines are the chief means of raising labour productivity. To build them a modern industry is needed. The classical capitalist method of industrialization—the development first of light industry followed by use of its accumulations—was not suited to the USSR, for it would have taken at least half a century.

The Soviet Union accomplished the task of industrialization, unparalleled in scope, by fulfilling the first, second and partly third five-year plans. (The realization of the third was interrupted by the war of 1941-45). What the West called the "Russian miracle" took place.

The "miracle" was worked by the labour of millions of people during the Soviet five-year plan periods. Each of them is remarkable in its own way.

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 29, p. 427.

Each bears the inimitable imprint of its time. Each is graven for ever in the memory of the people. And yet they are inseparable from each other.

Many years later, when the first five-year plans were already history, Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, called them remarkable chapters of a great book which bears testimony to the heroic labour of the Soviet people in the name of socialism and communism.

The Soviet economy is developing dynamically and stably. Having left behind many highly developed capitalist countries, the USSR is becoming an ever more serious economic competitor of the United States, the foremost industrial power of the world. It is the indisputable leader in the world in the extraction of oil and iron ore, the production of cast iron, steel, diesel and electric locomotives, cement, many foodstuffs, etc.

The young socialist state built its own motor vehicle, aviation, tractor, machine-tool and instrument-building industries, and branches of the chemical industry.

It also coped successfully with a formidable task of the socialist revolution after the conquest of power by the working class—the encouraging of millions of small-holding peasants to take the road of socialism. Already on the eve of the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany (1941-45) the collective farms, i.e., agricultural production co-operatives, united 96.9 per cent of peasant households.

The successes achieved in the course of socialist construction became the chief prerequisite of the victory over the aggressor. The new power had moulded people capable of winning the war. Heavy industry had supplied them with the required weapons.

One Hundred Nations and Nationalities—One People

The Russian Empire was called a prison-house of nations. The comparison was quite justified. The "aliens", as they were scornfully called even in official documents, not only were oppressed by the ruling classes, but suffered from national inequality. Prior to the October Revolution whole regions of the country were extremely backward, with industry non-existent or embryonic. Tsarism saw to it that feudal and even patriarchal-tribal relations were preserved in these areas. To be sure, there were peoples capable of enduring the hardest tests and safeguarding their democratic traditions and age-old culture. But some nationalities were dying out.

The victory of the socialist revolution signified at the same time the victory of the democratic national-liberation movement of the oppressed peoples, an end to enslavement by both their own beys, khans and emirs, and by Russian tsarism.

The Soviet state not only ensured the political equality of all nations, big and small (there are ethnic groups in the USSR numbering not more than 500 people, such as the Aleuts), but set for itself the tremendously complex task of turning the Soviet Union into a country without backward borderlands. In these areas industry was to be set up, the culture of their peoples revived, and written languages created where they did not exist.

None of this could have been accomplished if these borderland regions had not embarked on the revolutionary transformation of their whole social fabric. Now their destinies were decided by themselves and not by local rulers or tsarist governors.

Working people of all nationalities began to participate in deciding minor and major affairs of the state in their own Soviet republics. In this way they participated in the political life of the entire multinational state.

The peoples saved from extinction needed great help. And they got it. Here is one example. In the course of the first five-year plan period (1928-32) industrial production in the Central Asian republics rose approximately fivefold, whereas in the old industrial regions it only doubled. Right up to the building of socialism the expenditure of many republics on socio-cultural needs exceeded their revenues. Every year the USSR government allocated additional means to them out of the revenues received in the central regions of the country.

The policy of levelling out and raising development levels greatly accelerated the advance of all the Soviet republics, which had progressed from the proclamation of equality of nations and nationalities in 1917 to real equality. The correctness of the Soviet nationalities policy was borne out by its results.

Time demonstrated the cohesion of the multinational socialist state. One Soviet republic after another joined, on a voluntary and equal basis, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics established back in 1922.¹ The Constitution reserved to the Union republics the right to secession. But the peoples inhabiting them continued to build their new life in their large closely-knit family, having become convinced of the expediency of belonging to the Union. The free development of each of the republics signi-

¹ Initially the Union was formed by four Soviet republics: Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Transcaucasian (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia).

fied the free development of all of them taken together.

Internationalism, then as now, was the cementing material in the building of socialist social relations. True, it would be wrong to think that the life of the multinational community was, or is, free of such phenomena as parochialism or national egoism and narrow-mindedness. There are different traditions. Some of them serve as bridges which carry needless, outdated customs from the past to the present. The wheat of the past is not always, or not immediately, sifted from the chaff. The state sees to it that the sifting is done thoroughly, ensuring the unconditional and full equality of all the Soviet nations and ethnic groups (which number more than 100).

Every one of the nations or ethnic groups in the USSR is an organic part of the Soviet people, and every person belonging to one of these nations or ethnic groups is a Soviet man. When, let us say, an Ossetian and a Yakut, a Tajik and a Turkman call Yuri Gagarin, the world's first spaceman, a member of their people, all of them are equally right, for he is first of all a Soviet man. Soviet people have the same moral and cultural values and share a common world outlook. And when a Georgian and an Uzbek say, "Our Pushkin", or when a Russian, a Ukrainian and a Lett say, "Our Shota Rustaveli and Alisher Navoi", they are also equally right. And, of course, they are right when they say, "Our Lenin". Adherence to socialist ideals, diligence, patriotism combined with internationalism are all essential traits of the character of Soviet man.

The same traits are characteristic of every Soviet nation and ethnic group. They are components of the strength of the kinship of the new historical community—the Soviet people.

For the Good of Man

There live in the USSR many people belonging to the pre-revolutionary generation. Their memory has retained grim pictures of the existence of the working people in old Russia, when

- millions died of starvation;
- typhus, small-pox and other epidemics were rife in the country;
- 76 per cent of the population aged nine and over were illiterate;
- 27 out of every 100 new-born children died within the first twelve months.

These, too, are "reference points" in gauging what the power of the people has done for the good of the working man.

It should also be borne in mind that there have been devastating wars, foreign intervention and resulting economic dislocation. Without them, many of the problems the country is now tackling to raise the standard of living would have been solved long ago.

Not all in the USSR are provided with equally good housing yet, but the unprecedentedly large scale and pace of housing construction and the emphasis on quality will soon put an end to this problem. Much remains to be done to enable all Soviet families to use the services of pre-school establishments, to free working people of arduous physical labour, to lighten women's domestic chores.

To be sure, problems there are, but they are outweighed thousands of times by what has already been done by Soviet power to improve the life of the working people. The strategic course of the economic and social policy of socialism remains unchanged. "To achieve a steady growth of the people's

living standards was and remains the main goal of all our plans, both for the immediate future and over a longer period," Leonid Brezhnev said in a speech in Tula at the beginning of 1977.

By the end of the tenth five-year plan period (1976-80) the national income produced in the course of less than five days will equal the national income produced during the whole of 1928, the first year of the first Soviet five-year plan.

By the same time a vast number of housewarming parties will have been given. (Already by the end of the first year of the current five-year plan period 2.2 million flats and individual houses had been built.)

Wages will be increased for millions more workers. In the ninth five-year plan period of 1971-75, 75 million people had their wages raised.

It has been estimated that in a developed socialist society the real incomes of the population double roughly every fifteen years. This means several qualitative changes in the level of consumption for every generation. However, the essence of the changes taking place in the life of Soviet people lies not only in the fast and steady growth of possibilities for improving living standards. Today the issues under consideration are much more involved than ever before. They comprise the all-round development of the members of society, a comprehensive solution of all the problems that arise in this connection, such as the narrowing of the margin between the working and living conditions in town and countryside, gradual elimination of manual and arduous physical labour, extension of the network of cultural establishments, further development of the cinema, radio and television, disease prevention measures, and protection of the natural environment.

Take, for instance, the problem of bringing work-

ing and living conditions in the countryside closer to those in the towns. It will be noted that "elimination of socio-economic and cultural distinctions between town and country and of differences in their living conditions", an aim set in the CPSU Programme, is a component of the policy of socialist people's power.

The Soviet countryside still lags behind the town in living and working conditions and in overall cultural standards. What is being done to close the gap? Never before have changes in the countryside (where 40 per cent of the population of the USSR live) proceeded at such a pace as over the recent years. The standard of living is nearing the urban level: for example, the farmers' incomes in 1971-75 were growing at a much faster rate than those of all the other social groups of Soviet society. Payment for work for collective farmers went up, on the average, by 30-35 per cent, while wages and salaries of other social groups, by 20-22 per cent.

Evidence of the improvement of the farmers' standard of living is that today the demand for cars, TV sets, furniture and other goods which were formerly regarded as exclusively "urban" is as high in the countryside as in the towns.

Two out of every three new schools to be built during the tenth five-year plan period will be opened in villages. Universal secondary schooling, the introduction of which was completed during the ninth five-year plan period, will reduce considerably the gap between country and town in the important matter of training skilled personnel for agriculture and in the field of education generally.

There has been a considerable increase in the volume of everyday and community services to the rural population. At present about one half of all houses in the countryside are supplied with gas.

Changes have been taking place in the character of the labour of livestock breeders as old, poorly equipped livestock facilities have been replaced by large highly mechanized farms. The number of agricultural machinery operators already exceeds four million.

Working conditions in the countryside today differ little from those in the towns: the working week is 41 hours, with two days off, and there are paid holidays. Agricultural labour, however, has its special features. During crucial periods such as sowing and harvesting, when, as a Russian saying goes, "one day feeds a year", field work proceeds round the clock, all seven days of the week—with proper compensation, of course.

The labour of rural residents is increasingly becoming a variety of industrial labour. The life of the Soviet farmers is changing for the better, and people themselves are changing.

The Cost of What Is Given Free of Charge

In socialist society, where power belongs to the working people, the principle "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his work" operates. This society is yet to reach the degree of maturity when it will be able to satisfy in equal measure the requirements of people according to their more or less equal abilities.

The economic achievements, the level of social progress (which is determined in large measure by advance towards social homogeneity), and many other things that make it possible to speak of developed socialism in the USSR are all working actively for the future, when the complete equality of Soviet people will be attained. In the meantime,

there still exists a certain inequality of members of our socialist society, especially as regards the material conditions of their life. This is explained by differences in the kind of labour, in skill levels, the size of families, etc.

How is the state solving the problem of evening up the conditions of life of its citizens?

Alongside remuneration for labour there exists in socialist society a form of distribution which does not take into account a man's labour contribution. The means for it come from the state-financed social consumption funds, which add appreciably to the principal source of people's incomes—wages and salaries.

The question may arise whether it would not be better to raise the wages and salaries of working people of all categories at the expense of social consumption funds. But in this case the various good things of life would not be accessible in equal measure to all people. That would be against the very nature of socialist society.

And how much does that which is provided to people free of charge cost the state? A great deal. Moreover, the size of the social consumption funds is growing steadily. For instance, by the end of the current, tenth five-year plan period, it will increase by almost one-third and reach 117,000 million roubles.

These funds pay for free education and upgrading (every other person aged seven and older is studying in the USSR) and for free medical assistance. They help to keep rent low. A number of other payments and benefits come from these funds. On the average, a family of four receives from the social consumption funds every year about 1,400 roubles' worth of various payments and free services in addition to the wages.

Furthermore, the social consumption funds pay for factory and office workers' holidays and students' allowances.

The social consumption funds are the principal and in many instances the only source of means for more than 45 million pensioners—old people, invalids and families who have lost their breadwinner.

It will be noted that social insurance in the USSR is financed out of deductions from the incomes of enterprises and collective farms and not from those of factory and office workers and collective farmers.

Noteworthy is not only the scale of pension schemes in the USSR; the Soviet system of social insurance includes all its forms provided for by the conventions of the International Labour Organization (with the exception of unemployment relief, since there is no unemployment in the Soviet Union).

All those who work in the USSR receive, in case of illness, sick benefits in accordance with the length of service record. A 100 per cent benefit is paid in case of disability resulting from an on-the-job accident or occupational disease.

The USSR has 862,000 doctors, more than one-third of the world's total number of doctors. A sick person receives all necessary medical assistance free of charge, irrespective of the state of his finances.

Housing construction claims a large part of the spending on social needs. In the ninth five-year plan period alone this important social service of the socialist state to its citizens cost it an impressive sum of 100,000 million roubles. Incidentally, rent does not cover even one half of the state's expenses on the maintenance of the housing stock.

The social consumption funds pay also for the construction of schools, kindergartens and creches. At present one out of every three children of pre-school age in the countryside attends a creche or

kindergarten. In the current five-year period new pre-school establishments will be built for about one million little rural residents.

The figures cited here are, of necessity, of a general character. However, they reflect both the standard of living in Soviet society as a whole and the well-being of every family and every person.

Let us examine the budget of one family to see in practical terms socialist society's concern for its members.

The Sebyakins live in Likino, a settlement not far from Moscow, which has a big, nationally known bus-making plant. Nikolai Sebyakin works as an assemblyman on the main assembly line. His wife Alexandra works in the metal-plating shop. They have three children. The son has already entered upon a worker's career. The elder daughter studies in a pedagogical institute and the younger daughter goes to school. The head of the family brings home 180 roubles a month; his wife, 140 roubles, and the son, 120 roubles. The elder daughter's monthly allowance as a student is 40 roubles. The monthly budget of the family is 480 roubles (96 roubles per member).

The rent for the three-room flat and the payments for communal services amount to 23 roubles, or about five per cent of the family's income. The rent equals less than one-third of what the state pays on the maintenance of the flat, which means for the Sebyakins an annual "saving" of 690 roubles.

Two members of the family are studying. The state spends on the education of one school pupil 160 roubles a year. This is an "invisible" addition to the budget of the family. The elder daughter's allowance is included in the budget. But to it should be added one more "invisible" sum: the

instruction of one student costs the state almost 1,000 roubles a year.

The family's expenses during holidays are reduced thanks to the care of the state by 143 roubles (free use of the factory's holiday home, reduced-cost vouchers to health-resorts and youth health-building summer camps, etc.). The state-paid prophylactic measures to protect the health of the senior Sebyakins alone cost 160 roubles a year. (Disease-prevention has long been one of the services provided by the Likino plant.)

Adding up only the more important figures we find that the social consumption funds add 2,393 roubles to the Sebyakins' annual income, raising it to 8,153 roubles, which means 136 roubles per member monthly.

Thus payments and benefits received by the family from the social consumption funds equal almost 30 per cent of its overall income.

The components of the budget of this basic nucleus of Soviet society are typical. They show that the state covers about one-third of all the expenses of a large number of Soviet people.

Last year roughly 80 per cent of the national income, which reached 380,000 million roubles, was spent on raising the well-being of the people. This, as is the custom, was stated in the first line of the annual report of the Central Statistical Board of the USSR.

Also according to tradition, the last line of the report gave the size of the population of the country: 257.9 million. There is no intentional symbolism in this tradition, but a mere statement of the fact that all the national wealth in the Soviet Union belongs to the people, that everything created by the hand and brain of the people is used for their good.

Surely, this cannot but be one of the sources of

the optimism the Soviet people feel for the future of their society.

Constant concern for man, growth of the well-being of the people, improvement of working and living conditions, progress in the public health and education systems and in many other fields—all give people confidence in the future. That is what is meant in the USSR when it is said that development of democracy signifies further deepening of the humanist essence of socialism.

Soviet society is guided by common sense in its efforts to satisfy the material requirements of people, which it regards as the prime condition for a full human existence. To Soviet people the standard of living means much more than possession of things. Consumerism, self-seeking, money-grubbing are alien to the Soviet way of life, to the traditions of the Party, to socialist democracy, to the social consciousness of Soviet people.

II

A PARTY OF CREATIVE ENDEAVOUR

Socialism is a socio-political order which, as Lenin expressed it, presents "...an opportunity which rarely occurs in history of ascertaining the period necessary for bringing about radical social changes..."¹

This objective is fully attainable only in a society which is not at the mercy of uncontrollable economic and social forces but which is governed by the systematic and purposeful activity of a state in which political power is in the hands of the working people.

And, of course, the selection of the ways and means to achieve the goals set must be prompted by a knowledge of the objective laws governing social development, i.e. it must be based on an advanced scientific theory.

It is precisely the Party of Communists that is in possession of such a theory and of such knowledge; it is the Party that directs the building of the new society.

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 33, p. 483.

It is due to the leadership and organizational effort of the Party that the community of interests of the individual, the collective and the whole of society—a community of interests that is intrinsic to socialism—develops into a unity of will and action.

To Chart the Right Course

The magnitude and complexity of the tasks facing the country have grown as the country has progressed from one phase of socialist construction to the next. Now the time has arrived when it has become possible to choose an optimal variant out of a host of variants for the attainment of the goals set before the country, with the main objective of the Soviet government being the maximum satisfaction of the people's material and cultural needs.

In the prewar five-year periods (1928-41) there was practically no choice. The Soviet Union could not have survived without forcing the pace of industrialization. The situation is totally different now.

In principle there is a choice of ways of accomplishing the main task of the new society. It is therefore all-important to determine the right, or best course, to map out the most suitable direction for the country's social and economic development. And consequently it is crucially important to make well-founded political decisions and to supervise their implementation. This is the mission of the Party.

Ideological opponents of our system, the critics of socialism, overlook a simple fact—the principle of Party leadership in the affairs of state was not thought up by Marx or Lenin; in fact it was not devised at all. It evolved of its own accord in the

course of recent history as a method whereby the ruling class (the working people) exercises political power through the agency of its Party. In bourgeois society parties uphold the system of private ownership and the political power of the wealthy. In socialist society they uphold social ownership and the corresponding socio-political order.

The leadership of the Communist Party is an objective prerequisite for the building of communism. Just as a building cannot be erected without architects, so also communism cannot be built without Communists.

A most important principle relating to the leading role of the Party was formulated in the very first years of the development of the Soviet state, and still retains its relevance and validity today. It is expressed in one of the theses spelled out in the programme of the Party endorsed at its 8th Congress in 1919: "On no account should the functions of the Party collectives be confused with the functions of state bodies, i.e. the Soviets. . . The Party strives to guide the activity of the Soviets and not to replace them."

The country's long-term economic development plans serve as an illustration. The guidelines adopted by CPSU Congresses with regard to these plans provide the groundwork for the formulation by the USSR government and the governments of the Union republics of the relevant documents. These documents are then scrutinized by the supreme bodies of state power, which introduce amendments and give them the force of law.

In March, 1976, the 25th Congress of the CPSU adopted "Guidelines for the Development of the National Economy of the USSR for 1976-1980". Long before the Congress, the draft of this document was published in the press by the Party Central

Committee to invite nation-wide discussion. As a result, numerous suggestions, remarks and amendments were incorporated in the draft document.

In late October, 1976, the USSR Supreme Soviet (the country's supreme legislative body) met in session to discuss the document. It was thoroughly studied by the deputies, or members, who made their remarks and amendments, and introduced their own corrections. The document for the five-year plan of the country's economic development was then endorsed and thereby given the force of law.

The leading role of the CPSU in Soviet society is manifest among other things in its authority to intervene in questions of domestic policy whenever necessary and warranted.

Such intervention, however, is by no means tantamount to abrogation of the directives issued by executive bodies, nor does it violate the democratic procedure established by law. Such intervention involves adoption by the CPSU Central Committee (often jointly with the USSR Council of Ministers, i.e. the executive organ of power, and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, etc.) of specific decisions, which conform to the general political line, and supervision of their implementation.

Foreign policy is another sphere which is supervised by the CPSU. Here the Party plays a very big and direct role. Besides maintaining relations with the world communist movement, the Party takes an active part in carrying out the foreign policy functions of the Soviet state. The Party's contribution to the cause of promoting co-operation with other countries, and to the struggle for peace and the implementation of the principles of peaceful co-existence between states with different social systems is of inestimable value.

In accordance with long-established practice in the USSR a special role in handling these questions belongs to the Political Bureau of the Central Committee and the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee.

Needless to say, the fact that the Party guides the life of society cannot be interpreted to mean that it either "suppresses" or "limits" democracy in any way. The decisions made by democratic bodies, whether state or public, are based on a policy which has been scientifically substantiated by the Party. This is another indication that Party policy expresses the will of the entire Soviet people.

"The supreme meaning of the Party's activities," Leonid Brezhnev pointed out in his interview with French TV in October 1976, "is everything for the people, for their well-being and happiness. That is why the people identify themselves with the policy pursued by the Party and entrust it with the leading role in society."

The Party and Development of Democracy

"...The most active and politically conscious citizens among the working class, working peasants and working intelligentsia voluntarily unite in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which is the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to build communist society..." This is written into the Constitution (Article 126). But long before the Constitution was adopted this truth had been borne out by life itself.

Likewise, the logic of events made the CPSU the one and only ruling party of the country. The Communists constituted a steadfast revolutionary force

before the Revolution and after it. There were other parties too. One of them, the Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries, represented the peasantry, or to be more exact the well-to-do peasants, and exerted a considerable influence on the peasant masses.

The Communists had a substantial majority of seats in the highest body of political power—the All-Russia Central Executive Committee (later renamed the Supreme Soviet of the USSR)—elected by the people. Its membership included 62 Communists, 29 Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and ten representatives of other parties. The Communists had the right to form a one-Party cabinet, but offered to form an alliance with those Socialist-Revolutionaries who were prepared to co-operate with them.

The Left SRs, as they were called, accepted the offer to take part in the government but, as subsequent developments amply demonstrated, they had no intention of co-operating with the Communists in implementing the programme of socialist reforms in Russia. Seven SRs joined the government of the young republic; however, in March, 1918, they staged a walk-out and in July attempted to overthrow the Soviet government in Moscow in an armed rebellion which was put down.

Contrary to allegations by some Western historians, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties were not "dissolved". They had to step down from the political scene after they had sided with the counter-revolution and totally discredited themselves in the eyes of the people. The course of events compelled the Communists to assume sole responsibility for the destiny of Russia. . .

Communists have never asserted that one-Party leadership is the only course available to any country in which the people win power and start

upon socialist construction. In a number of socialist countries several parties have formed an alliance under the leadership of the Communists and are successfully building a new life.

Allegations by critics of socialism that the one-Party system excludes democracy, that the two are incompatible, stem either from erroneous preconceived notions or from a total ignorance of Soviet reality. A brief survey of what the Party has done in recent years to promote socialist democracy (for instance, between the 24th and 25th Party Congresses) shows the falsity of these allegations.

The democratic principles which govern the day-to-day activities of the Party, and the activities themselves, serve like a tuning fork, setting the tone for the whole of society. . .

In developing democracy the Party has always employed an arsenal of means and followed several paths. For example, the USSR Supreme Soviet adopted proposals put forward by the Party for extending the rights of local bodies of government—the Soviets of districts, cities and rural localities.

Discussion by the central organs of the Party of local, seemingly secondary, questions connected with the work of separate Party organizations, questions which are at the same time of fundamental significance for the democratic development of the whole of society, is another important aspect of Party work. The results of such discussions are made public through the Party press and evoke a country-wide response.

For example, a while ago the CPSU Central Committee considered a report submitted by the Party organization of the Cherepovets steelworks. In its decision the Central Committee recommended a more active involvement of workers and employees

in the management of production, and the greatest possible encouragement of shop-floor initiative at workers' meetings.

Though the decision was addressed to the Communists of the Cherepovets steelworks, it found a country-wide response, for it concerned not merely one of the thousands of Soviet plants and factories but the very foundations of democracy in the USSR. So it can be equally applied to Urals workers, the builders of the Baikal-Amur Railway and to the sailors of the Soviet Far East. Indeed, there can be no real democracy if it does not also extend to one's working environment.

Displaying concern for the promotion of socialist democracy, the Party has been giving its unremitting attention to the question of the "psychological climate" at one's work, in the democratic context, and in local Party and other organizations.

The decision of the CPSU Central Committee on criticism and self-criticism in the Tambov Regional Party organization was promulgated in early 1975.

The CPSU Central Committee charged the Tambov Regional Party Committee, and the city and district Party Committees to "resolutely combat suppression of criticism, and to correct and if necessary discipline and even dismiss Party functionaries who react to criticism negatively and regard critical remarks addressed to them as attempts to undermine their prestige and who place personal self-esteem above the public interest. . ."

By publicly acknowledging its mistakes the CPSU sets an example which, because of the high esteem in which it is held by the people, is followed by the Soviets, the trade unions, the youth organizations and Soviet society as a whole.

The Rights and Obligations of Party Membership

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union has never been a force standing above society. It is part and parcel of the people. One out of eleven Soviet citizens is a Communist. Each of the 16 million Party members has a voice in formulating Party and state policies and in their implementation through the Party organization he belongs to (the primary Party organizations and also the district, regional and republican Party organizations).

The structure and numerical strength of the Communist Party, and the manner in which it works, make it self-evident that the Party cannot be accused of being apart from the people. The very name of the Party is indicative of its main function and the paramount objective it pursues: to build communism, the system which equips man with everything necessary for his all-round and harmonious development.

In socialist society Communists do not enjoy any exclusive status.

Privileges associated with an elevated social status and wealth were abolished in this country 60 years ago. A person owes his social standing and "weight" in Party ranks to his ability, knowledge and devotion to the socialist ideals and not to his bank account or social origin.

And, of course, one does not have to be a member of the Party in order to be promoted to a position of leadership. Proficiency, experience and ability are what count. The list of persons who are not Party members and nevertheless occupy high posts and enjoy nation-wide fame is endless. Foreign visitors to the USSR are particularly interested in this ques-

tion, so we might mention a few prominent people in this category:

Nikolai Bogolyubov—Director of the International Integrated Institute of Nuclear Research.

Konstantin Fedin—Chairman of the Board of the USSR Writers' Union.

Ivan Artobolevsky—Academician, Chairman of the All-Union Znaniye (Knowledge) Society.

Yekaterina Korovina—Chief Physician of a hospital in Ryazan Region.

Said Rafikov—Chairman of the Presidium of the Bashkir Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

Respected citizens who are not Party members are also elected by the people to bodies of state power—the Soviets of the Working People's Deputies. A third of the membership of the USSR Supreme Soviet are not Party members. In the local Soviets—territorial, city, village, etc.—non-Party people are in the majority, accounting for 56 per cent of all deputies.

A person joining the Communist Party is not granted any privileges over non-Party people. He enjoys no precedence and advantages in matters of job advancement and pay rises and is in no way distinguishable in this sense from his fellow-citizens.

The rights he is accorded by the Party Rules enable him to take an active part in Party life. The Communist has a right to elect and be elected to all Party bodies, and to freely discuss at meetings, conferences and rallies, and also in the Party press, any questions pertaining to the theoretical and practical activities of the CPSU. Every Communist has a right to criticize any of his comrades, no matter how high their office. These rights, however, are exercised only within the Party.

Soviet Communists have only one privilege, so to

say: to be in the forefront wherever the going is difficult, to pioneer uncharted paths.

In Lenin's words, "Russia was wrested from the rich for the poor" by the Communists.

It was the Communists who organized the rebuff to counter-revolution and foreign intervention.

It was the Communists who were in the thick of the battle to overcome famine and economic dislocation.

It was the Communists who initiated and carried out the industrialization of the country and set up the collective farm system in the countryside; it was the Communists who gave the former illiterates their first books.

The inspiring call: "Communists, forward!" was the signal for Soviet servicemen to rise into the attack against the Nazi aggressor in the Great Patriotic War (1941-45).

The first man to fly in space was a Communist.

The Peace Programme, which accords with the thoughts, sentiments, aspirations and hopes of hundreds of millions of people was advanced by Communists.

Living Threads Bind Party and People

The Soviet people trust their Communist Party and hold it in high regard; to them it is a "comrade-Party". People often turn to Party members or local Party organizations for advice, to share their thoughts, to make a suggestion or express their concern.

The forms of contact are varied. Letters to Party bodies is one of them. People write letters because they know that their complaints, petitions or suggestions addressed to Party or government bodies

will not go unheeded but will be duly examined and acted on.

For the Party and its Central Committee, letters from the working people are a most important source of information, a special "live" form of communication with the people. This tradition became established in the very first years of Soviet power.

Lenin attached immense importance to the study of public opinion and in particular to written and oral appeals and petitions by the people. Letters which Lenin received from the country's cities and villages gave him reliable information on the sentiments and moods of the people, and on their needs and requirements. Lenin referred to such letters as "control from below". He demanded that every organization, every industrial enterprise concern itself with the satisfaction of the Soviet people's basic needs, and attend promptly to their petitions. He severely criticized the slightest manifestations of procrastination and red-tape.

The CPSU upholds and develops the Leninist principles in the procedure it adopts for examining letters from the working people. In 1976, the Central Committee received about 850,000 letters and telegrams concerned with a wide range of matters. Most of them express good will and are prompted by concern for public and state affairs.

In this connection, Leonid Brezhnev once noted in a talk with Party functionaries that Communists and non-Party people are both concerned with the affairs of the country and address themselves to questions having to do with both negative and positive phenomena in the life of the country.

Soviet man has come to a profound understanding of the fundamental tasks facing the state and the Party. The letters abundantly demonstrate that

their authors take close to heart everything that happens in the country.

More effective forms and methods of handling letters have been developed. More and more of the suggestions, proposals and critical remarks expressed by the Soviet people are taken into account in Party practice, in the building of the state and development of the economy, and in ideological work.

Many proposals contained in the letters are used in the preparation for CPSU Congresses, in formulating the main documents, in finalizing decisions of the CPSU Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers. A large number of them are utilized in the work of government bodies.

A decision of the Central Committee of the Party "On the Further Improvement of the Procedure for Handling the Letters of Working People in the Light of the Decisions of the 25th Congress of the CPSU", adopted shortly after the Congress, has done much to improve the organization of this important Party work. Party Committees throughout the country drew up specific measures to make the most effective use of the information afforded by letters received in the period leading up to the 25th Congress of the Party. Many regional and territorial Party Committees have been following up this question at their plenary meetings.

The letters deal, for example, with the need to raise the efficiency of production and improve the quality of work. Taking into account the numerous matters raised in the letters, the USSR State Planning Committee, the State Committee for Science and Technology under the USSR Council of Ministers and the USSR Academy of Sciences are formulating proposals for a country-wide system of quality-control in industry. Measures are also being worked

out to further streamline the system for the supply of materials and equipment.

Let us take another example. Some of the letters addressed to the Central Committee spotlight shortcomings with regard to the supply of consumer goods and suggest ways of raising the quality and extending the range of light-industry products. The letters have enabled the USSR State Planning Committee, acting jointly with the USSR Ministry of Trade and other ministries and departments concerned, to formulate and submit to the USSR Council of Ministers a series of proposals for the development of the production of consumer goods in 1976-80 and measures to improve their quality. The Ministry of Light Industry is taking additional steps to develop and put into production new goods and items.

There is also a special category of letters which contain criticisms and suggestions concerning the style and methods of Party work. The wishes expressed in these letters about stricter observance of Party rules and the need for greater discipline in the Party were taken into consideration in the preparatory work for the 25th Congress of the CPSU and found expression in its decisions.

The letters are also an effective means of verifying observance of Party and government decrees and decisions. For example, a letter from a group of workers from the "Rossiya" production association (Rostov region) reported instances of violation of provisions laid down by the USSR Council of Ministers for environmental protection. The facts were confirmed in an inquiry instituted by the People's Control Committee of the USSR, and appropriate measures were taken. The ministries concerned ordered the construction of waste-treatment

facilities at the appropriate factories to be accelerated.

The letters written by Soviet people giving their views and containing proposals and requests are given every consideration. This has helped foster an atmosphere conducive to fuller implementation of the democratic principles of socialist society.

Prompt attention to the letters, and a responsible and responsive attitude toward the needs and requirements of the population have long been an inflexible rule for every branch of the Party and every government department.

The more active the Party work in this area, the fuller the principles of socialist democracy manifest themselves and the stronger is the bond between the Party and the people.

III

WE ARE THE STATE

For centuries the working man had been no more than a servant in his own home, but 60 years ago he became the master.

His new status as "owner" placed on the working man certain responsibilities: as a true master, to manage his resources intelligently and to multiply them, and to distribute the benefits fairly.

If you take into account that the "home" was a vast country with tremendous natural resources, but ravaged by war and semi-destitute at the time, and that the "master" was a multi-million people who had cast off the yoke of exploitation and destroyed the economic foundations of an outdated system, but who had no experience in governing a country, you will realize what an immensely complex and responsible task he was confronted with.

It is true that there had been the brief-lasting only 72 days—but instructive experience of the Paris Commune, the first proletarian state in history. However, neither in historical conditions, nor in its motive forces, nor in scale, was the October Revolution a repetition of the heroic struggle waged by the proletariat of Paris in 1871. What the revo-

lutionary people of Russia did was to pioneer new, hitherto unknown forms of people's government.

"Comrades working people! Remember that now *you yourselves* are at the helm of state. No one will help you if you yourselves do not unite and take into *your hands all affairs* of the state."¹ These were the words that Lenin, the leader of the Revolution, addressed to the workers, peasants, soldiers and revolutionary-minded intellectuals immediately following the victory of the Revolution, on November 5 (Nov. 18, according to the new calendar), 1917.

The overthrow of the old order was only the first step towards the building of a socialist state, the complete restructuring of the country's administration, the enlisting of broad sections of the people in governing the country, and the setting up everywhere of new bodies of power.

These bodies of power were the Soviets.

Power Born of the Revolution

In 1905, during the first Russian revolution, Soviets, which were spontaneously set up by the people who had risen against tsarism, proved their vitality and revolutionary staunchness in grim class battles and asserted their right to lead an uprising. Lenin described the Soviets then as an authority open to all, carrying out their functions before the eyes of the masses, accessible to the masses, springing directly from the masses; and as a direct and immediate instrument of the popular masses and of their will.²

After the victory of the October Revolution the

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 297.

² See Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 10, p. 245.

great prestige of the Soviets in the eyes of the working people was due to the fact that they combined a maximum of revolutionary fervour with a maximum of democratic spirit, and were directly representative of the people.

In those first, tumultuous months in the life of the proletarian state, local executive bodies of the Soviets at branch level were elected right at industrial enterprises, in military units and at peasants' meetings. The action programme, the rights and duties of the delegates, and the term of their mandate—everything was decided then and there. The deputies, like those serving on the Soviets themselves, could be recalled and replaced at any time.

It is noteworthy that there was no uniformity in the work of the Soviets at the time. For instance, in many *guberniyas* (administrative regions) local "Soviet governments" were set up which appointed their own staff administration on the pattern of Petrograd and Moscow, and issued their own decrees. Of course, many of these decrees were never put into effect. Some of them were soon swept aside by developments. But they stimulated thought and unfettered the creative energies of the people who, on an increasing scale, became involved in the turbulent developments. The new laws created by the people were a striking manifestation of revolutionary propaganda work and revolutionary activity. Evaluating them, Lenin wrote:

"...Living, creative socialism is the product of the masses themselves."¹

Of course, all the enthusiasm and the natural ability shown in creating new legislation did not grow out of nothing: they were a natural result of

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 288.

the enormous organizational and educational work conducted over many years before the Revolution by the heroic working class of Russia and its Party.

At first the Soviets wielded all power—legislative, executive and judicial. Investing the Soviets with such broad, actually all-embracing, authority was, naturally, possible only at the initial stages in the making of the new society—when the old machinery of state administration in the hands of the bourgeois-landlord class had been destroyed and there was no new apparatus ready to replace it. It was imperative that the building of such an apparatus be started without delay. It would not have been possible to even hope to carry out such an immensely complex task had it not been for “Soviet power, a filtering apparatus which can promote people.”¹ By the latter Lenin meant able organizers who could competently and effectively administer that intricate political and socio-economic organism called the state.

A great service rendered by the Soviets was that they became such a “filtering apparatus”. Hundreds of revolutionary workers, peasants and soldiers with a mandate from a Soviet of Workers’, Peasants’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, learned one of the most difficult arts, the art of state administration.

Days, months and years went by. The Soviet republic was gaining strength; its immediate and long-range social tasks were specified and elaborated on, and methods of coping with these tasks were being perfected.

The scope of socialist democracy, essential for social progress, was widening; new forms of people’s power, previously unknown, came into being, for there were no ready-made recipes for the exercise of power by the people.

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 26, p. 470.

Modern bourgeois democracy with its institutions and practices has a history that goes back for centuries. In England, for instance, the first elements of civil rights were wrested from the monarchy as far back as the 13th century and set forth in Magna Carta. Each step towards universal suffrage and the modern parliamentary system was made as a result of bitter struggle, often taking the form of revolutionary explosions.

With such a long period of evolution of "classical" parliamentary democracy, it would hardly be realistic to expect the entire system of socialist democracy—an altogether new phenomenon and of an incomparably higher order—to attain perfection within a comparatively very short period of history. So, at the present stage, there can be no question of its being perfect or complete.

The great dynamic force, the unparalleled rate of social, political and economic development, and the accelerated progress of the new society constantly enrich the practice of state administration and guidance of society.

Speaking at the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, said:

"Today, we know not only from theory, but also from long years of practice, that genuine democracy is impossible without socialism, and that socialism is impossible without a steady development of democracy. We see the improvement of our socialist democracy as consisting primarily in a steady effort to ensure the ever fuller participation of the working people in running the affairs of society, in further developing the democratic principles of our state system, and in creating the conditions for the all-round development of the individual."

At the Kremlin in Moscow

Twice a year the state flag of the USSR is hoisted over the Great Kremlin Palace to announce sessions of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the country's Parliament. The sessions are held in a hall seating 2,500. The many guests, including Soviet citizens and foreign visitors, sit on the balconies; there are special boxes for diplomats and newsmen accredited in Moscow.

Traditionally, the first session of each new convocation (the current one is the ninth) is opened by one of the senior deputies.

There is always a wide range of questions to be discussed and decided upon, pertaining to the country's development, its present and future.

Outside the Soviet Union many people have the idea that the work of the USSR Supreme Soviet is straightforward and quickly disposed of. It is said that the deputies merely gather in Moscow twice a year, endorse new laws, and go back home, to forget all about their parliamentary duties until the next session.

In fact, the sessions usually last only two or three days, and there is no need for them to be any longer. However, preparations for the sessions start long before their opening. The fact is that two out of every three deputies (the USSR Supreme Soviet has a total of 1,517 deputies) are members of standing commissions which deal with mandates, legislative proposals, plans and budgets, foreign affairs, youth matters, industry, transport and communications, building materials and construction, agriculture, public health and social security, public education, science and culture, trade, community and public services, consumer goods, and nature con-

servation. Working on these commissions is thorough and painstaking and it takes the deputies considerable time to elaborate and agree upon the decisions which form the basis of draft laws.

That is why it took the delegates only three days (from the 2nd to the 4th of December, 1975) to discuss and endorse the country's plan of economic development and the budget for 1976, the first year of the tenth five-year plan.

During the three summer months of 1976 (the period when the parliaments of many countries of the world are in recess) the deputies who are members of the USSR Supreme Soviet's standing commissions, met six times. Deputies belonging to different professions, and representing different parts of the country, had taken part in elaborating the questions submitted for discussion. For instance, nature conservation problems in Azerbaijan and measures taken by that republic to safeguard the Caspian Sea against pollution had been investigated by 80 deputies, including oil experts, biologists, engineers and Party officials. They had visited factories and oilfields, and talked with fishermen and orchardists.

The results of the intensive, comprehensive work done by the commissions in the summer period were later discussed by a session of the Supreme Soviet Presidium.

The notion that parliamentary functions in the Soviet Union are unusually simple stems from ignorance of the actual state of affairs.

To administer a state is no simple matter. But by its very nature the Soviet political system combines administrative competency (and therefore efficiency) and direct participation of broad sections of the people in state administration.

The practice of socialist democracy and the practice of Soviet government at all levels—from local So-

viets to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR—reject the attitude which forms the cornerstone of Western parliamentarism, where the decisions of the professional élite in office are handed down to the passive population. Soviet members of Parliament are political leaders, but they are also workers, farmers, scientists, doctors, etc.¹

If we examine the composition of the USSR Supreme Soviet membership elected in June, 1974 (their term of office ends in 1978), we find that more than half of the members (769 deputies) are workers and farmers, while the rest are professional people such as engineers, scientists, artists, writers, teachers and doctors (accounting altogether for 9.3 per cent of the membership), or Party, trade union and YCL officials (17 per cent), or government and state officials (14.2 per cent), or servicemen (3.7 per cent).

In other words, a deputy's direct employment in this or that sphere of the national economy, his main occupation, is the source of his proficiency as a representative of the people.

But, most important of all, the question of whether a person can be entrusted with the high honour and great responsibility of representing the interests of the people in the Supreme Soviet (or any other Soviet, for that matter) is decided by the people—industrial and office workers, farmers and intellectuals—and by nobody but the people.

¹ There are only four persons in the USSR Supreme Soviet for whom serving in the Soviet is their full-time employment. They are: the President (sometimes called Chairman) of the Supreme Soviet Presidium, the Secretary of the Presidium, and the Chairmen of the Supreme Soviet's two Houses—the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities—which have equal rights (the first represents the common interests of all Soviet citizens irrespective of nationality; the second—the specific interests of all the national groups inhabiting the USSR).

In this the electors and elected alike proceed from the principles of people's government formulated by Lenin early in the history of the Soviet state. He said:

"The masses must have the right to choose responsible leaders for themselves. They must have the right to replace them, the right to know and check each smallest step of their activity."¹

And that right, won by the people in October, 1917, is being used by them more and more fully. Evidence of this is the high degree of political consciousness shown by the people at elections. For example, in the 1975 elections to the local Soviets and the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous republics, there was a 99.9 per cent turnout of voters.

They gave mandates to their workmate candidates whose professional and public standing was not built in the quiet of parliamentary offices, but right in the factory shops, in the field, in research laboratories, and at construction projects. In short, deputy mandates were given, not to a few representatives of the millions, but to the millions themselves. And this is not merely a figure of speech: altogether, 2.2 million deputies were elected to the Soviets.

Handing on Deputy Mandates

One of the main reasons for the high degree of social and political awareness of the Soviet people consists in the fact that the composition of the representative bodies of power is not only genuinely democratic but is also constantly changing.

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 212.

The continuous turnover of the membership of the Soviets at all levels has the purpose of involving the greatest possible number of working people in the process of state administration.

The Soviet method of government wants everyone to be able to think like a statesman, to see things in the light of common national tasks, and to reason and act as a responsible citizen.

The Soviet method of government helps to bring out and develop a citizen's abilities and talents, including the ability to take part in the running of the state, which, in the final count, serves the interests of society.

And here is the result: during the 40 years since the adoption of the present Constitution of the USSR, 24 million citizens have taken part in state administration.

The ability to think and act in a far-sighted and responsible manner is the main capital which has been, is being, or will be acquired by many millions of citizens as a result of their work in the Soviets. Furthermore, this capital never diminishes, but is constantly growing since the process of its accumulation is not limited to the term of office set for deputies under the law; nor does it disappear when deputies leave office and others come to replace them. There is no question of conflict or competition here; there is no desire to conceal from the successors what has been accumulated, rather there is a generous sharing of it with them.

The practice of having a continuous turnover of the membership of the Soviets (the average is 50 per cent) has become a tradition.

... Mrs. Anastasia Goplyak, an employee at a taxi pool in the city of Kishinev, capital of the Moldavian SSR, was elected deputy of the Frunze District Soviet for two consecutive terms. Although she is

not a deputy now, she is often seen at the Soviet after her work. She is working with deputies on recommendations for a public control group, which, on the instructions of the Soviet, will inspect the work of public transport. Anastasia Goplyak is one of nearly 300 former deputies who lend a helping hand at the Soviet. They put their extensive experience at the service of the people.

Those Who Will Carry On

A typical feature noted each time after the elections is the growing proportion of young delegates to the Soviets. Today, young people constitute about one-third of the body of deputies in the country (in the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation, for example, one-fifth of the delegates are under 30). This trend is partly due to the fact that young people bring fresh energy and enthusiasm to the work. But even more important, those who are young today will be required to tackle complex tasks tomorrow—tasks which are already being projected by economists and the country's political leaders.

Nikolai Khlystov, Deputy to the RSFSR Supreme Soviet, received his mandate when he was 26. His youth did not worry his voters; by then he had considerable experience in public work to his credit. As a student of the Irkutsk Polytechnical Institute (Irkutsk is one of the largest cities in Siberia), he had been Secretary of the YCL organization of his Department for several years, and several times he had headed students' construction teams.

Deputy Khlystov is a member of the Soviet's standing commission on youth affairs. He was a natural choice for the post: a young man himself,

he is in a position to understand the problems of young people.

Nikolai Khlystov is on the staff of the Irkutsk Polytechnic. He combines lecturing there with his duties as deputy, and finds that he has to learn a lot in his latter capacity. One can see a volume of labour laws, decisions of the Supreme Soviet Presidium and much other special literature on his desk. In his work at the Soviet and in his studies he is helped by older comrades, including 16 deputies representing the city of Irkutsk and the Irkutsk region in the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation. Many of them are serving for a second, and some for a third term.

A major project is under construction in Siberia at present—the Baikal-Amur Railway (BAM) which will give access to areas rich in various ores, coal and oil. The country's youth have taken charge of the project, and young workers, who have come from all over the country, constitute the majority of the work force there. The average age of the workers is 25. Their working and living conditions are among Nikolai Khlystov's daily concerns.

Early in 1976, he visited the western section of the construction project, and later, in Moscow, reported on his visit to his standing commission. Things were going fairly well, he said, and much had already been done. One of the key sections of the railway had been put into operation ahead of schedule. But deficiencies in everyday services multiplied the difficulties that the workers had to contend with: there were not enough kindergartens, the functioning of the postal service was faulty, and the transport service needed improving. Of course, the scale of the project was tremendous, and nobody expected working and living conditions to be like they are

in the capital, but the difficulties could and should have been minimized.

The deputy wrote to *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (the newspaper of the YCL Central Committee) and *Sovetskaya Rossiya* (the paper of the CPSU Central Committee and of the Supreme Soviet and Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation), sharply criticizing the relevant ministries and departments. Shortly afterwards, the newspapers printed reports on what had been done in reply to Deputy Khlystov's requests.

"You see, it pays to have your man in the Supreme Soviet," the BAM workers remarked jokingly.

Substantial Powers

As can be seen, the view that Soviet members of Parliament only meet to pass decisions and endorse laws is a mistaken one. They execute laws and implement decisions to the best of their ability and within their powers as deputies elected to run the affairs of the country. And their powers are indeed very substantial.

The extent of a deputy's rights was legally reaffirmed in 1972 in the Statute of Deputies, a special document adopted by the USSR Supreme Soviet. It names among the very first powers the right of deputies to make official inquiries.

... A regular session of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR was drawing to a close. Discussion of the items on the agenda—draft laws on water management and decisions on the introduction of crop rotation in the republic—had practically been completed. For the evening sitting it remained only to finalize and endorse the decisions reached earlier. And then the Chairman announced: "An

official inquiry by Deputy Yelizaveta Petrova addressed to the Minister of Light Industry."

The deputy wanted to know why some light-industry enterprises were supplying shops with goods of inferior quality. She named the enterprises: a shoe factory in Ferghana, a china-ware factory in Samarkand, and a factory making silk and woollen fabrics in Namangan.

After the recess, the Minister of Light Industry took the floor. He had to admit the faults mentioned by the deputy. Having heard the inquiry and the reply to it, the Supreme Soviet adopted a special decision outlining measures to be taken by the enterprises in question to improve the quality of their goods. Appropriate standing commissions of the Soviet were instructed to check on the implementation of the decision. Incidentally, a deputy's powers include the right to carry out inspections. The Statute of Deputies states that, upon request, a deputy must be provided with all the information he requires without delay.

Official inquiries by deputies have long been established practice. In 1975, for instance, at the sessions of local Soviets one deputy in every thirty came forward with official inquiries. A quarter of these related to problems of economic and cultural development, one-fifth—to trade, public catering and everyday services, one-tenth—to nature conservation, and one-fifteenth—to housing and the provision of public services and utilities in towns and rural areas.

Deputies make extensive use of their right to inspect the work of government agencies, industrial enterprises and various organizations. Of course, they can exercise this right only within the limits of their jurisdiction, i.e. at village, town, region or

republic level, or, in the highest instance, at the level of the whole country.

During 1976, for instance, standing commissions of the USSR Supreme Soviet heard reports by Boris Stukalin, Chairman of the State Committee for the Affairs of Publishing Houses, Printing Establishments and the Book Trade; Ivan Grishmanov, Minister of the Building Materials Industry; Nikolai Baibakov, Chairman of the State Planning Committee; and Vassily Garbuzov, Minister of Finance. The proposals and suggestions made by the deputies were duly considered and acted upon by the government.

The extensive rights enjoyed by deputies to the Soviets impose many obligations on them, the first being to justify the trust vested in them, to earn the approval of their electors when the deputies report to them on their activity.

And Responsibilities to Match

In 1975, for instance, 99 per cent of the deputies to the Soviets reported to their electors on the work done. The reports were heard by two-thirds of the country's adult population. It is specified in the Statute that deputies to local Soviets (village, district, city and regional Soviets) must report to their constituents not less than twice a year; and deputies to the Supreme Soviets of the Union republics and to the USSR Supreme Soviet—at least once a year.

However, a deputy may be required to report "ahead of schedule", if requested by his electors. Accounting to the constituents is like undergoing an examination, and the "judges" are always exacting, strict and impartial.

During an election campaign voters give their

candidate a list of requests—urgent tasks which they consider should be carried out during his term of office. This is what might be called the deputy's obligatory programme.

... Moscow's Kuibyshev District is one of the largest. In territory (5,000 hectares), population (350,000), and the number of its industrial enterprises, offices and educational establishments it could be compared to a city. For many years the working people of the district have elected Alexander Ivlev their deputy to the District Soviet; and all these years he has headed the Soviet's action body, its Executive Committee, one of the chief tasks of which is carrying out the electors' requests. While working as Chairman of the Kuibyshev District Soviet's Executive Committee, Alexander Ivlev has accumulated extensive experience.

During the last election campaign (June, 1975) the Kuibyshev District Soviet received 30 requests. First they were sorted out and put into order. The plan for their implementation comprised the following sections: provision of public services and amenities in the district, maintenance of housing, construction, transport, trade, public catering, everyday services, children's institutions, physical culture and sport. Deputies were put in charge of carrying out the different requests and time limits were set.

The deputies also have many daily cares. Every day at specified hours the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Executive Committee receive visitors who come to the Soviet with proposals, requests, suggestions and complaints. Receiving constituents is an important part of the work of all the members of the Soviet without exception. But carrying out the electors' requests remains the main concern.

It is noteworthy that the content of the requests has changed substantially over the years. Whereas fifteen or twenty years ago they mainly concerned the opening of shops, cafeterias, kindergartens, outpatient clinics, and pharmacies, and the pulling down of old buildings (the greater part of the district used to be a suburb), today the action programme for deputies is much broader: there is a constantly growing demand for large shopping and everyday-services centres, youth clubs, stadiums and cinemas. This change is to be expected: it reflects the Soviet government's policy aimed at a steady raising of the standard of living.

Of course, when a deputy assumes his responsible post he does not do so unprepared. He has carefully made ready for this. He has ideas of his own, and a plan for their realization.

Having received and examined the requests of his electors, a deputy has every opportunity to plan his preparatory work. When he meets his constituents, he has a clear-cut plan and proposals of his own, often complementing the requests.

In this businesslike, creative co-operation a concrete and realistic programme of work for the deputy's entire term of office takes shape.

Deputies' reports to their constituents are usually informal, open discussions in the course of which the electors have plenty of opportunity to appraise the man (or woman) who represents them in the Soviet. If a deputy does not measure up to their expectations, if he fails to carry out his duties, he can be recalled.

The procedure for recalling a deputy is fully democratic: the issue is taken up at an open meeting and decided by a show of hands, by a simple majority vote. Incidentally, the principle of openness is one of the basic principles of the entire work of

the bodies of people's power—both during elections and during the deputies' term of office.

The right to recall deputies was put into practice in 1918 and was formalized in the first Soviet Constitution. In this connection it is interesting to note that 165 deputies were recalled from local Soviets in 1975, and that in the past 17 years eleven deputies have been recalled from the USSR Supreme Soviet.

Wielding Full Power

Implementation of the constituents' requests, which are assigned to particular deputies to be acted upon within specified time limits, constitutes the framework of the Soviet's activity. The range of its duties is constantly widening and its tasks are becoming more and more complex. They have come to embrace practically all spheres of life—economic, cultural and social.

Clearly, the Soviet cannot deal in its sessions with such a wide sphere of day-by-day activity. For that reason, every Soviet appoints a permanently active body with executive and administrative functions, which is called the Executive Committee. Executive Committees are elected by the Soviets at the first session of each new convocation and are assigned their own personnel. All questions within the competence of Executive Committees are decided collectively by a majority vote.

The Executive Committee is fully accountable to the Soviet. The Soviet has the right to recall at any time some or all of the Executive Committee members and to elect new ones.

As can be seen, in the USSR there is no division of bodies of power (as is traditional in the capi-

talist countries) into administrative bodies (consisting of officials appointed by the government) and local autonomous bodies of administration, which run local affairs under the supervision of higher administrative institutions. The Soviet state system has no need for such chief administrative officials as governors or prefects since in the USSR there is no problem of division of power—all power is vested in the Soviets.

The Soviets of Working People's Deputies carry full responsibility for the administration of their territory. Their competence covers all practical matters concerning industrial and agricultural production, public education, culture, health protection, social security, trade, public catering, everyday services and the provision of amenities, housing construction, public services, environmental protection, the preservation of historical and architectural monuments, law enforcement, the maintenance of public order, protection of the rights of citizens, etc.

* * *

A high degree of social and political awareness among working people is a characteristic feature of the Soviet political system and one of the sources of its genuinely democratic nature. As we have mentioned, there are more than two million deputies; but in addition to this the Soviets rally round themselves tens of millions of helpers. The Soviets, which usually have a small number of staff workers, have a large voluntary personnel—30 million people throughout the country.

The Soviet people have long been accustomed to this voluntary work carried out by a public-minded population, for example, that citizens' volunteer

squads help the militia (the peace-keeping force in the USSR) to maintain law and order; that whole sections of Executive Committees are made up, not of staff employees, but of citizens who devote a good portion of their free time to public activity; that parents' committees help teachers at school to watch over the young; and that at factories, veterans' committees, consisting of retired skilled workers, play an active part in production by passing on their knowledge to young workers.

"My factory, my collective farm, my city, my country. . ."

The age-old word "my", used to denote personal ownership, has acquired a new, profoundly collectivist meaning, expressing the pride of a citizen who is a master in his own right, who concerns himself with everything that is happening in his great socialist home.

IV

THE FEATURES OF TRUE DEMOCRACY

When Lincoln Steffens, the well-known American journalist, returned from a trip to Russia in the first years of Soviet power he said he had visited the future. Unlike other visitors to Soviet Russia of that time, he had seen more than the utter economic ruin and the dark shadows of ignorance and poverty. He had seen people of boundless energy and enthusiasm who were building a new life on a hitherto unknown collective basis in spite of all hardships and privations.

The revolutionary passion, social vigour and optimism of these people stemmed from the new life that had been brought to them by the power of the working people.

We have long been familiar with the noble slogans "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" proclaimed earlier, during bourgeois revolutions. But we have to ask how the slogans were implemented, if at all, and just what exactly the proclaimed rights gave to man. What, for instance, is the worth of the right to education if a person does not have the possibility, sometimes for a long time, of making use of

the knowledge he has acquired, and feels he is not wanted?

The new social order allowed man to find himself anew, as it were, to find his true place in life. Only a short while before, a person's lot was something largely outside of his control, the combined result of many factors, such as social and property status, competition, etc. And always it had been a person's first concern to fend for himself in order to be able to live, sometimes even to survive. As a rule, the state had stood aloof.

Now it took over many of man's concerns; above all, it enabled him to lead a life worthy of man.

Rights Without Which No Freedom Is Possible

From its very inception the Soviet state sought to give real freedom to the working man. The most important step it took towards this end was the proclamation of the right to work, a right which was guaranteed all the more securely as the new government gained in strength. For without this right all the other rights and freedoms are meaningless.

No one tries to assert that working people in non-socialist countries are devoid of any rights. But what vital rights they have won, they have to fight hard all the time to retain.

The problem of human rights has always been one of vital importance. Its universal significance was confirmed once again when, in 1966, the United Nations adopted the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which includes:

- the right to earn a living by work;
- the right to an adequate standard of living;

the right to free primary education;
the right to a system of medical assistance available to all, the right to social security;
women's right to equal pay with men for equal work.

The covenant has not been ratified by all countries. The United States, for instance, has officially admitted its inability to guarantee its provisions. Only a few Western countries—among them Denmark, Norway, and Sweden—have signed the covenant. Naturally, the Soviet Union, which has implemented many of the items of the incomplete list of rights given above at various stages of its development, is among the countries that have ratified it.

The USSR was the first country in the world to have ended forever the scourge of unemployment, or "redundant people". There should be no need to emphasize that the solution of the question of ensuring full employment, the question of work is fundamental to any form of democracy. What can be said of a society where the very possibility of employment is in doubt for many? And the problem is by no means a purely practical, material one, though this is obviously the most essential aspect. The fact is that even where there is a relatively high level of unemployment relief in advanced Western countries—which is made much of in the capitalist press—an unemployed person lives under a considerable moral stress. American psychologists reveal that, having lost a job, people conceal the fact for a long time. Some of them do not come to get their relief, which they consider humiliating. The psychologists consider that one year without a job is equivalent to the loss of five years out of a person's life. A simple calculation shows the resultant loss to each country, for unemployment in the West has

stood at a level of between 15 and 20 million ever since 1974.

In the Soviet Union every able-bodied person enjoys the right to work. This right is guaranteed by the entire way of life of socialist society with its socialist ownership of the means of production and socialist organization of the economy free from crises and slumps. Moreover, the steady growth of productive forces and the mammoth scope of construction require ever more hands. Socialist society guarantees employment, stability, and confidence in the future.

The right to work is firmly protected in the Soviet Union. The enforcement of labour legislation is supervised by Soviets of Working People's Deputies, the courts and the procurator's office, and by competent government agencies which are independent of the management of enterprises. Trade unions also exercise supervision through specially appointed technical inspectorates and numerous activists.

However, this does not mean that the Soviet Union has no problems in connection with employment.

When it comes to a reduction in the work force, what can be worse for working people in capitalist countries? It is usually a result of economic crises. It also happens from time to time in the Soviet Union as a result of reorganization of factories and offices in order to improve efficiency, although mostly it is caused by the retooling of factories and equipment of offices with modern devices.

How is employment guaranteed to people made redundant by reorganization? The management is obliged to provide them with alternative work without loss of pay. This is done through district and city job-placement offices. New placement is effected with the consent of the person concerned who

is entitled to get a job in a different location, with travelling expenses paid. He is also paid a relocation allowance and receives assistance in getting new housing.

Another aspect of the general question of the right to work is what pay one receives for one's work.

In socialist society equality between men and women is always and everywhere taken for granted. This also goes for pay for work. (By way of comparison we may note that in Sweden a woman gets about 60 per cent of a man's earnings regardless of education or occupation, and in Denmark, approximately 75 per cent. These countries have obviously not gone far beyond just signing the corresponding item of the UN Covenant).

Nor, in the USSR, is there any difference between the sexes in choosing a trade or profession. Women account for 49 per cent of the work force in industry, 85 per cent in the public-health and social-security services, and 73 per cent in the educational and cultural spheres. In the Soviet Union there is nothing out of the ordinary in a woman occupying a leading position in the government or a top executive post.

An opportunity to study, to acquire an education is a major prerequisite of an individual's development. Everybody in the USSR is entitled to a free secondary and higher education. Universal secondary education to the age of 17 was made compulsory during the ninth five-year plan period (1971-75). Under Soviet law vocational training and improving one's qualifications are also free of charge.

In the current five-year period (1976-80) the enrolment at various vocational and technical schools will more than double compared to the pre-

vious five years. They will train nearly 11 million skilled workers, many of whom will simultaneously receive a secondary education.

The question may be asked what the practical guarantees of the right to education are. The answer is very simple—the state pays the entire cost of the construction, equipment and upkeep of educational institutions. It maintains a huge army of teachers, pays monthly grants to students and builds hostels for them. A Soviet citizen may study in his own language or in that of another nationality inhabiting the USSR.

The literacy level in the Soviet Union is 99.7 per cent. Over 11 million people have a higher education, and every third person studies in one way or another. Already, the Soviet Union accounts for every fourth scientist in the world.

Making adequate provision for ensuring the physical and mental health of every citizen—something which every member of society is entitled to—is another concern of the Soviet state and another prerequisite of real democracy.

That medical assistance is free in the Soviet Union is generally known. The USSR has a huge number of doctors and 118 hospital beds for every 10,000 of the population (for the United States the figure is about 80 and for Britain and France, 90-95).

The guaranteed right to adequate leisure time and to material security through social security and other benefits—all serve to ensure man's all-round and harmonious development in conditions of socialist democracy.

There can be no democracy and personal freedom without the concrete realization of social and economic rights. This is the essential prerequisite of man's basic freedom, freedom to live.

Freedoms Without Which No Democracy Is Possible

Our Western opponents argue with regard to democracy that the question of man's social rights should not be substituted for the question of his political freedoms. We agree. But the argument holds equally true the other way round.

The two issues are interconnected and are considered equally important in the Soviet Union. Underestimation of social rights leads inevitably to underestimation of guarantees of freedom.

Every Soviet citizen is guaranteed by the Constitution freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, freedom of assembly, meetings and demonstrations, personal immunity and other freedoms. What does this mean in everyday life?

In the Soviet Union public opinion is shaped and voiced by the working people and not by newspaper barons, as is the case in capitalist countries. The working people and their organizations have at their disposal newspapers, magazines, printing establishments, and radio and television facilities. A Soviet citizen can express his opinion or state his position anywhere, and first of all, of course, at the place where he works. One only has to attend a few turbulent meetings at factories or offices to see how false is the talk in the West about the alleged lack of freedom of speech under socialism.

Many people abroad may not know that every issue of any of the Soviet Union's newspapers (of which there are about 8,000) carries readers' letters in which various economic and social problems are raised and discussed in a serious manner, with concern for the interests of society and the state.

There are different papers—newspapers put out by

the Party and by government bodies, trade-union and youth newspapers (such as *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, published by the Young Communist League, which is equally popular with the young and the old), and literary and other daily and periodical publications.

The newspaper with the strongest ties with its readership is *Pravda*, founded in 1912 by Lenin, which speaks for the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee. This newspaper receives an average of about 450,000 letters a year (465,000 in 1976), or more than one thousand a day. From every town, district and village come letters which reflect the Soviet people's attitude to life, an attitude which is positive, principled and intolerant of any shortcomings that hold back social progress.

If the facts reported in a letter are confirmed, the establishment or institution thus criticized is obliged to rectify the shortcomings and then inform the readers of the newspaper, which in this case acts as an intermediary. Such criticism is invariably constructive, not just criticism for criticism's sake.

Let us, for example, look at the issues of *Pravda* for the first ten days of December 1976. There are about forty critical items addressed to ten ministries and fifteen regional or city Party committees. The same issues carry reports that, following earlier criticisms appearing in *Pravda*, 27 officials had had appropriate action taken against them, and seven of them had been dismissed from their posts. Party or administrative sanctions had been applied to two deputy ministers, several directors of enterprises and to Party functionaries.

If the Soviet press had not implemented freedom of speech, newspaper circulation would not have grown as it does each year so that there are now 65 newspaper copies for every 100 citizens.

Soviet people are sometimes asked why there are no meetings or demonstrations in front of Party or government offices or of the parliament, the way there are in Western countries. But there is hardly any need for a Soviet working man to demonstrate to make his point, say, outside the parliament, when he has more effective ways of doing this, including within the walls of parliament.

Another expression of freedom of speech in the Soviet Union is that everyone can take part in the preparation of draft legislation. Every major piece of legislation is discussed on a nation-wide scale before it can become law.

It is sometimes argued that in the West bills are subjected to lengthy debate as distinct from the unanimous passage of legislation in socialist countries. Hence, it is claimed, the former procedure is more democratic.

But in fact the reverse is true. When socialist legislation is passed, it is only after a quite lengthy legislative process in the course of which the opinion of the largest possible number of citizens and organizations has been taken into account, thus linking law with practical, everyday life. For instance, when the basic legislation on public education was being prepared in 1973, more than 3,000 proposals and suggestions were considered and discussed. The situation was the same with regard to the draft legislation on labour relations, and on marriage and the family.

There is complete freedom of religion in the Soviet Union. This means that every Soviet citizen is free to profess any religion or to profess none at all. This inalienable right is laid down in the Constitution.

It is generally known that most Soviet people are non-believers. At the same time religious beliefs and

sentiments are respected. Any restriction of the freedom of religion is a punishable offence. For example, in the Penal Code of the Russian Federation, the largest republic of the Soviet Union, there is an article which prescribes a sentence of up to six months' corrective labour for any interference with religious worship.

No one in the USSR is obliged to declare his religion or attitude to religion. Nor are any records kept on that score. Both atheists and believers, including the clergy, enjoy equal rights and freedoms. Both non-believers and believers of all religions are equal before the state, be they adherents of the Russian Orthodox Church, which used to be the state religion in tsarist times, or Roman Catholics, Moslems, Buddhists, Judaists, Evangelists, Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, etc.

The Russian Orthodox Church maintains three seminaries and two academies in the Soviet Union. The Moslems have their madrasahs, and there are religious schools for Buddhists, Judaists, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, etc. Some Moslems from the USSR study at Islamic schools at Damascus and Cairo, while Baptists attend the theological departments of universities in Sweden, Britain, and Canada.

Political views, like religion, are a person's exclusively private concern. There are people whose views and expressed opinions are at variance with the communist ideology, and there are also frank opponents of socialism. Some of them land up in court, though not for their convictions, but for actions which have contravened the law.

Personal immunity, sanctity of one's home, secrecy of correspondence and all other rights which are strictly observed in socialist society demonstrate the truly democratic nature of the Soviet state.

For example, in the USSR it is not permitted for

anyone to enter a person's home or arrest its inhabitant without a ruling of the court or the procurator's office. An arrest is at all times an emergency measure.

But such violations of a person's rights are far from rare in the self-styled "free world", whose ideologists and propagandists concern themselves with what they call the "lack of human rights" in the USSR. In their own countries, as often as not, a suspected person is first arrested and only then is it decided if he should be released before the investigation is completed. For this money is demanded, so that sometimes a wrongly accused person has to pay a bail of tens of thousands of dollars for his own innocence. For instance, Angela Davis, the world-famous champion for civil rights in the United States, was released on a bail of 102,500 dollars—another case of freedom being equated with money.

Any infringement of the rights and freedoms of citizens is a punishable offence in the USSR. But this is only one aspect of the matter. Anyone who has any knowledge at all of life in the Soviet Union knows that socialist legality is not the only guarantee of a person's right to go about his lawful affairs without hindrance. The entire system of the socialist state, the genuinely democratic nature of Soviet society, stand guard over the rights and freedoms, the honour and dignity of Soviet man.

At the Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties of Europe in June, 1976, Leonid Brezhnev said, "We have created a society of people who are equal in the broadest sense of the word and who do not know any social, property, racial or other privileges, a society which not only proclaims human rights but also ensures the possibility of their implementation."

The benefits, rights and freedoms enjoyed by the Soviet people have become part of the very fabric of their life. They are taken for granted as being right and natural.

From Society to Man, from Man to Society

There is a kind of working agreement between the socialist state and its citizens, most of whom are noted for their energetic participation in production and in social and political affairs. The state undertakes to ensure the well-being and freedom of the individual, while the individual gives his work to society and participates in state and social affairs. To the majority of Soviet people this is not an obligation limiting their personal freedom but a natural need consistent with their own interests.

There is no unresolvable conflict between the individual and society under socialism. Their relations are based above all on mutual responsibility and mutual care and concern.

Every Soviet person is aware from his own experience and that of his family, relatives and friends, of the concern for the individual of society, which is not at all indifferent as to whether a certain worker is satisfied with his work, the provisions for his leisure, and generally how he feels. A feeling of his importance and usefulness is what a person gets in the first place from the society of socialist democracy which is responsible for him.

"My life is like the life of many others," said K. B. Donenbayeva, a tractor driver from Kazakhstan, at the 25th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1976. "It is not an exception," she continued. "I must say frankly that I am boundless-

sly happy with what Soviet government has given me, a simple Kazakh woman. My grandfather and great-grandfather tended cattle owned by other people on other people's land. They toiled all their lives on that land but never knew the joy of free labour. But even their lot was not as bad as that of women whose entire life began and ended with housekeeping.

"Who would have ever believed that I, the granddaughter of a downtrodden herdsman, would be driving a powerful tractor over a steppe brought to a new life, that I would be elected to the highest body of state power, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, that my modest services would be rewarded with the title of Hero of Socialist Labour. . ."

Explaining what was at the basis of the changes, not only in her life but in that of millions of other Soviet people, she said that it had all become possible because of the Soviet government's concern for every working man no matter what his position or in what part of the great country he lived.

Socialist society treats all working people as important. This can be seen from the special attention they receive. On the front pages of Soviet newspapers every day can be found the portraits of factory workers, collective farmers, engineers, scientists—people with all sorts of skills—who can best be described by one word—creators. The fact that these people (and not members of a royal family, millionaires and "stars") are the nation's favourites testifies to the high and exacting ideals of the society of socialist democracy.

Conditions that are in every sense "human" are essential for personal freedom. This is a self-evident truth. But the individual himself becomes free only when he becomes capable of consciously utilizing these conditions for his social activity.

"Nothing adds so much to the stature of the individual as a constructive attitude to life and a conscious approach to one's duty to society, when matching words and deeds becomes a rule of daily behaviour," Leonid Brezhnev said in his report to the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

"An active position in life, a conscious attitude to one's social duty" is probably the key to the character of man in socialist society.

This also helps one better to understand the formula "from society to man, from man to society".

Those who have first-hand knowledge of the Soviet Union are aware that the work of running the state—which means, in particular, the work of the Soviets or agencies of the Soviets—is done by many millions of working people. Equally broad, if not broader, is the participation of the Soviet people in the work of various kinds of trade unions, youth organizations and numerous other public organizations.

The basic purpose of Soviet trade unions—which unite in their ranks nearly 110 million factory and office workers, collective farmers and intellectual workers—is to promote democracy in the sphere of production which is the most important sphere of man's creative endeavour. It is at one's place of work, amongst fellow-workers, that one's socialist qualities develop, together with relations of comradesly assistance and a responsible attitude to the collective and vice versa. These are the beginnings of the "Soviet way of life", with all that this implies.

Both workers and managers are members of the same trade unions. That is why a factory manager, as a rank-and-file member of his primary trade-union organization, is accountable to the workers

and manages the factory in their interests, with their help and under their control.

There can be no production plan or rate-setting without the approval of the trade-union committee. The management and the trade union together draw up the "house" rules for an enterprise, award gradings for skill, determine the size of wages, etc.

The trade union has in addition a right which does not extend to the management, that of administering the state social insurance funds. Allowances for temporary disability are paid by the trade union, which is also in charge of sanatoriums and holiday homes.

Through the trade union, working people take part in drawing up an enterprise's economic plans, distributing its profits, and allocating the housing built by the enterprise. No plant—nor even a section of it—can be put into operation without the consent of the trade union which has first to study the working conditions at the new project. No law which affects working conditions, even indirectly, can be promulgated without the agreement of the trade unions.

It will be clear, therefore, that participation in trade-union work enables workers to have a hand in the solution of economic problems, big and small, and that rank-and-file members of the trade unions perform an important duty in the service of society and the state.

The biggest youth organization in the USSR, the Komsomol, as the Young Communist League is called, is 35-million strong. Young people are the most mobile and energetic section of Soviet society and take a lively interest in everything. They are always ready to offer their strength, their knowledge and their boundless enthusiasm.

Komsomols are ready to leave all the comforts

of city life for years to live in unusual and often hard conditions while building new towns in the Far North, ploughing virgin lands in Kazakhstan or laying railway lines such as the one from Lake Baikal to the river Amur in Siberia.

To give a general idea of the scope of the Komsomol's participation in state and social affairs, we may mention that a total of 250 government decrees to improve the conditions of work, study and recreation of Soviet people were drafted in the period 1963-73 with the participation of the Young Communist League.

Voluntary work in public control agencies (people's control, as it is called), which exercise a supervisory or oversight function, is another important form of social activity. Nine million factory and office workers and collective farmers have been entrusted with a task of great state importance, that of keeping a careful check on how rationally and thriftily public funds are spent. The People's Control Committee of the USSR, which co-ordinates the activity of people's controllers, itself maintains only a very small staff in its various branches. Over 360,000 people are voluntary inspectors and heads of voluntary departments of people's control committees. Like the main body of controllers (the so-called groups and posts) they work solely on a voluntary basis.

There are many other public organizations in the Soviet Union. For example, trade unions organize standing production conferences at factories and mills. These bodies, which numbered 130,700 as of January 1, 1977, are elected, and three-quarters of their members are workers and representatives of the management, and they participate actively, and by no means as a formality, in all production matters.

"Actively", "voluntarily", "thriftily", "not formally", "on a social basis" are all fitting terms for the social image of Soviet man.

New associations appear and develop in our country alongside those of long standing. Quite recently, for example, nature-conservation and book-lovers' societies, and several associations of friendship with other nations have been organized. For instance, the All-Russia Society for the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Monuments has a membership of ten million and has the right, on an equal footing with the appropriate government agencies, to approve (or oppose if necessary) all development and reconstruction projects in towns and other inhabited localities which have historical monuments. No project of this nature is authorized without the Society's participation.

The growing role of public organizations in the life of the country and the increasing contribution made by their members in running the state affairs are a dynamic indicator of the high level of democratism of mature socialism. In terms of social development this testifies to a tangible movement towards communist self-government.

* * *

This is a story about the democratic social system in the USSR, about the sources and special features of Soviet democracy.

The only purpose of this brief historical excursion is to take a comparative view of the achievements of socialism, of the new democratic set-up. We have sought to describe the forms of social organization and government which best correspond to the principles of socialism.

The new social system creates its own democratic forms of running society and the state. Socialism evolves a qualitatively new type of democracy, both representative (elective) and direct. Socialism provides for the combining of these forms in the best possible way. The most important thing, however, is to employ them as efficiently as possible, both from the viewpoint of democracy itself and the rational economic management and organization of the country's entire life.

Soviets have always been the foundation of the new society, the main link of the democratic system in the Soviet Union. "The democratic nature of our society is most vividly seen in the many-sided activities of the Soviets of Working People's Deputies—the most representative organs of people's power," reads the resolution of the CPSU Central Committee of January 31, 1977, on the 60th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

Indeed, the Soviets are in charge of practically all spheres of state affairs. Their activity today is the best possible reply to the question whether the potentialities of Soviet democracy have been exhausted—a democracy which, as Leonid Brezhnev said at the 16th Congress of Soviet Trade Unions in March, 1977, embraces the political, social and economic spheres, a democracy which ensures above all social justice and social equality.

The range of problems dealt with by the Soviets is constantly expanding. In recent years, for example, responsibility for the running of many enterprises, institutions and organizations has been handed over to local Soviets. Previously these establishments were under the control of ministries and departments of the USSR or of the separate republics. In addition, Soviets now participate di-

rectly in the planning and co-ordination of the work of those industrial enterprises located on their territory which are the responsibility of departments or ministries.

Local Soviets have also taken over responsibility for the state-owned housing and the entire system of utility services. They are now authorized to pool and use the funds of enterprises and organizations in order jointly to build blocks of flats, kindergartens, shops, and cultural centres, and to set up service facilities.

This has been made possible largely because some time ago the Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee initiated legislation giving greater authority to village, district and town Soviets.

The 25th CPSU Congress, held in February-March, 1976, discussed, among other things, a proposal to institute legislation outlining the extent of authority of the Soviets of large territorial-administrative units—territories, regions and national areas. The proposal was approved and work is already under way which will define to a great extent the future of the entire system of democratic government.

Lenin saw the content and meaning of socialist democratism as demanding close links with the people as a whole, and drawing them into the governing of the country.

This is equally important today. At the same time, today, as never before, the development of socialist democracy cannot be limited to increasing the involvement of working people in governing the country and adding to the citizens' democratic rights. What is also required is the improvement of the very methods of government in

keeping with the requirements of society's dynamic economic and cultural development.

The purpose of the democratic procedure is to facilitate to the maximum the implementation of a broad social programme and the scientific government of socialist society. To solve in a competent manner various problems of social development, means, in the final analysis, to elaborate an optimum model of the process of government as a whole.

Party guidance of society and the state is essential to the development of socialist democracy. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union fulfils the triple function of a political, ideological and organizational leader.

In its current and long-range policy, the Party proceeds from the premise that socialism is a scientifically-organized and scientifically-governed society which thoroughly studies and analyses its own development, thus ensuring the best conditions for rapid progress. The radical economic, social and political changes that have taken place in the sixty years of Soviet government are primarily the result of the efforts of the Communist Party and the socialist state in the field of organization and government in the broadest sense of the word.

The principle of Party guidance is of key significance under socialism. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is today charting a realistic course of action for the immediate future and over a longer period based on the theory and practice of advanced socialism. It prepares a working schedule for the carrying out of its programme. The well-being of man is central to all of the Party's plans, and is the ultimate goal of its policy.

One aspect of this activity is the strengthening of the foundations of the state of the entire peo-

ple, "which, in new historical conditions, is carrying on the great creative role of the state of proletarian dictatorship", as the resolution of the CPSU Central Committee on the 60th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution expresses it.

The Soviet state of the entire people is not a new type of state but a new stage of its development, the social and political embodiment of advanced socialism. Its character is determined by a gradual transition to a communist social organization.

The social base of the state of the entire people is the new historical community—the Soviet people—that has taken shape in the course of the building of socialism. History knows of no other state with such a broad social base, which is growing increasingly stronger as classes and social groups, nations and nationalities grow closer together and the major distinctions are erased between town and countryside and between physical and intellectual work.

The achievements of the Soviet people, both economic and political, and the stage of ideological and moral unity they have attained demonstrate that our country has scaled qualitatively new heights. The time has come to sum up what has been accomplished and incorporate it in the Constitution, the country's fundamental law.

"This work is being done thoroughly, without any haste, so as to consider every problem that arises with the greatest possible precision, and then to place the draft for discussion by the whole people... The draft of the new Constitution should evidently reflect the great victories of socialism and formalize not only the general principles of the socialist system, expressing the class substance of our state, but also the basic features of

the developed socialist society and its political organization," said Leonid Brezhnev at the 25th CPSU Congress.

The new Constitution should fully reflect the principles of economic management, and outline in a new way the role of the state in the advancement of science, public education and culture, and in general in the life of the entire country and every Soviet person.

The basic provisions of the new Constitution of the USSR will reflect the humanistic nature of a society of true democracy, of a state whose chief objective is to build communism in the name of the interests of the working people.

Socialist democracy is a dynamic process which constantly seeks to perfect the forms and methods of government of socialist society. There is a great deal yet to be discovered, tested and modified.

Socialist democracy will continue developing and improving in step with the Soviet Union's economic, cultural, social and political progress.

* * *

When this booklet was already off the press the draft of the new Constitution of the USSR was published, following its discussion at a plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee where the report on it had been presented by Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and Chairman of the Constitutional Commission. The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet was recommended to present the draft for country-wide discussion. We are therefore adding this supplement to the booklet as a logical completion of the theme dealt with in it.

The USSR Constitution is at once a legal and political document which sets forth the basic legal provisions operative in the country, reflects the Soviet Union's social achievements, and at the same time proclaims the principal tasks and aims of Soviet society at a given stage of its development. The constitutions of different periods in the history of the Soviet state have a natural and logical continuity. Each of them reflected the realities of its time:

- The first Constitution of the Russian Federation adopted in 1918 gave legislative expression to the victory of the October Revolution of 1917 and established the class essence of the new power.

- The Fundamental Law, or Constitution, of the USSR adopted in 1924 laid down the principles of the Union as a federation.

- The Constitution of 1936 reflected the consolidation of socialist social relations in the country and in conformity with this formally established the system of power and government and procedure for elections.

- The new Constitution records the establishment in the Soviet Union of a society of developed socialism, a state of the whole people, and proclaims communism as the highest goal of social development.

The basic provisions of the current Constitution, which has been in force for forty years, continue to accord with the essence of the Soviet system and will be retained in the new Constitution. But socialist development has seen modifications and improvements over the years and changes in the features of everyday socialist life. External circumstances affecting the Soviet state have also changed considerably. The capitalist encirclement of the USSR has become a thing of the past. Socialism has become

a world system. The international authority and influence of the world's first socialist state have grown immensely.

Time has made it necessary to introduce corrections to constitutional formulas.

The draft of the new Fundamental Law of the country takes into account the accumulated experience of the state in constitutional matters and incorporates the measures taken between 1936 and 1977 to bring the country's legislation up to date. The past few years alone have witnessed the entry into force of Fundamentals of Legislation and Codes of the Union republics covering most of the principal branches of law, legislation governing enterprises and production associations, new Rules for Collective Farms, and new laws on public education, pensions, public health, environmental protection, the rights and duties of Soviets, etc.

These legislative measures are reflected in the draft of the new Constitution of the USSR.

In addition, account was also taken in drawing up the draft of the experience of constitutional development of other socialist countries.

In general outline the new Constitution of developed socialism will reflect what has been achieved by the economic and social policies of the Party and state, and the position attained by the USSR in the international arena, and indicate the path of future social progress.

Since the socialist state performs very important economic functions the Constitution will be brought up to date as regards the main principles observed today in the management of the national economy. It will reflect the fact that in the past decades the single economic mechanism of the country has achieved stability and greater dynamism and smoothness of operation. It will show that the achieve-

ments of the scientific and technological revolution, optimally combined with the advantages of socialism, have advanced the Soviet economy to a leading place in the world, demonstrating that public ownership has proved its viability and effectiveness.

The new Constitution will reaffirm the fundamental principle of socialist public ownership of the means of production as being the basis of the Soviet economic system. In addition, the draft contains specific provisions called into being by the development of socialist society. Along with the state and cooperative collective farm forms of property it names **joint state-cooperative property and the property of public organizations.**

These forms of property have already become part of Soviet reality. For example, there are the agro-industrial complexes. This new form of collective property is owned jointly by collective farms, on the one side, and state farms and state-owned industrial enterprises, on the other.

The fourth Soviet Constitution will give legal expression to the combination of planned, centralized management with the economic autonomy and initiative of enterprises and their associations. This will give a fresh impetus to the development of democracy in the most important sphere of social life—production and the management of it.

The new Constitution will also reflect the essence of changes in the social make-up of the Soviet state. The advance toward social homogeneity, the steady and ever more noticeable obliteration of distinctions between the basic social groups of society; the drawing together of the separate nations and ethnic groups of the country—a natural process which cannot be hastened artificially; the formation of a new historical community—the Soviet people—all these changes now make it possible to define the

Soviet state constitutionally as a socialist state of the whole people (Article 1).

In recognition of this it is proposed to rename the present Soviets of Working People's Deputies **Soviets of People's Deputies**.

Article 2 of the draft reads:

"All power in the USSR shall be vested in the people. The people shall exercise state power through the Soviets of People's Deputies, which constitute the political foundation of the USSR.

"All other organs of state shall be under the control of, and accountable to, the Soviets." This means that all links of the political system are subordinate to the Soviets and must maintain close working contact with the Soviets, which constitute the basis of the mechanism of socialist democracy.

There is special reference in the draft to the people's deputies to the Soviets. Taking into account the great importance of the activity of deputies, the draft incorporates certain fundamental provisions of legislation on the Status of Deputies, adopted five years ago. The embodiment of these provisions in the Constitution will further enhance the status of deputies and regularize their work.

The new Constitution of the USSR is a constitution of communism under construction. An objective prerequisite of progress toward communism is leadership by the Communist Party of social life in all its aspects—as the years of practical experience have shown.

The draft contains a statement of the place, role and importance of the Party in the country's overall development. As distinct from the 1936 Constitution, the draft has a special article devoted to it, reading:

"The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is the leading and guiding force of Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state and public

organizations. The CPSU exists for the people and serves the people.

"Armed with the Marxist-Leninist teaching, the Communist Party shall determine the general perspective of society's development, and the course of the internal and external policy of the USSR, shall direct the great constructive activity of the Soviet people, and place the struggle of the people for the triumph of communism on a planned, scientific basis" (Article 6).

In addition to the Party and the Soviets, the new Constitution of the USSR will define the status of the trade unions, the Young Communist League (Komsomol), cooperative associations and public organizations. They will be vested with the right to participate in the deciding of political, economic, social and cultural questions, and the right to initiate legislation.

A large part of the new Constitution will reflect the development of socialist democracy. It will sum up the years of experience of this development, reflect the improvements effected in different forms of government by the people, and reaffirm the old rights of Soviet citizens and specify new ones and the obligations that go with them.

It will proclaim the real rights and obligations of Soviet citizens that make up the fullest complex. How does the draft formulate the existing and new civil rights and the principles of equality?

The previously specified right to work is supplemented with **the right to a choice of profession, occupation or work suited to one's vocation, abilities, education and special training**, with the proviso that this choice must also conform to the requirements of society.

The existing right to maintenance in the event

of sickness or disability is extended to include the **right to health protection** (Article 42).

Forty years ago the Fundamental Law of the USSR fixed the right to education generally. The new draft provides for **compulsory universal secondary education, and the overall development of higher education and vocational training.**

The new Constitution of the USSR will proclaim **the right to living accommodation** (Article 44), which was not included in the previous Constitutions. The Soviet Union will become one of the first countries in the world to institutionalize the right to this vital need.

It will also specify in particular or establish for the first time other rights, such as the right to submit proposals to various bodies (Article 49), the right to legal protection against any encroachments upon life and health, property, personal freedom, honour and dignity (Article 57). In addition, provision is made for the right to appeal to a court of law against unlawful actions by officials which infringe the rights of citizens (Article 58).

Most of these rights have long been realized in practice. Their being written into the new Constitution will define more fully the legal status of Soviet citizens.

The draft reaffirms the civic freedoms which have been in existence for many years, such as freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and rallies, and of street processions and demonstrations.

The provisions of the new Constitution of the USSR will be guaranteed to a greater extent than before.

It is expressly stated that it is the responsibility of the state to concern itself with improving working conditions of citizens, raising their incomes, ensuring the growth and just distribution of the public

consumption funds, and promoting the development of science and the arts.

The right to living accommodation will continue to be realized through a housing construction programme of unprecedented magnitude and intensity. In addition, the state will provide further assistance to cooperative and individual house-building.

These constitutional rights carry with them certain obligations, among which is the provision that citizens must realize their rights and freedoms reasonably, without detriment to the social system. It is clearly stated that the rights and freedoms specified are provided in keeping with the interests of the working people and with a view to continuing to advance the socialist way of life. It is a prime civic obligation to be aware of one's responsibility toward society and to conscientiously perform one's duties to the state and to the people.

The new Constitution will require citizens to safeguard the interests of the socialist state, to strengthen its might and promote authority, to preserve cultural values, and to protect nature.

In connection with man's relationship to nature—a very topical world problem today—the Constitution contains the new provision:

"In the interests of the present and of the future generations, necessary measures shall be taken in the USSR for the protection and scientifically-founded rational utilization of the land and its mineral resources and the country's flora and fauna, for the preservation of the purity of the air and water, for ensuring the reproduction of natural resources, and for improving the environment" (Article 18).

Additional constitutional provisions specify other responsibilities of citizens: to care for their children and their upbringing; to combat the squandering of social property; to assist in the preservation of

public order; to strengthen the friendship of the peoples of the USSR.

This friendship constitutes one of the principal foundations of the multinational socialist state. The principles underlying the federal structure of Soviet society have fully justified themselves, and there has been no need to make any important changes in the forms of the Soviet federation.

As in the 1936 Constitution, the new draft provides that the sovereign rights of the Union republics are protected by the USSR. The guarantees of their rights are retained, and new ones are added, such as the right to take part in deciding questions which formerly were the prerogative of the USSR. The right of the Union republics to initiate legislation in the USSR Supreme Soviet is reaffirmed.

The new Constitution reaffirms the need for the constant strengthening of the foundations of the Union.

Some changes are envisaged in electoral procedure. At present the minimum age for election to the USSR Supreme Soviet is 23, and for election to the Supreme Soviets of the Union republics, 21. Now it is proposed to lower the minimum age in both cases to 18.

The close interconnection of internal and foreign policy in the life of the state, and the tremendous changes that have taken place in the past forty years as regards the position occupied by the USSR in the international arena will be reflected in the new Constitution. There will be new articles dealing with foreign policy.

The Soviet state has invariably championed peace. Its prime objectives as recorded in the draft are to create favourable international conditions for the building of communism in the country; to strengthen the security of all the world's peoples and to

prevent wars of aggression; to consolidate the position of world socialism; to support the struggle of the peoples for national liberation and social progress.

The draft contains an article which expresses in condensed form the essence of the policy pursued by the Soviet Union of peaceful coexistence of states with different socio-economic systems:

"The relations of the USSR with other states shall be based on the observance of the principles of mutual renunciation of the use or threat of force, sovereign equality, inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity of states, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in internal affairs, respect for human rights and basic freedoms, equality and the right of peoples to decide their own destiny, cooperation between states, scrupulous fulfilment of commitments emanating from universally recognized principles and norms of international law, and the international treaties signed by the USSR".

The new Constitution may well be regarded as a manifesto for the building of communism. It will record the degree of maturity of the present socialist society and set out more clearly the guidelines for its advance toward communism.

The country-wide discussion of the draft will demonstrate the degree of the civic and political maturity of the Soviet people. The many years of painstaking work of jurists, historians, economists and sociologists, and the efforts of the Party and government officials, will be supplemented by the creative involvement of millions of Soviet citizens in the drafting of their Constitution.

The fourth Soviet Constitution will make up the core, as it were, of the Code of Laws of the USSR, the compilation of which was begun by decision of the 25th Congress of the CPSU in 1976.

The new Constitution will serve as the fundamental law of the country, the measure by which the government, the ministries and the executive committees of the Soviets of People's Deputies will check their work.

The new Constitution of the USSR will provide for the further social activity of the entire country and of every citizen.

The discussion of the draft will be taking place as preparations are under way to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution. These two momentous events will complement each other, making 1977 an especially memorable year in the life of the Soviet state.

К. Черненко

СОВЕТСКАЯ ДЕМОКРАТИЯ:
ПРИНЦИПЫ И ПРАКТИКА

на английском языке

Цена 27 коп.

**Power of the people
and for the people**

**Free benefits
and what they cost**

Living threads

Who are elected deputies?

**Rights without which
no freedom is possible**

Features of real democracy

