

V. KOTOK

The SOVIET
REPRESENTATIVE
SYSTEM

VIKTOR KOTOK

The Soviet Representative System

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PROGRESS PUBLISHERS

Moscow

PRINTED IN SOVIET UNION

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Edited by Y. Sdobnikov

A description of how the Soviets—the representative organs of the Soviet state—function; and a picture of current trends within the Soviets and novel developments in their formation and structure, the grassroots of these representative organs, and the legal and organizational forms of their every echelon.

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How the Soviets Function

A new stage in the development of the Soviet representative system was ushered in by the decisions of the Twentieth, Twenty-First and Twenty-Second Congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union which blazed the trail to socialism has now attained economic, political and cultural heights which enable it to start the full-scale construction of communism.

To build the material and technical basis of communism and to improve living standards is one of the basic tasks of the Soviet state and its representative organs. This calls for an unprecedented boost in industrial and agricultural production. Investments in the economy over 20 years (1961-80) are to total almost 2,000,000 million rubles, which is six times the amount invested since 1917. Expanding social production rests on the latest achievements of science and technology. Of especial importance is the all-round growth of labour productivity, which is the main condition for the victory of the communist system. On this groundwork the Soviet Union will create gigantic productive forces and lead the world in output per head, thereby ensuring its people the highest standard of living and creating the conditions for transition to distribution according to need. Socialist relations of production will be gradually transformed into communist relations; the important distinctions between town and country and sub-

sequently those between mental and physical labour will be obliterated. As a result, distinctions between the classes will completely disappear.

Only by creating the material and technical basis of communism will the Soviet people be able to gain victory in the economic competition against capitalism, to maintain the country's defences on the level necessary to defeat any aggressor who dares encroach on the Soviet Union and the socialist world.

Another task of the Soviet state and its representative organs is to educate and mould the new man, the builder of communism. Moulding the new man is a process of many aspects: it implies acceptance of the communist world outlook and communist ideals, a much greater sense of public duty, and the communist attitude to labour and social production which make labour a prime human want, and a source of inspiration, creativity and happiness; it implies the acceptance of communist morality, the rules of the communist way of life, harmonious cultural development, general and polytechnical knowledge, a sense of the aesthetic, and physical development. Communism will take mankind and the individual to the summits of progress.

Both these primary tasks are being tackled by the Soviet state and its representative bodies in close unity, because the shaping of the communist economy and the moulding of the new man are inter-related.

These tasks are being carried out at a time when socialism in the country has triumphed *completely* and *finally* and when the conditions which necessitated the dictatorship of the proletariat have disappeared. Accordingly, as Khrushchov said at the Twenty-Second Congress of the C.P.S.U., the Soviet working class, with an eye to the tasks of communist construction, has transformed the state of its dictatorship into a state of the whole people. Until then the state had always been an instrument of dictatorship by one class or another. Now, for the first time in history, there is a state which is not a dictatorship of any one class, but is an instrument of society as a whole, of the entire people.

The state of the whole people began to emerge shortly before the adoption, in 1936, of the U.S.S.R. Constitution, with the abolition of the exploiting classes and the building of the framework of socialist society. It was a slow process because of the wartime emergency and the postwar cult of Stalin's personality.

The Twentieth Congress subjected the personality cult to severe criticism and decided on measures to abolish its harmful effects, restore Leninist standards within the Party and the Government, and to develop Soviet democracy.

It was the task of the representative organs to improve the political organisation of Soviet society. The Twenty-First Party Congress stated that "in contemporary conditions the main emphasis in the development of the socialist state is to be laid on the all-round development of democracy, on ensuring that all citizens participate in the management of economic, cultural affairs and the conduct of public affairs."¹

The new Party Programme adopted by the Twenty-Second C.P.S.U. Congress reaffirms this long-range prospect. It emphasises: "*All-round extension and perfection of socialist democracy, active participation of all citizens in the administration of the state, in the management of economic and cultural development, improvement of the government apparatus, and increased control over its activity by the people constitute the main direction in which socialist statehood develops in the period of the building of communism.*"²

The development of the Soviet representative system, combined as it is with a variety of forms of direct participation by the masses in government and social affairs, is the main trend of Soviet democracy to ensure the sovereignty of the people. This system is highly ramified in accordance with the Soviet Union's federal structure and the administrative and territorial organisation of its constituent republics.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a multinational

¹ *Decisions of the Twenty-First (Extraordinary) Congress of the C.P.S.U.*, 1959, p. 27.

² *The Road to Communism*, Documents of the 22nd Congress of the C.P.S.U., Moscow, 1962, p. 548.

federal state, which was founded on December 30, 1922, through the voluntary union of equal Soviet republics. Today there are fifteen Union Republics, some of which are multinational, with compact national populations. These, by virtue of their right to self-determination, have chosen the form of Soviet socialist autonomy—Autonomous Republic, Autonomous Region or National Area—which best suits them. All in all, there are 20 Autonomous Republics, 8 Autonomous Regions and 10 National Areas within the framework of the Union Republics.

The highest organ of state power—the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.—is bicameral because it must reflect not only the common interests of all the working people but also the specific interests of all the nationalities. A point to note about the Supreme Soviet is that its two Chambers—the Soviet of the Union, and the Soviet of Nationalities, have equal legislative rights. They are elected for the same term and on the same principles, but on a different basis of representation. A law is considered adopted if passed by both Chambers by a simple majority vote in each.

The Soviet of the Union expresses the common interests of all the working people, irrespective of nationality. The Soviet of Nationalities reflects the interests and needs of the nationalities arising out of their specific national features. And this determines representation in the Chambers. The Soviet of the Union is elected by citizens voting by election districts on the basis of 300,000 inhabitants per constituency. As for the Soviet of Nationalities, it is elected by citizens voting by Union and Autonomous Republics, Autonomous Regions and National Areas. This system of election produces the following distribution of seats in this Chamber: 25 seats to each Union Republic, 11, to each Autonomous Republic, 5, to each Autonomous Region, and 1 to each National Area.

The entire representative system in the Soviet Union is made up of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., 15 unicameral Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics, 20 unicameral Supreme Soviets of the Autonomous Republics, and 47,225 territorial, regional, area, district, town, ward and rural Soviets

of Working People's Deputies. All are elected by Soviet citizens on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot. The activities of all these Soviets are organised in such a way as to vest the people with all state power and to enable them to control the national wealth.

The keynote of socialist democracy is the actual sovereignty of the people, who hold sway both in the political and economic spheres. The Soviet people administer all their national wealth both through their representative organs and directly. As communist construction progresses, the masses, who have a vested interest in the expansion of the productive forces and the steady growth of the social economy, culture and welfare, will have more and more say in the solution of fundamental economic and political problems. There is evidence of this trend on every hand. During the country-wide discussion on the target figures for the Seven-Year Plan for the Economic Development of the U.S.S.R. more than 968,000 meetings attended by over 70 million people were held. At these meetings 4,672,000 people submitted proposals and additions, and made comments.

That this is a profoundly democratic trend will be seen from the fact that the Twenty-First Party Congress endorsed the target figures for the development of the Soviet economy for 1959-65 "*with the amendments and addenda introduced on the basis of the discussion at the Congress and during the pre-Congress discussion of the theses*" (of Khrushchov's report to the Congress).¹ Winding up the debate on this question at the Congress, Khrushchov gave a high assessment of the people's proposals and said competent state organs should make a careful study of numerous concrete proposals made by working people during the discussion of the target figures and adopt measures aimed at their practical implementation.

The nation-wide discussion of the economic target figures meant that the numerous concrete proposals, submitted by the people and approved by the Party Congress, were in the

¹ *Decisions of the Twenty-First (Extraordinary) Congress of the C.P.S.U., p. 6.*

nature of a *directive* to all-Union, republican and local state bodies to act and implement these proposals.

The unity of economic and political guidance is a distinctive mark of socialist democracy; it flows from the very nature of the socialist system, which is gradually concentrating all social production in the hands of the socialist state.

There are two forms of socialist ownership of the instruments and means of production: state property, and co-operative and collective-farm property. Socialist property is unchallenged. Both forms rule out any exploitation of man by man and serve as the material basis for the satisfaction of society's growing needs.

State property differs from co-operative and collective-farm property in proportions and the objects of ownership. The objects of state property are the land, its mineral wealth, waters, forests, factories and mills, mines, rail, water and air transport, banks, communications, large-scale state-organised agricultural enterprises (such as state farms), municipal and commercial enterprises, the bulk of the dwelling houses in the cities and industrial centres. Nine-tenths of the nation's wealth is state property, the rest being co-operative and collective-farm property, which includes the commonly-owned enterprises of the collective farms and co-operatives, with their livestock and implements, agricultural machinery (tractors, combines, lorries, etc.), the products of the collective farms and co-operatives, and also their common buildings.

These two forms of socialist property also differ in the degree to which they are socialised. State property belongs to the whole people, and is administered on their behalf by state organs, with the broad participation of trade unions, the personnel of the enterprises and construction sites. By contrast, co-operative and collective-farm property is owned by collective farms and co-operative societies, and is administered entirely by its owners.

To get a clear picture of how the people take part in production management, let us take a state farm and a collective farm, which correspond to the two forms of socialist property.

The state farm is a state-owned enterprise. It is headed by a state-appointed director. Next in line is a consultative board, consisting of workers and technical specialists, who hear reports from the state-farm management and draft recommendations on planning and other important aspects of economic operations. These recommendations are put into practice when approved by the director.

The collective farm (kolkhoz) is a voluntary peasant organisation. Its major business is decided by a general meeting of members or by a meeting of their authorised representatives (on large collective farms). The day-to-day control of production is exercised by a board elected at a general meeting. The trend now is towards a broader state guidance of collective farms, on a wide democratic basis (of which more later).

There are new developments in these two forms of socialist property, such as the emergence in recent years of interkolkhoz property, which originates with the pooling of resources by two or more collective farms to build common enterprises for processing agricultural produce, and also elevators, hospitals, roads, etc. This is evidence of the growing socialisation of collective-farm production. Another recent development is joint kolkhoz-state property, such as electric power stations and processing enterprises built jointly by collective farms and the state.

In the period of full-scale communist construction this tendency towards greater socialisation is intensified and in the process of economic development collective-farm and state property are brought closer together. This reflects the gradual reduction of the two forms of socialist property to a single social ownership of the instruments and means of production—communist property under the control of society as a whole. In these conditions, the role of representative organs becomes much more important, for their activity extends to the organisation of all social production, planning and the distribution of products. So long as these organs remain political, the unity of their economic and political activity will continue to be one of their characteristic features.

The Twenty-First Congress of the C.P.S.U. decided that the representative organs must have a greater part to play in solving the task of building the material and technical basis of communism. The Congress emphasised that as Soviet society advanced to communism the Soviets would be extending their guidance of economic and cultural development.

If the Soviets are to function successfully, they must daily concentrate on the crucial questions in the fulfilment of Seven-Year Plan assignments by industrial enterprises, construction sites, and state and collective farms; they must see that the best possible use is made of all potentialities to expand production, and improve living standards and cultural facilities.

The founders of Marxism-Leninism hammered home the point that communism is born wherever the masses—those who actually produce material wealth—decide of their own accord, to expand social production, lower costs and make social labour more and more productive.

It is the task of the Soviets to support in every way the initiative of the masses in developing the economy and labour productivity. This is done both through scientific state planning of the economy and culture, and management of production by organs set up by the Soviets, and through greater socialist emulation for the fulfilment and overfulfilment of state plans. In recent years the Soviets have concentrated on applying the latest technical achievements to socialist production and developing the communist forms of labour in every way.

It is clear, then, that the Soviets do not deal only with purely governmental problems but also with broad social problems. The Party's Programme says that "the role of the Soviets, which are an all-inclusive organisation of the people embodying their unity, will grow as communist construction progresses. The Soviets, which combine the features of a government body and a mass organisation of the people, operate more and more like social organisations, with the masses participating extensively and directly in their work."¹ It is there-

¹ *The Road to Communism*, p. 548.

fore safe to say that the Soviets may survive as the backbone of a stateless communist society where socialist statehood has fully grown into communist public self-administration. According to the Party's Programme, communist self-administration will embrace the Soviets, trade unions, co-operatives, and other mass organisations of the people. The Soviets, which represent and unite all the people, are best suited to become the basis of communist public self-administration.

Lenin said popular representation under socialism was the highest form of democratic social organisation because the Soviets assured the masses all-round participation in government. "This means that every representative of the masses, every citizen must be placed in conditions which would enable him to participate in the discussion of state laws, in the election of his representatives, and in putting the state laws into effect."¹

That, Lenin said, was self-administration, for the masses themselves elected their representatives and exercised control over them, discussed bills and translated them into life. This concept of the essence of self-administration is true to the present day.

Self-administration under socialism is still a state institution, for it has a special state apparatus to fulfil its tasks. It is blended with state power to express both the activity of the representative organs elected by the people and the grass-roots democracy which is highly diverse. The connection between the Soviet representative system and immediate democracy is so close and indissoluble that it can be imagined in action only as reciprocating with direct popular rule. This combination of the advantages of representative and immediate democracy is one of the major distinctive features of the political organisation of socialist society.

In the period of full-scale communist construction all Soviet representative institutions, both as the organs of state power and as mass voluntary organisations of working people, have a steadily growing role to play.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 185.

The Party's Programme maps out the prospects for a further improvement of the representative bodies and demands un-deviating observance of the principles of socialist democracy. It says: "It is necessary to ensure in full: regular accountability of the Soviets and deputies to their constituents and the right of the electorate to recall ahead of term deputies who have not justified the confidence placed in them; publicity and the free and full discussion of all important questions of government and of economic and cultural development at the meetings of Soviets; regular accountability of executive government bodies to meetings of Soviets—from top to bottom; . . . criticism of shortcomings in the work of government, economic and other organisations."¹

The Soviets of Working People's Deputies, which are vested with the plenitude of state power, exercise their powers on an expanding scale: they solve major political, economic and cultural problems, and set up other state organs guiding them and checking up on their activities.

The legislative activity of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., the highest representative organ of state power in the country, has been considerably extended in recent years. Among its important legislative acts are the laws on "State Pensions" (July 14, 1956), on "The Further Improvement of the Organisation of Management in Industry and Construction" (May 10, 1957), on "The Further Development of the Collective-Farm System and the Reorganisation of Machine and Tractor Stations" (March 31, 1958), "Fundamentals of Civil Legislation of the U.S.S.R. and Union Republics", and "Fundamentals of Civil Procedure of the U.S.S.R. and Union Republics" (December 8, 1961). From April 26, 1954 to December 13, 1962, the Supreme Soviet enacted 52 new laws and confirmed 84 decrees issued by its Presidium, which thus became law.

The extension of the rights of the Union Republics in the past few years applied primarily to the powers of their highest representative organs, the Supreme Soviets. Prior to 1936,

¹ *The Road to Communism*, p. 549.

Union Republics enjoyed the right to promulgate criminal, civil and other codes, but because of conditions that led to greater political centralisation the 1936 Constitution of the U.S.S.R. vested this right in the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. This was amended in February 1957, after the Twentieth Party Congress, and the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet now has the power to lay down the all-Union principles governing legislation in particular branches of law whereas the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics adopt the codes of law, which gives them a chance to reflect their specific national features in their laws, simultaneously abiding by the Leninist principle that the law must be uniform for the whole country.

Since 1958, when the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. adopted the fundamentals of criminal law and procedure, Union Republics have done a great deal in legislation and codification. All the Republics promulgated many acts of legislation covering the most important aspects of economic and cultural development and have adopted their respective criminal codes and codes of criminal procedure. Since the Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U. the number of laws adopted by the Supreme Soviets of Union Republics has increased four or fivefold as compared with the 1951-54 period.

Excessive centralisation of management in industry and construction, formerly within the sole jurisdiction of the U.S.S.R., as represented by its all-Union and Union-republican ministries, was eliminated. A law containing amendments and additions to the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. was passed by the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. on May 10, 1957. The old organisational principle of management through branch ministries and departments was supplanted by the new, territorial principle of management of industry and construction through economic councils for each economic administration area. More than a dozen industrial and building ministries of the U.S.S.R. were closed down, and the direction of many thousands of industrial enterprises and construction projects was entrusted to the Union Republics. Their Supreme Soviets set up economic administration areas and exercise control over their governments which direct the economic councils

on the territory under their jurisdiction. In 1957-58, the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics, by virtue of their new powers, passed laws to improve management in industry and construction. They were also given greater powers in economic planning. As of 1957, they have been enacting the annual laws on the republican economic plans and this is solid evidence that they now play a greater guiding role in the construction of the material and technical basis of communism.

These Supreme Soviets were vested with the important right to participate in the formation of top-level government and judicial organs of the U.S.S.R. Under the law of May 10, 1957 and Article 70 of the Constitution, the Chairmen of the Councils of Ministers of the Union Republics are *ex officio* members of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. In conformity with the Statute of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R., adopted by the Soviet Parliament on February 12, 1957, the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R. includes the Chairmen of the Supreme Courts of the Union Republics, who are elected by the Supreme Soviets of their republics and who are *ex officio* members of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R. These officials make up a fairly big proportion of the men and women in all-Union bodies. The Chairmen of the Councils of Ministers of the Union Republics, who are appointed by their Supreme Soviets and who are members of the Soviet Government, constitute well over one-fifth of its membership, while the Chairmen of the Supreme Courts of the Union Republics make up more than half the membership of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R.

As the political organisation of Soviet society improves, this trend embraces the system of other state organs subordinate to the Supreme Soviets. For instance, *Soyuzselkhoztekhnika*¹ set up a Council consisting of representatives of all the Union Republics.

These are some of the facts showing the growing unity of the Soviet multinational state.

¹ The All-Union Board for the Sale of Agricultural Machinery and Spare Parts, and for Technical Supplies, Maintenance and Services on State and Collective Farms.—Ed.

The Supreme Soviets of the Autonomous Republics have also become more active in the sphere of legislation. In 1959, most of the Supreme Soviets of the Autonomous Republics passed laws on recall of deputies in line with the legislation of their respective Union Republics. Thus, the Supreme Soviet of the Kara-Kalpak Autonomous Republic enacted, on March 31, 1959, "The Statutes of District, Town, and Rural Soviets of Working People's Deputies of the Kara-Kalpak Republic". These statutes, based on the appropriate legislative acts of the Uzbek Union Republic, of which it is a part, corrected the shortcomings and deficiencies existing in similar laws of the Uzbek Republic.

The extension of the powers of local Soviets is of surpassing importance for the further democratisation of the political organisation of Soviet society, and the still wider extension of the principles of public self-administration. As the representative organs on the spot participating in the discharge of all the functions of the Soviet state, they now have an especially wide range of powers in local economic, social and cultural affairs and public services. These powers will be further extended in the future. The Party's Programme says that local Soviets "will make final decisions on all questions of local significance".¹

In the conditions of comprehensive communist construction, the scale of production has grown to tremendous proportions, with the result that the old organisational forms of management no longer meet the requirements of highly efficient guidance in industry and agriculture. To secure such guidance, Party and state organs had to be reconstructed on a production basis. Addressing the November 1962 Plenary Meeting of the Party's Central Committee, Khrushchov emphasised that production was the main trend in communist construction.

In accordance with the decisions of the November C.C. Plenary Meeting, two regional (territory) Party Committees and two regional (territory) Soviets were set up in all terri-

¹ *The Road to Communism*, p. 550.

tories and in most regions. One Soviet serves the population engaged in industry, and the other, the population employed in agriculture. Where economic operations are not on a large scale, only one regional Party Committee and one regional Soviet were set up.

The sessions of the regional Soviets, held in December 1962, implemented the measures mapped out by the November C.C. Plenary Meeting. Thus, the sessions of the Soviets in the Moscow, Leningrad, Yaroslavl, Tula, Kalinin, Lipetsk, Ulyanovsk, Kurgan, Vladimir, Kirov and Bryansk regions and also in the Primorye (Maritime) Territory (in the Far East) adopted decisions to set up two Soviets, one for industry and the other for agriculture. These were empowered to set up their own standing committees and form separate Executive Committees each with its departments and sections. Each industrial and agricultural Executive Committee of the regional Soviet has a set of departments of similar denomination, such as the finance, education, social security, and culture departments, and a planning committee. Only the rural E.C. has departments for agricultural production and purchasing farm produce, water conservation, afforestation and protection of natural resources, etc. Only the industrial E.C. has departments for timber and paper, food, and building materials. Some regional departments cater for the entire population, engaged both in industry and agriculture. Thus a decision of the Vladimir Regional Soviet in December 1962, assigned this task to the departments of the industrial E.C. dealing with building and architecture, health services, local archives and to the sections in charge of the maintenance of law and order, supply and marketing, professional and technical training, and the means of communications.

The above list of departments and offices shows that both the industrial and agricultural regional Soviets direct economic development and run the public services in the territory under their jurisdiction. Accordingly, it is the business of the rural, town and district Soviets of Working People's Deputies to provide the population with cultural and other welfare services, maintain law and order and protect the rights of citi-

zens, and see that they are educated in the spirit of communism.

Thus, the role of the Soviets in guiding the economy, in building the material and technical basis of communism, in training and educating members of society is being greatly enhanced and their organisational forms of economic, cultural and educational work are being steadily improved.

The decisions of the November Plenary Meeting of the C.P.S.U. Central Committee should be considered in the light of the recent measures to improve economic administration, especially management in industry and construction (carried out in 1957) and the reorganisation of the machine and tractor stations (carried out in 1958). As a result of the latter reform, the collective farms bought a great quantity of machinery from the machine and tractor stations, but management in farming was hardly affected and agriculture as a whole remained poorly managed by state organs. The main problem was to bring management into the sphere of production, so that it would guide the collective and state farms on a day-to-day basis.

This problem was resolved by a highly important decision taken by the March 1962 Plenary Meeting of the Party's Central Committee. Territorial collective-and-state-farm production boards were set up in the regions, territories and republics to organise management in farming. These boards direct the collective and state farms on a democratic basis through a Production Board Council consisting of the chief of the board (chairman); a Party organiser either from the C.C. of the Communist Party of the given Union Republic or from the Territory or Regional Party Committee and a Kom-somol organiser either from the C.C. of the Y.C.L. of the given Union Republic or from the Territory or Regional Y.C.L. Committee; the chairmen of collective farms and the directors of state farms; the first secretaries of district Party Committees and the chairmen of District Soviets; and the managers of the local branches of *Soyuzselkhoztekhnika*. It meets once in three months to consider and decide the basic problems of production, economic development and consolidation of collective and state farms, the organisation of labour and wage sched-

ules. It hears annual reports by state and collective farms, considers their production plans and financing, and determines the volume of purchases of agricultural produce. Its decisions are put into effect by the production board which in these cases functions as the Council's executive.

Agricultural Committees headed by the First Secretary of the Regional Party Committee, Territory Party Committee or the Central Committee of a Union Republic were set up in regions, territories, Autonomous and Union Republics. They consist of the First Deputy Chairman of the Regional or Territory Executive Committee, the Council of Ministers of the Republic, Party workers and farmers.

The responsibility for directing agriculture on the scale of the whole country now rests with the All-Union Committee for Agriculture, whose membership includes the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. (the Committee Chairman), the chief of the agricultural department of the Party's Central Committee for Union Republics and a number of other representatives from state organs dealing with agricultural production.

In a nutshell, the new organs directing agriculture are state-Party establishments operating on the principles of representation of Party organs, the Soviets and economic bodies in agriculture. They handle both the management of agricultural production and the purchases of produce, with economic guidance coming first. Their task is to maintain direct and constant contact with *every* collective and state farm and see to it that ever greater use of potentialities is made on *every* farm, something that is possible only if the agricultural organs work hand in hand with the Soviets whose men are on the territorial production boards and committees for agriculture. There is no doubt that the Soviets will stimulate the work of the agricultural organs.

The reorganisation of the Party and state apparatus in line with the decisions adopted by the March and November (1962) Plenary Meetings of the Party Central Committee calls for an improvement of the present administrative and territorial set-up in the Union Republics.

When the machine and tractor stations were reorganised and the collective and state farms amalgamated in 1958-59 the area under the jurisdiction of a rural Soviet was extended. This put an end to the old practice of two or three rural Soviets functioning on the territory of one collective farm. The rural districts were also redemarcated. At present, the district in the main coincides with the boundaries of the area within which a collective-and-state-farm production board operates. As a result, the total number of districts has considerably decreased.

N. S. Khrushchov, speaking at the November 1962 C.C. Plenary Meeting, gave the example of the Kursk and Belgorod regions to show that the enlargement of districts paid. Twenty-two production boards were set up to replace 62 rural districts in these two regions. It cut down the staff in the district offices and helped to improve the guidance of agriculture. The larger rural districts well accord with the new conditions in which the amalgamated collective and state farms have a much more efficient management and inter- and intra-district ties are improved. This makes it easier to consolidate the rural Soviets, and staff them with highly qualified cadres. Moreover, the numerical growth of the deputies to the Soviets helps to improve organisational work among the masses and to strengthen the links between the Soviets and the people.

Because present-day economic and cultural problems are more complicated all Soviets, from top to bottom, have to be more efficient in the dispatch of business. The sessions of both the local and the Supreme Soviets now deal with many more questions of education and health, public services, road-building, town planning, annual economic plans, etc.

In deciding such questions through the issue of general directives, the local Soviets have always mapped out concrete practical measures similar to those usually adopted by their Executive Committees. Today the local Soviets are extending the sphere of their jurisdiction at the expense of their executive and administrative organs. As for the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous Republics, they have broadened the scope of their activity not only in legislation but also in

their supreme guidance of administration. This usually takes the form of decisions, statements, declarations, appeals and messages.

In recent years, the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. has been making special efforts to get peaceful coexistence between the two different social systems going, to stop the arms race and ban nuclear tests. Most of its decisions, statements and appeals dealt with these outstanding issues. In March 1958, the Supreme Soviet adopted a decision unilaterally discontinuing Soviet nuclear weapons tests, and sent messages to the U.S. Congress, the British Parliament, the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany and to the parliaments of all countries on the question of discontinuing nuclear weapons tests. In January 1960, the Supreme Soviet adopted a Disarmament Appeal addressed to all Parliaments and Governments of the world.

The sphere of domestic legislation of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet is very wide, for it adopts decisions on the most important questions of state life, such as its May 1960 decision "On the Change in Prices and the Substitution of New Currency for Currency in Circulation" and the April 1962 decision "On the Drafting of a New Constitution". The same is true of the activities of the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous Republics. Their order of business shows them dealing with the most urgent problems, of great concern to the masses, the problems of supreme guidance of economic and cultural development.

Here is an example. The first session of the Fifth Supreme Soviet of the Kara-Kalpak Autonomous Republic looked into the housing problem in view of the non-fulfilment of plans for housing construction and the failure to use tens of million rubles in the housing estimates. It adopted a series of measures to get housing construction going full swing. Another example. In April 1963, the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R. debated welfare services and adopted a decision "On Further Improving Public Services and the Quality of Manufactured Goods, and Enlarging Their Assortment".

An analysis of these decisions shows that the highest representative organs of the Republics are doing a great deal in the sphere relating to the competence of the administrative organs under their control. These decisions are not ordinary acts of state administration: they have the force of law. They are frequently binding on the higher organ of state administration of the Republic—its government. Such decisions should be regarded as acts which combine supreme state guidance and administration.

The question arises whether this practice contradicts the Constitutions of the Union and Autonomous Republics, according to which the Supreme Soviet of a Republic exercises all the powers vested in it, barring those which come within the jurisdiction of the organs subordinate to the Supreme Soviet. The answer is no, for a Supreme Soviet, as the representative organ of state power, is entitled to examine any question within the jurisdiction of the Republic. It has the right to issue such acts also because the full-scale construction of communism calls for a greater organising effort on the part of representative bodies, which requires of them to be more operative and concrete in their directives. This is to bring out their specific feature of combining legislative and administrative functions. This feature has so far been regarded as implying that the Soviets are working corporations, since by meeting periodically for their sessions they do not convert the representatives of the people into professional parliamentarians but, on the contrary, give them the opportunity of adopting bills and decisions, and also of putting them into effect. Now, with the spread of public self-administration, the broader activities of the Supreme Soviets in guidance and administration must also be taken to signify that legislation and administration are being blended to a greater extent.

The wider operation of the principles of self-administration by the public finds its expression not only in the extension of powers vested in the representative bodies, but also in the transfer of a greater number of functions of the state apparatus to mass organisations of the people. As the resolution of the Twenty-First Party Congress points out, "questions related to

cultural services, public health, physical culture and sport should be handled with the active and broad participation of public organisations. In the matter of enforcing the rules of socialist society an ever more important role is to be played by the people's militia, courts of honour and similar public organs, which must hand in hand with the state institutions perform the functions of preserving public order, protecting the rights of citizens and preventing acts damaging to society."¹

Some sectors of the state apparatus are eliminated as state functions are transferred to mass organisations (for instance, the republican Committees for Physical Culture and Sport were abolished and their functions taken over by a Union of Sports Societies); in other cases such sectors are retained but with reduced staffs, and conduct their activities parallel with mass organisations (for example, the reduction of staffs in organs of the militia in connection with the setting up of people's volunteer squads to maintain public order).

The ever wider participation of the people in state administration through the Soviets and mass organisations means, as the Twenty-First Party Congress noted, the extension and consolidation of the political foundation of socialist society. In other words, the transfer of certain state functions to mass organisations considerably strengthens the role of the socialist state, enabling its representative organs to concentrate on solving the problems of building the material and technical basis of communism, educating its builders, further improving living standards, and fulfilling the foreign policy tasks of securing world peace and consolidating co-operation and mutual assistance between the socialist nations.

The organs of state administration have always been accountable both to the Soviets, which set them up, and directly to the electorate, and this trend has grown in recent years. Although there is as yet no law binding the administrative bodies to report to the population, but this is regularly practised in all Union Republics. In the past, electors in Kazakh-

¹ *Decisions of the Twenty-First (Extraordinary) Congress of the C.P.S.U.*, p. 27.

stan were poorly informed of the work of their administrative organs, notably the departments and sections of Executive Committees. Not being elective, they were controlled by the Executive Committees only. The picture is now quite different: both the elective and the appointive bodies regularly report to the people.

This practice was established with the participation of the highest republican organ, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh Republic. In 1959, for instance, it sent deputies to the localities to organise regular reporting by government and economic organs to the population. This experience was summed up in a special discussion by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet which ruled that Executive Committees must report to the people all over the Republic.

Constant contact with the masses is maintained not only by the local administrative organs, but also by the higher government bodies. Every year the head of the Soviet Government, N. S. Khrushchov, has many meetings with the people at various levels. For instance, when he returned from his state visit to France he gave an account to the people of Moscow of his talks with the President of the French Republic.

Regular reports by government leaders to the population and to the Soviets testify to the more extensive application of the principles of popular self-administration. The C.P.S.U. Programme points out that the principle of accountability to representative bodies and to the electorate should be gradually extended to all the leading officials of state bodies.

The Soviet Government apparatus is largely responsible for the proper utilisation of all the resources of the country and the timely settlement of the questions relating to the cultural and everyday needs of the people. It must be "simple, qualified, inexpensive, efficient and free of bureaucracy, formalism and red tape".¹

The Party Programme emphasises that "*constant state and public control* is an important means of accomplishing this task. In keeping with Lenin's directions, control bodies must

¹ *The Road to Communism*, p. 551.

function permanently to combine state control with public inspection at the centre and in the localities."¹

This kind of effective control by the Soviet people was in operation in Lenin's lifetime and during the first few years after his death. It was represented by the Party's Central Control Commission and the People's Commissariat for Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. The underlying feature of this harmonious control system was Lenin's idea to combine Party and state control—the idea of a single, all-embracing, constantly operative control with the participation of the masses.

In the period of Stalin's personality cult, the Leninist principles of public control were forgotten. The joint Party and state organ of control was abolished, its place being taken by separate organs of Party and state control, in which the masses did not take part.

The November 1962 Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. criticised this system of control and decided to restore the Leninist principles of public control in full. A joint Committee of Party and State Control has been set up by the C.C. of the C.P.S.U. and the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., and similar bodies have also been set up in the localities. All these organs rely in their work on the masses and their voluntary organisations.

The people exercise broad and comprehensive control over all state organs, and participate directly in their activities. The forms and results of the public's participation in government will be dealt with further on. Here we shall merely note that Soviet representative bodies bring democracy to millions of people. In addition to some two million deputies who work in the Soviets, 20 million activists help to run the state.

But the Party does not think that this is the limit. The C.P.S.U. Programme says that "democratic principles in *administration* must be developed further".² More and more official posts are to be elective. "An effort should be made," says the Party Programme, "to ensure that the salaries of

¹ *The Road to Communism*, p. 551.

² *Ibid.*

government staffs are reduced, that ever larger sections of the people learn to take part in administration and that work on government staffs eventually cease to constitute a profession."¹

One of the chief uniformities of the present development of the Soviet state is the enhancement of the leading role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in social and state affairs. The Programme adopted by the Twenty-Second Party Congress put a further stress on the *growing role and importance of the Communist Party* as the leading and guiding force of Soviet society.²

The enhancement of the leading role of the Communist Party in the period of full-scale communist construction derives from some developments in Soviet society, such as the fact that consequent on the consolidation of the unity of the Soviet people, the Communist Party has been transformed from the vanguard of the working class into the vanguard of the whole people: it has become a party of the entire people. The Communist Party's growing role is also due to the fact that, possessing the knowledge of the objective laws of social development, it is able to work out scientific plans and project Soviet society's advance to communism. The credit for all the major economic measures goes to the Party. This includes the adoption of the target figures of the Seven-Year Plan which determine the main trends of economic growth and technical progress, the further improvement of the forms of management in industry and construction, the reorganisation of the machine and tractor stations and the further consolidation of the kolkhoz system. It must be emphasised that the change-over from economic management by ministries and departments to territorial economic management transformed the administrative links between economic areas, and this called for stronger Party leadership.

The Communist Party directs the Soviets of Working People's Deputies. Its relations with them have always been

¹ *The Road to Communism*, p. 551.

² *Ibid.*, p. 583.

within the framework of the Soviet Constitution. The Communist Party's leading position in Soviet society and state is fixed by the 1936 Constitution of the U.S.S.R. (Art. 126). The constitutional principle of Party leadership implies that the Party directs the activity of the Soviets from day to day and implements its decisions through the Communists elected to these bodies.

But it does not supplant them. Party groups are formed in the Soviets at all levels, and their duties, according to the Rules of the C.P.S.U., are: "Strengthening the influence of the Party in every way and carrying out Party policy among non-Party people, strengthening Party and state discipline, combating bureaucracy, and verifying the fulfilment of Party and government directives."¹

To enable the Party to exercise its influence on non-Party people in the representative bodies in an organised way, Party groups function permanently. In its resolution "On Improving the Activity of the Soviets of Working People's Deputies and Strengthening Their Ties with the Masses" (January 22, 1957), the C.P.S.U. C.C. recommended that "all the directions of Party organs relating to the work of the Soviets, should be implemented through the Communists working in these Soviets and also through the Party groups formed in the Executive Committees or at sessions of the Soviets".

Through these groups the Party helps the Soviets properly to place personnel, work out decisions on the basic problems of state policy, correct mistakes and eliminate shortcomings, and seek support from the masses. The Party leadership of the Soviets is also exercised through general directives issued by Party Congresses, C.C. Plenary Meetings and other leading Party organs.

The Twentieth Congress decisions to implement the Leninist principles of state administration were of great importance to the Soviets. This meant the further development and consolidation of Soviet democracy, including democratic centralism, collective state guidance, rule of socialist law, criticism and self-criticism.

¹ *The Road to Communism*, p. 622.

This Congress laid special emphasis on the main conditions favouring the further development of Soviet democracy. In its resolution on the Central Committee's report it said that the majestic tasks of building communism call for "maximum development of Soviet democracy, persistent efforts to improve the work of all governmental organisations, central and local, and bring them into closer contact with the people".¹

The Communist Party is working to develop and consolidate Soviet democracy in these main directions. It is taking measures to implement fully the Leninist principle of collective state guidance and seeks first of all to ensure that the Soviets, from top to bottom, regularly meet in session and concentrate on the most urgent problems of public and state activity.

The organs of state administration base their work on the decisions of the Soviets, due consideration being given to the collective experience of the people. This principle underlies the close links between the Soviets and the entire state apparatus, on the one hand, and the broad masses of the people, on the other. The Soviets have enlivened their work, and this is accompanied by more frequent reports to the electorate. The deputies' meetings with their electors and their reports to them are also on the increase. The Soviets and the state apparatus as a whole are doing a great deal more to satisfy the demands of the people and meet their needs.

On the initiative and under the leadership of the Party, the Soviets are improving the operation of the state apparatus, reducing administrative and management staffs and transferring workers so released to the sphere of production, consolidate effective leadership of the masses, and overcoming red tape in administration. The Party believes that direct mass participation in state administration which is ensured by the Soviet system is an earnest of successful communist construction, and so takes all measures to give full scope to the initiative of the people in tackling political, economic and cultural tasks.

The Soviets have already overcome the excessive central-

¹ *Resolutions of the Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U.*, Moscow, 1956, p. 21.

isation of state guidance which developed particularly during the last war and largely remained in the postwar period. In the light of this, measures have been taken to extend and consolidate the sovereignty of the Union Republics and to extend the powers of the local Soviets. This secures more consistent and fuller implementation of the Leninist principle of democratic centralism.

The Party strives to extend and strengthen the material and juridical guarantees of the basic rights and freedoms of Soviet citizens and to satisfy in every way the growing needs of the people. One of the most important means of achieving this task is to strengthen socialist legality in the activity of the state organs operating under the supervision of Soviets.

The C.P.S.U. most fully expresses and ably protects the interests of the entire Soviet people thanks to its close ties with the masses and its loyalty to Marxism-Leninism.

According to its Programme, "*the Party exists for the people, and it is in serving the people that it sees the purpose of its activity. . . .* The Party considers it its duty always to consult the working people on the major questions of home and foreign policy, to make these questions an object of nation-wide discussion, and to attract more non-members to participating in all its work."¹

The period of full-scale communist construction, in which the task of developing the socialist state into communist self-administration by the people comes to the forefront, is characterised by the growing unity of state and society. In this period, a number of state functions are transferred to mass organisations of the people who are drawn into state administration to a greater extent. Consequently, the forms and methods of state guidance of society become more democratic and this is reflected particularly in the laws and decisions passed by the higher and local representative organs in recent years. In conformity with all-Union and Republican legislation, some categories of offences have been transferred to the jurisdiction of comrades' courts, set up at enterprises,

¹ *The Road to Communism*, p. 587.

educational establishments, collective farms and house management offices. The trial of criminal cases may now take place with the participation of a prosecutor and defence counsel nominated by mass organisations. Instead of penalties, the court may now apply measures of public influence, such as handing over of a person to a mass organisation for his re-education and reformation.

In 1960, many local Soviets took decisions replacing the salaried staffs ranging from chiefs to inspectors of some E.C. departments by employees who work after office hours without any salaries.

In early 1961, the U.S.S.R. Ministry of Agriculture was reorganised, with the result that this organ of administration, which it had been for many years, became an organising centre for the application to production of the latest achievements of science and advanced experience. Radical changes were brought about also in the methods of work of all agricultural agencies. They can no longer confine themselves to issuing orders and instructions, but must give recommendations and demonstrate in practice to collective and state farms the best techniques of farming and organisation of production and labour.

The financing of the state apparatus has also changed. Taxes from the population, already an insignificant item in the national budget revenue, are being gradually abolished. When they all go, the state apparatus will be financed entirely from taxes on industrial and other enterprises. Taxation in a socialist state ceases to be one of its distinctive features.

The Soviet socialist state, which from the very first had fundamentally new features, has become, in Lenin's words, a "semi-state", not a state in the true sense of the word, since from the outset it has not served the interests of a minority but of the vast majority of the people. These features are developing in the full-scale construction of communist society, when the Soviet state has become a state of the entire people. There is no insurmountable barrier between the state of the whole people and the state of proletarian dictatorship. The two are merely different stages in one type of state power.

New Developments

1. Elections

Since the 20th Congress there have been four elections to the local organs of state power (1957, 1959, 1961 and 1963), two to the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous Republics (1959 and 1963), and two to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. (1958 and 1962). There have been some novel features due to the new political situation and the labour enthusiasm generated by the decisions of the Twentieth, Twenty-First and Twenty-Second Party Congresses. The development of socialist democracy has made the people more active, the masses have increased their control over the work of the Soviets, and the electors have raised their demands to their deputies and have made their criticism of the Soviets' activities more constructive. This has strengthened the ties between the Soviets and the masses, promoted the consolidation of the alliance between the working class and the peasantry and furthered friendship among the nations of the Soviet Union.

Thanks to the decisive consolidation of the socio-political and ideological unity of Soviet society, a new important change has been brought about in the Soviet electoral law: *citizens can no longer be disfranchised under a court sentence.*

The 1936 Constitution of the U.S.S.R. (Art. 135) and the Constitutions of the Union and Autonomous Republics said

all citizens had the right to vote in elections to the Soviets, except "persons convicted by a court with consequent deprivation of electoral rights". Disfranchisement for a fixed period was applied as an additional penalty which went into effect after a convict had served his term of imprisonment under sentence. Although this legal provision was applicable to a small group of persons it was nevertheless a certain restriction of their right to vote.

In the new conditions, this additional, purely political, penalty is no longer applied. The Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. deemed this punishment to be improper and on December 25, 1958, amended Article 135 of the U.S.S.R. Constitution, which now reads as follows: All citizens have the right to vote, "with the exception of persons who have been legally certified insane". Similar changes were made in the Constitutions of all Union and Autonomous Republics, and all the Regulations governing elections to the Soviets duly amended.

As a result, suffrage in the U.S.S.R. has become fully universal,¹ this fact reflecting the true nature of the Soviet state, which has become a state of the whole people.

The formation of regional Soviets for industry and agriculture called for a further improvement of the Soviet electoral system. In the past, elections were conducted according to constituencies based on the territorial principle, so much so that election districts did not coincide with production units, especially in urban areas. When constituencies are set up today the territorial and the production principle can be combined.

This reform shows that Lenin's idea of building popular representation according to production collectives finds its realisation in the period of the full-scale building of communism. When drafting the Party Programme in 1918, Lenin pointed to the necessity of establishing close and direct links between the Soviets, "professions and productive economic units" through elections by constituencies, formed on the

¹ The right to vote accrues at 18.—Ed.

basis of factories, and local peasant and handicraft communities. These links make it possible to carry out radical socialist transformations."¹

The basis of representation to the local Soviets has been extended in recent years. In order to improve their activity and draw ever more people to assist these bodies in their practical work, the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics substantially increased the number of deputies to local Soviets. This was done on the eve of the 1959 elections. In the elections to the Soviets held in 1957, a total of 1,549,587 deputies were elected, whereas in 1959 the number of deputies elected went up to 1,801,663, i.e., an increase of 252,076. This made it possible to strengthen the ties between the Soviets and the various sectors of political and social life, and to make their standing committees more representative and numerous.

After the 1961 elections the number of deputies to the local Soviets increased to 1,822,000 deputies; and in 1963 it went up by another 150,000. At present, the figure is 1,979,000.

Mikhail Kalinin, the outstanding Soviet statesman, said: "The vast number of deputies all over the Soviet Union, from Moscow to the remotest places, shows that the Soviet Government is able to implement and does implement very important measures through the medium of deputies, because, strictly speaking, this *active* involves the entire population of the country."²

One of the most important advantages the Soviet system has over bourgeois parliamentarism is that it does not turn the deputy into a professional parliamentarian whose only job is that of "law-maker". This is achieved by the special procedure which governs the work of the Soviets and does not distract deputies from their day-to-day work, and also by the periodic renewal of deputies. All this brings the deputies into close contact with their electors and helps the Soviets to attend to the needs and requirements of the people more thoroughly.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 129.

² M. I. Kalinin, *Problems of Soviet Development*, Moscow, p. 678.

The composition of the representative organs was largely renewed at the elections held in recent years, and this trend persists to this day. At the 1959 election to the local Soviets, a total of 939,770 deputies, or 52.2 per cent of the whole body of deputies, were elected for the first time.

At the 1961 local elections, the renewal of deputies was almost on the same scale. For instance, in the Russian Federation, 51.1 per cent of those elected were new deputies. In 1963, the picture was similar.

The proportion of new deputies in the higher echelons of the Soviet system is even higher. Compared with the fourth Supreme Soviet elected in 1954, the body of deputies in the fifth (1958-62) Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. was renewed by 62.3 per cent.

In the sixth Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., elected for 1962-66, 1,007 deputies, or some 70 per cent, of the total deputies, are new. There is the same trend in the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics. Thus, in the fifth Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R., elected in 1959, 78.3 per cent were newly elected deputies, and in the sixth Supreme Soviet, the figure was 84.2 per cent.

This renewal of deputies is due to the fact that in the last electoral campaigns mass organisations and meetings of citizens nominating candidates were guided by a decision taken by the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. on January 22, 1957, which said that in the past "a certain number of candidates were nominated only by virtue of holding office and were elected deputies to several Soviets simultaneously". This shortcoming, however, was in the main overcome in the 1957, 1959 and 1961 election campaigns. The elections to the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet in 1962 and to the local Soviets in 1963 were held in accordance with the Twenty-Second Party Congress directive to the effect that at each election at least one-third of the total number of deputies to all Soviets should be elected anew.

The implementation of this requirement is of primary importance: it serves to rule out abuses of power by individuals elected to leading posts and makes it possible to bring fresh

millions of popular representatives into government through election.

There is much history to show that the persistence of a "government" profession in capitalist society leads to the emergence of a caste of officials divorced from the people. It is replenished mostly by parliamentarians, for bourgeois parliamentarism turns the deputy into a professional.

The Soviet system of representation precludes the turning of a deputy into a professional. Thanks to the sessional arrangement of work, the deputies do not have to leave their jobs in the sphere of economy or culture for a long time, and constantly work in the midst of the masses, and these ties are consolidated by the operation of the principle of systematic renewal of the Soviets.

Recent election campaigns have seen growing mass activity, especially in the nomination of candidates. In the past, meetings of electors to nominate candidates were held at enterprises and on collective farms, mostly without any preliminary discussion of candidates at meetings in shops or teams. In the latest campaigns, however, candidates were nominated only after being duly discussed by workers and collective farmers at their meetings in shops or teams; this was followed by the nomination of a single candidate at a general meeting of the whole collective. This gave electors a better chance of learning about the social and production record of their candidates and making a critical appraisal.

In addition to the nomination of candidates, the general meetings of constituents elected authorised representatives, who were entrusted with the task of arranging with the representatives of other collectives the registration of a single candidate and the organisation of election canvassing. As a result, every constituency had one candidate registered to represent the bloc of Communists and non-Party people.

Bourgeois critics are at pains to cast aspersions on the democratic nature of Soviet elections and say elections are not free if there is only one candidate in each constituency. Their criticism, however, holds no water. First of all, Soviet electoral law, far from prohibiting, provides for the possibility

of registering several candidates to stand in each constituency. In accordance with the election Regulations, electoral rolls and ballot papers are all designed for the running of several candidates.

Why, in that case, do the electors not make use of this opportunity? The elections are organised and conducted by the electors themselves, by their election commissions composed exclusively of representatives of mass organisations and general meetings of constituents. At the local Soviet elections in 1961, there were a total of 2,022,683 election commissions with 7,907,292 persons working on them. In the 1963 elections to the Republican Supreme Soviets and local Soviets, about the same number of election commissions was organised. In the Soviet Union, election commissioners or special agents are never elected to supervise elections as they are in capitalist countries.

This being the case, why the preference for one candidate in each constituency?

This is explained by the fact that in the U.S.S.R. there are no contending social forces or political parties catering for the interests of rival classes and fighting for a dominant position in representative bodies during elections. In this country, candidates are nominated on behalf of a single bloc of Communists and non-Party people.

It should also be borne in mind that the Soviet people traditionally regard polling not only as an act of election of specific persons to a representative organ, but also as an act of appraisal of the Soviet Government's activity for the past period and of launching a programme for the future. Having several candidates in one constituency would mean an artificial scattering of the votes and would run counter to this tradition.

This is why the Soviet electorate and the election commissions consider it as most advisable to register only one candidate in each constituency. They do not regard this as any violation of the freedom of election, for there is the guaranteed secret ballot and the freedom to nominate candidates and canvass for them.

Freedom of nomination is guaranteed by the fact that candidates are nominated at meetings of electors and members of mass organisations where they have equal right of bringing in any motion. They also have the right to give a critical assessment of the social, business and personal qualities of candidates and to challenge them. The record of the last election campaigns shows that wherever the discussion of candidates by the electors was not sufficiently full and all-sided, the candidates, even when registered with the district election commissions, were dropped from the rolls and replaced by others at the electors' request.

Freedom of election is guaranteed by the freedom of voting, each elector having a full opportunity to vote "for" or "against" a registered candidate. If the electors are of the opinion that the nominated candidate does not justify their confidence, they vote against him. In 1961, for example, 249 candidates throughout the country were not elected because they failed to obtain a majority of votes. In 1963, 195 candidates were not returned.

These facts testify to genuine freedom of voting in the U.S.S.R., where the people, by common consent, support the Communist and non-Party bloc candidates, since the non-elected candidates constitute a tiny number as compared with those elected. This is proved, for example, by the fact that at the last local Soviet elections, from 99.28 per cent to 99.76 per cent of the electors (out of a total of 99.94 per cent who went to the polls) cast their ballots for the candidates of the bloc of Communists and non-Party people.

2. Representation

The Soviets at every level have always represented all sections of Soviet society. Below we shall examine statistics showing the trend towards greater representation of the masses in the organs of Soviet state power.

The social composition of the Soviets is of primary importance. It is only natural that in the socialist state the decisive part in these representative bodies is played by workers and peasants.

In the sixth Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. (1962-66), 55.1 per cent of the deputies to the Soviet of the Union are workers and peasants, or come from working class or peasant families. Among the deputies to the Soviet of Nationalities 52.9 per cent are workers and peasants. Moreover, 44 to 45 per cent of the deputies in the two chambers are directly employed in industry and agriculture. In the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics the producers of material wealth are also broadly represented. Thus, in the sixth Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation, elected in 1963, workers from the bench and farmers make up 47.3 per cent of all the deputies.

The local Soviets elected in 1961 had a still higher proportion of workers and collective farmers. For instance, they constituted 60.4 per cent of the total body of local Soviet deputies in the Russian Federation, 65.67 per cent in the Ukrainian Republic, and 67.5 per cent in the Uzbek Republic. In the local Soviets elected in the R.S.F.S.R. in 1963, these two categories of deputies make up 63.93 per cent of the total.

Bourgeois propaganda claims Soviet organs are formed "only by Communists". In actual fact, however, non-Party people are broadly represented in the Soviets. In the sixth Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., non-Party deputies comprised 24.2 per cent. In the local Soviets elected in 1961, they made up 54.6 per cent. Together with those elected to the Republican Supreme Soviets the non-Party deputies totalled about one million. The proportions were similar in the local Soviet elections held in 1963. Thus, in the Russian Federation the figure was 57.37 per cent, and in Kazakhstan, 54.66 per cent.

The representation of women in the Soviets is also on the increase. In 1939, women constituted 33.1 per cent of the total number of deputies to the local Soviets, in 1959 they made up 38.3 per cent, and in 1963, the figure was even

higher. In the Russian Federation the figure is 41.86 per cent, in the Byelorussian Republic 41 per cent, and in the Moldavian Republic 46.8 per cent.

The representation of women is especially high in the Central Asian and Caucasian Republics, where before the October Revolution women were second-class citizens. Here are some figures for 1963: in the local Soviets of Georgia the percentage of women is 43.7 per cent; in those of Azerbaijan, 39.4 per cent; in those of Tajikistan, 43.9 per cent; and in those of Turkmenia, 41.6 per cent.

The equal representation of all nations and nationalities in the organs of state power both in the centre and in the localities is of over-riding importance for the Soviet multinational state. The Soviet Union is inhabited by over 100 nations and nationalities. Of these, 53 nations and nationalities form more or less compact communities and set up their own Union and Autonomous Republics, National Regions and Areas. As has been said, all have their own representatives in the Soviet of Nationalities—the second chamber of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet. Regardless of population and area each Union Republic has an equal number of deputies (25 people) in this Soviet; each Autonomous Republic has 11 deputies; each Autonomous Region, 5 deputies; and each National Area, 1 deputy.

Among the members of the Soviet of Nationalities of the sixth Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. are representatives of 55 nations and nationalities. The other chamber—the Soviet of the Union—is also multinational: it has representatives from 27 nations and nationalities.

The rates of representation for the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous Republics and local Soviets are determined by the Republics themselves. Numerically all the constituencies within a Republic are equal but they vary with the Republics, depending on the size of their population. The rates of representation of nations and nationalities in these organs of state power are not laid down by law. All the Soviets are formed and function on the basis of socialist internationalism, which means that all national groups, however small, are represented on these bodies. The composition of the

sixth Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation shows that it is truly multinational. Among its members are representatives of 37 nationalities. Moreover, 60 nations and nationalities are represented in the local Soviets of this Republic. In the Supreme Soviet of the Daghestan Autonomous Republic there are deputies of twelve nationalities, etc. Nationalities, compact or dispersed, have their representatives in the Republican Supreme Soviets and local Soviets in conformity with the size of national groups.

In this way the multinational composition of the Soviets is fully expressive of socialist internationalism in action and the equality of peoples in the exercise of state power.

The body of deputies also presents an impressive picture from the standpoint of education. In 1939, only 3.1 per cent of the deputies had a higher education and 13 per cent had a secondary education. In 1961, the respective figures were 12.8 and 56.2 per cent. Moreover, a total of 6.5 thousand deputies had scientific degrees. The proportion of workers and collective farmers in the deputy body is on the increase, which is an indication of rising skills and cultural standards.

In the first Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. elected in 1938 deputies with a higher or secondary education made up about 50 per cent. In the sixth Supreme Soviet, deputies with a higher or incomplete higher education constitute 53.2 per cent of the Soviet of the Union, and 52.1 per cent of the Soviet of Nationalities. Among them are a score of Lenin and State Prize winners. A large group of deputies are prominent specialists in various fields of economy, technology, science, art and literature.

The Soviet people elect to their highest organ of state power their most authoritative and respected men and women. Of the 1,443 deputies to the sixth Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. 1,095 were winners of Soviet orders and medals; 161 deputies had the title of Hero of Socialist Labour, and 45, the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

3. Deputies and Electors

Under the Soviet Constitution, which defines the relations between deputies and the electorate, every deputy is duty-bound to report to his electors on his own work and that of his Soviet, and the electors have the right to recall a deputy by a majority vote at any time.

These principles are further developed by the laws and ordinances passed by Soviet representative bodies since the Twentieth Party Congress. Let us look at the new aspects of this practice of deputies reporting to their electors.

The Statutes of Local Soviets passed in 1957-58 establish that every deputy shall take active part in the work of his Soviet, keep in touch with his electors—receive them regularly and keep them informed of the Soviet's activity—fulfil their mandates and realise their suggestions, consider their complaints and statements and see to it that their legitimate requests and proposals are met promptly, and also carry out the assignments given him by the Soviet or its standing and executive committees. Deputies must constantly help organise citizens to fulfil the decisions of state organs, help strengthen state and labour discipline, draw the masses into active participation in the administration of economic affairs, systematically interpret to their electors the decisions of local Soviets and higher Party and government bodies and help carry out these decisions.

Every deputy must submit regular reports to his electors on his own work and that of his Soviet. The Statutes of Rural Soviets in some of the Union Republics state that a deputy must report to his electors at least once in six months, or do so whenever his electors demand it.

In its decision adopted on February 12, 1962, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R. stated that 73 per cent of all deputies had reported to their electors in the first nine months of 1961. The progress here is evident from the fact that in 1955 only 48.2 per cent of the local Soviet deputies had done this.

Another example. On January 31, 1962, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan Republic stated that in the first nine months of 1961 89 per cent of the local Soviet deputies had reported to the electorate.

Electors display great interest in deputies' reports. Two examples will illustrate this. Meetings at which D. Kupriyanov, deputy to the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet, reported on his work were attended by 3,500 electors and there were 148 speakers in the debates. The electors' meetings in the Chelno-Vershina District, Kuibyshev Region, attended by 5,724 people, heard reports from 31 deputies of the District Soviet (out of a total of 33). Constituents made many critical remarks about the work of various deputies and of the Soviet and its Executive Committee and tabled many practical suggestions on how to improve public services in their villages. All in all, 118 electors took the floor following reports by their deputies.

Some Statutes of Local Soviets contain even more exacting clauses: they stipulate that the work of deputies must also be checked by a local Soviet. With this end in view credentials committees are empowered to verify the work of deputies and to submit reports on the results of their check-up to their Soviet.

The Presidiums of the Supreme Soviets of Union and Autonomous Republics record, on the strength of fresh statistics, the steadily growing improvement in the practice of local Soviet deputies' reporting to the population. This also applies to the deputies to the Supreme Soviets of Union and Autonomous Republics and the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.

There is no legislative provision governing the periods for reporting by Supreme Soviet deputies, but it has become a tradition that deputies meet their electors after each Supreme Soviet session.

Since constituencies embrace dozens, hundreds of thousands and even millions of citizens (for instance, a Soviet of Nationalities election district in the Russian Federation has about 5 million people), Supreme Soviet deputies are, as a rule, unable to report in person to *all* their electors, and so they make extensive use of mass media, including the press and

radio, to tell their electors about their work. Moreover, electors' meetings are held at industrial enterprises, offices, on collective or state farms, especially the nominating establishments and organisations.

Electors' meetings held to hear reports by Supreme Soviet deputies are usually organised in such a way as to avoid overcrowding and to enable the deputy to meet his constituents informally. By way of illustration, I. Belykh, an excavator operator and a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R. from the Asbest election district, Sverdlov Region, had 13 meetings attended by 1,600 people; milkmaid A. Melnik, deputy to the Supreme Soviet from Khorol constituency, Primorye Territory, spoke at 11 meetings, attended by over 4,000 electors.

During the four years in office as deputy to the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet from the Artyom election district, Don Region, schoolteacher O. Kvitko made 64 reports to her electors. She was given many valuable suggestions on industrial construction, everyday services and cultural establishments, electrification, and improvement of the pension scheme. Proposals referred to the Supreme Soviet and its committees were written into bills as these came up for consideration. Over this period she received 1,200 persons, who came to see her chiefly about personal matters and were given the necessary help and support.

After senior machinist D. Peshatov, deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., made a report to some of his electors working at the Obluchno roundhouse, he was instructed to help improve the work of the local railway line, increase local food supplies and modernise local town planning. This necessitated action by several central organs of administration, so Peshatov went to see the Minister of Railways and got most of the problems solved. In one year he received in his office at the town Soviet over 300 electors who came with personal business. He had most of their claims satisfied on the spot.

Some laws governing the recall of deputies were adopted in recent years, but the question of whether the voting should

be public or secret was open to discussion. Some said the procedure of recall should correspond to the election procedure. Others insisted on a simpler procedure of recall and suggested that recall decisions should be taken by a show of hands. Election procedure is more complex because the candidate is given a vote of confidence by the people and is invested with their trust and authority to implement their will. There is no need for that sort of thing where a deputy is relieved of his duties for failing to live up to the confidence of his electors. Under the Law Governing the Recall of Deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., adopted on October 30, 1959, the decision is taken at electors' meetings by a show of hands (Art. 5).

A Supreme Soviet deputy may be recalled by a decision of the majority of his constituents, if he has not justified their trust or has committed an act unbecoming his office. The right to motion a recall is secured to all working people's mass organisations and societies and also to all general meetings of electors empowered to nominate candidates. The deputy concerned is informed of the reasons for his recall and is entitled to present his case, orally or in writing, to the mass organisations or general meetings of electors moving his recall. The decision is submitted to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. If it conforms with the requirements of the law, the Presidium appoints a day for voting on the recall. A district electoral commission, consisting of representatives of mass organisations, working people's societies and general meetings of citizens, is set up to see that the Law Governing the Recall of Deputies is observed and also to determine the results of the voting in the electoral district. On the basis of the minutes of the meetings, the commission adds up the votes for or against. A Supreme Soviet deputy is deemed recalled if the majority of the electors of a given district vote against him.

The procedures governing the recall of deputies to the Supreme Soviets of Union and Autonomous Republics and also to the local Soviets are similar in their essentials. But there are some distinctions.

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For instance, the law in the Ukraine gives the right to motion the recall of a deputy to meetings of workers and other employees in the smaller units, such as departments and shops, and also to meetings of collective farmers, in their kolkhoz teams.

On the strength of these laws the electors in 1960 recalled nearly 100 local deputies for reasons of improper behaviour or neglect of duty. Some deputies to the Supreme Soviets of Union Republics were also recalled. For instance, after a general meeting of workers of the Tulek State Farm, Tien Shan Region, had motioned the recall of M. Isaev, Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Kirghiz Republic, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet issued a decree on February 16, 1961, setting the polling day for a by-election in the district.

Soviet law does not merely proclaim but guarantees that deputies are completely dependent on their electorate, whose interests they must uphold in organs of state power. Any elected body, as Lenin pointed out, can be considered really democratic and truly representative of the people's will only if it recognises the right of electors to recall their deputies, and practises it.

Bourgeois constitutions do not, as a rule, provide for the recall of deputies by the electorate. For instance, under Swiss law no deputy can be recalled alone: if one should prove unworthy, the whole body has to go. This requires a petition signed by several thousand electors of the given canton followed by a general poll on the recall of this organ. There is no case of recall in Switzerland on record, which is evidently due to the difficulties involved in collecting the large number of signatures.

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In the United States, electors enjoy no such right at all, as is exemplified by the case of Leroy Gore, editor and publisher of a local newspaper in Soc City (Wisconsin), who made futile efforts to recall Joseph McCarthy from the U.S. Senate. In 1954, he launched a campaign to collect signatures to a petition for his recall. In ten days 100,000 people put their names to the petition. Subsequently, the figure reached 400,000, far in excess of the number of votes cast for McCar-

thy during the election to the Senate. The electors, however, did not succeed in their bid: Leroy Gore was hounded and harassed and lost his newspaper.

Bourgeois parliamentarism implies that a deputy is independent of the electorate, because he is said to represent the whole nation and not the section of the electorate who sent him to parliament. In consequence, there is no "imperative mandate": the voters cannot bind their deputy to do their will or report to them on his activity. Although their M.P. may have forfeited their trust, the voters can do nothing about it.

4. Sessions of Local Soviets

Sessions constitute the basic organisational form through which the Soviets carry on their work, and ensure the fullest implementation of the Leninist principle of collective state leadership. The Twentieth, Twenty-First and Twenty-Second Congresses of the C.P.S.U. devoted much attention to the matter of sessions, a question which has been widely dealt with in the decisions of the Party Central Committee and the higher organs of Soviet power.

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics regularly discuss ways and means to make the sessions of local Soviets more efficient and see to it that these are applied.

Recent years have seen substantial improvements in the time-table and content of sessions from top to bottom. Under the old provisions of the Constitutions of Union Republics, rural and town Soviets were due to meet 12 times a year. Actually, this was not strictly observed, for the good reason that the intervals between sessions were too small to allow for thorough preparations. This led the lawgiver to realise that it was necessary to space the sessions of rural and town Soviets further apart. The present Statutes of Local Soviets stipulate that rural and town Soviets shall meet at least six

times a year, or at least once in two months. This session timetable is strictly observed.

Also of vast importance are the improvements in the methods of preparing for sessions. The new forms of organisation are conducive to the strengthening of the ties between the Soviets and the masses. This has made it possible to revise the question of quorum. Under the old Statutes sittings of Soviets were competent when attended by more than half the deputies. Since the adoption of the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. in 1936, custom tended to demand a greater quorum, namely, *two-thirds*. This quorum is now written into all the Statutes of Local Soviets adopted from 1957 to 1959, and reflects the higher level of socialist democracy in the work of Soviet organs of representation, for they discuss matters within their jurisdiction and pass decisions with the maximum number of deputies in attendance. This enables the Soviets to carry out the will of the masses most fully and comprehensively.

According to the new Statutes, sessions may be convened not only on the initiative of the Executive Committees but also at the request of one-fifth of the Soviet's deputies in some Republics or of one-third of deputies in other Republics. This helps the masses to exert direct influence on the work of the Soviet through their deputies.

The new laws contain special safeguards to ensure *publicity*. For instance, the Estonian Statute of Rural Soviets states that sessions are "held in public, with every elector having the right freely to attend them" (Art. 34). Not only the deputies but also the public are notified of the time and place of a session and its order of business (Art. 33).

Many Executive Committees of the local Soviets issue public notices of coming sessions, the practice being of surpassing importance for taking into account the interests of the electorate in solving problems of government. Here is an example. The Executive Committee of the Leningrad District Soviet in Moscow planned to discuss the question of the use and maintenance of housing facilities in the district. It addressed a special message to the people, urging them to for-

ward to the E.C. their suggestions and remarks. A total of 320 proposals and suggestions were submitted during the preparations for the session. Most of them were later accepted and translated into practice by the Soviet's decisions.

In Novorossiisk, City Soviet decisions are traditionally discussed by conferences of constituents or general meetings at enterprises, establishments and organisations. A few days before the session, deputies tell electors at public meetings about the order of business and the drafts of decisions to be taken on the questions submitted for the Soviet's consideration. The people voice their opinions on the drafts and make suggestions, which are thoroughly weighed and reported to the session.

Four thousand people took part in a discussion of the draft of the City Soviet's decision concerning "Measures to Strengthen the Rule of Law and Public Order in Novorossiisk". Workers of the local shipyards motioned an addendum calling for greater safeguards for socialist property, and volunteered to guard the shipyards themselves. Port-workers suggested improvements in the state sales of furniture, sewing machines, refrigerators, TV sets, etc. The employees of the Krasny Dvigatel Plant, an engineering works and a state factory, also tabled their proposals. As a result, the draft underwent substantial changes and became more purposeful. The Soviet's final decision was the fruit of collective thinking which draws on massive experience.

Many of the local Soviets in all Union and Autonomous Republics hold *circuit sessions* at enterprises and collective farms. These sessions usually discuss production plans of kolkhozes and local industries, plans for cultural and everyday services for the population, housing construction, urban and rural improvements, etc. Good advice is sure to come from workers, collective farmers and specialists with a good knowledge of local conditions. It goes without saying that those who are invited to participate in the deliberations of a session have only a consultative vote.

This practice of holding circuit sessions has fully justified itself. Thus, milk yields at the Chapayev Collective Farm

(Ataksk District) were increased considerably. The District Soviet decided to popularise the farm's experience and held a circuit session on the farm. Before the session opened, the deputies and the invited stock-breeders inspected the farm and saw a great many things they could well adopt on their own farms. The session then heard a report by the chairman of the Chapayev Collective Farm, discussed ways and means of boosting milk production and took its decisions to that effect.

Of over-riding importance for the implementation of the Soviets' decisions is the new practice of arranging meetings between deputies and their electors after each session. As soon as a session is over, deputies return to their constituencies to explain to the people the decisions adopted and canvass mass support for them. This way of informing electors about decisions enhances mass control over their implementation.

When deputies meet electors at mass rallies and in their offices vital questions are brought to the notice of the Soviets.

The new Statutes of Local Soviets give deputies and executive and standing committees the right to place questions on the agenda of sessions.

The deputy's right to ask questions is also vastly important. The frequent use of this right is evidence of a higher level of control exercised by the Soviets over the activity of the executive and administrative apparatus.

The Statute of Regional Soviets of Working People's Deputies in the Ukrainian Republic, dated May 31, 1957, says that "during a session the deputies of the Regional Soviet have the right to put questions to the Executive Committee of the Regional Soviet or to the heads of its departments and sections, who must reply to it orally at the given session or in writing not later than three days after the question is submitted" (Art. 67).

A question may be put by one or more deputies on their own initiative or on instructions from their electors. It may or may not have some bearing on other items on the agenda. This rule is very important, because it enables deputies to place any aspect of administration under the Soviet's control.

Deputies' questions have great effect because of possible criticism at the session of the reply coming from the subordinate body and the possible adoption by the Soviet of a special decision on the matter.

Deputies now have even greater control over the activity of the state apparatus. Many Soviets hear reports from E.C. chiefs on measures taken to realise the proposals made by critical deputies at previous sessions. Regular discussions of such information increase the responsibility of the organs of administration to the Soviets and enhance the deputies' prestige among their constituents. Very often deputies tell the session about the instructions received from their electors who brought up proposals to improve the work of the Soviet at report-back meetings. By checking up on the realisation of such proposals at the next session the masses exercise a direct influence on the functioning of the state apparatus.

5. Standing Committees of Local Soviets

The local bodies also maintain close contacts with the electorate through the medium of their standing committees. Under the Statutes of Local Soviets these committees are organs of the Soviets and are formed, as a rule, from among deputies according to key branches of its work. The standing committees draw into their work a large body of activists-workers, collective farmers, industrial and agricultural specialists, scientific workers, who have a consultative vote.

In some Union Republics, not only deputies but also activists are members of these standing committees. Under the Latvian Statute of Rural Soviets, "the standing committees of a rural Soviet are elected from among deputies and active workers, collective farmers and intellectuals" (Art. 28).

The local Soviets elected throughout the Soviet Union in 1961 set up 243,953 standing committees, consisting of a

total of 1,394,920 deputies (77 per cent of the deputy body) and over 2.5 million activists.

Consequently, the bulk of the deputies not only take part in the sittings of the Soviets but also in the workaday business of the various standing committees, whose jurisdiction is determined either by the Statutes of Local Soviets or by the Statutes of Standing Committees.

According to the Statute of Rural Soviets of Working People's Deputies in the R.S.F.S.R., standing committees take part in preparing questions of economic and cultural development submitted for examination to the rural Soviet and its Executive Committee, table their own suggestions and remarks on these questions and appoint their co-rapporteurs both to the session of the Soviet and its Executive Committee. They help the Executive Committees to check up on the fulfilment of the rural Soviet's decisions and the decisions of higher Soviets and their Executive Committees, and carry on organisational work among the population with the object of getting these decisions fulfilled. On their own initiative or on instructions from the rural Soviet, within the limits of their authority, the standing committees check up on the work of collective and state farms, offices, enterprises and organisations situated in the territory of the rural Soviet, without interfering in their day-to-day activity. They submit their proposals, based on the results of their check-up, for decisions by collective-farm boards, state-farm directors, and the management of enterprises and organisations, or for consideration by the rural Soviet and its Executive Committee.

The law does not set any limit on the number of standing committees a local Soviet may have. Proceeding from local conditions and the strength of the deputy body, each Soviet decides how many committees it requires and in what sphere they are to specialise. As a rule, a rural Soviet has from three to five committees: budget and finance, agriculture, and cultural and other welfare services. A regional Soviet usually has from six to fourteen standing committees: budget and planning, industry and building, agriculture, municipal economy, housing and town planning, trade and public catering,

education and culture, health services and social security, road-building, transport and communications, socialist legality and the maintenance of law and order.

The local Soviet committees perform a great deal of work. Every year they carry out hundreds of thousands of checks and investigations. In the Russian Federation alone, standing committees made 206,566 co-reports both at the Soviets' sessions and at sittings of their Executive Committees. In 1960, local Soviet committees throughout the Soviet Union made over 530,000 co-reports to their parent bodies.

How effective the work of the standing committees is may be seen from the following example. At one of its sessions, the Kursk City Soviet discussed ways of improving medical and health services in the city. Before the session opened, members of the standing committee for health services and numerous activists inspected many enterprises and construction projects and checked up on the state of labour protection and safety engineering. The shortcomings that were brought to light were corrected on the spot. The chairman of the committee made a co-report at the Soviet's session. Drawing upon a wealth of material, the committee gave cogent proof that the building of new medical and prophylactic establishments could be accelerated and the system of labour protection and safety engineering improved. The committee's proposals were accepted by the City Soviet, entered into its decision and subsequently put into effect.

The C.P.S.U. Programme envisages the further extension of the powers of local Soviet standing committees: "An increasing number of questions which now come under the jurisdiction of the departments and sections of executive bodies must be gradually referred for decision to the standing committees of the local Soviets."

The number of Executive Committee departments, especially on the district level, has been on the decrease in recent years and more branch departments operating on a voluntary basis are emerging everywhere. In Lvov Region and elsewhere the functions of some E.C. departments have been transferred to local Soviet standing committees.

6. Electors' Mandates

Mandates—instructions—given by electors to the Soviets and their members show the direct links between these representative bodies and the masses. A mandate is usually drawn up by electors at election meetings where they meet their candidates and also at report-back meetings.

In the not too distant past, any proposal from the electors was often regarded as a mandate. Lately, the mandate has acquired a definite juridical form. Thus, a resolution adopted by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh Republic, on May 27, 1960, says: "Only those proposals from constituents that have been approved by a majority vote at a meeting of electors are deemed to be mandates." Similar resolutions have been adopted by the Presidiums of the Supreme Soviets of other Union Republics. They have also laid down the procedure for drawing up these mandates.

Pre-election and report-back meetings thrash out every proposal with the view to determine its expediency and efficacy and decide just how the electors will participate in implementing the mandate. Proposals are approved by a show of hands. The instructions are then entered into the record and referred to the Soviet's Executive Committee for implementation.

How important an electors' mandate is for the Soviet activity can be seen from the Statute of District Soviets of Working People's Deputies in the Byelorussian Republic, adopted on June 27, 1958. It says that a District Soviet shall abide by the laws and decisions of higher organs and also by the instructions of electors accepted by the Soviet for fulfilment.

The local Soviets have of late intensified their work to fulfil electors' mandates. The Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. in its decision of January 22, 1957, emphasised the necessity of strengthening the ties between the Soviets and the people.

During election campaigns, measures are taken to register the instructions given by electors at their meetings with candidates.

After elections, deputies submit electors' instructions to their Executive Committees, which sum them up and place before the Soviet for discussion and approval.

To implement the approved mandates, a time-table for carrying out electors' proposals is drawn up and persons are designated to supervise it, and the proper establishments are entrusted with the task of implementing the approved instructions. Control is exercised in the following manner: all deputies are duty-bound to give their constituents accounts of the implementation of their instructions. They inform their electors about the items turned down by the Soviet and state the reasons. Some instructions can only be put into effect with the direct participation of the population and so deputies organise the public to help the organs of administration to implement the instructions. Here is one example. To enable deputies to organise the implementation of instructions from the public and secure systematic control over measures to that effect, the Executive Committee of the Amur Regional Soviet made two check-ups on the results of this work in the region as a whole and in each constituency. This put the deputies in possession of the facts which they later reported to their electors. The Executive Committee arranged two seminars for deputies on the exchange of their experience accumulated in the course of fulfilling instructions and particularly on the ways of improving control over the carrying out of electors' suggestions.

Systematic control over the handling of electors' suggestions is also exercised by the E.C. departments and the Soviet standing committees. If the need arises, the check-up results are submitted for consideration to the Executive Committees and Soviet sessions. Thus, the Amur Regional Soviet discussed the fulfilment of electors' mandates, which had been elaborated with the assistance of most of its deputies. Because of the business-like approach to the whole matter, all electors' suggestions to the Amur Regional Soviet were implemented in full.

Here is another example. The Perm Regional Soviet devoted one of its sessions to a discussion of the implementation of

electors' mandates. It heard a report by a Deputy Chairman of the Regional E.C., who said that since the last election the local Soviets had done a great deal to implement electors' mandates, in particular, to step up rural electrification and supply more machinery to the farms. Of 388 collective farms 239 had been fully electrified. In 1961 alone, 49 collective farms were linked to state electric transmission lines. Over this period, these farms bought a total of 432 tractors, 381 harvester-combines, 70 lorries and other machines.

The great effort put into implementing instructions dealing with housing construction, education and health services was very rewarding. The workers of Perm Region recently built over one million sq. metres of housing and opened 58 general schools, 11 boarding-schools, 20 hospitals and clinics. Further measures were adopted to improve the distributive industry.

The reporter and the deputies who participated in the debates pointed up a number of serious shortcomings in the fulfilment of electors' mandates. In particular, a group of deputies asked why building operations in the town of Gubakha were so slow. The chief of the Soviet's building administration, who replied, assured the deputies that all the necessary measures would be taken to fulfil the plan on time.

These examples show that electors' mandates are a powerful means by which the masses effectively influence the work of Soviets and the administrative bodies accountable to them.

In recent years, more and more electors' instructions which essentially come within the jurisdiction of establishments and organisations not subordinate to the local Soviets, are handled by the latter. For instance, the Executive Committee of the Sverdlovsk City Soviet, taking note of an electors' suggestion bound the Railway Administration and the Water and Sewerage Administration to draw up a plan for water supply to a local station and forthwith to improve the supply of water to local residents. This practice testifies to the growing role played by the local Soviets and to the greater solicitude displayed by the organs of the Soviet state, both central and local, in the speedy implementation of constituents' mandates.

Mandates are given both to local Soviet and Supreme Soviet deputies. The first mandates, as recorded in the history of the Soviet state, were addressed to the supreme organ of Soviet power. The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets, held in October 1917, adopted its Decree on Land on the strength of mandates from the peasants. In our day, too, the higher organs of state power in the Union and Autonomous Republics receive their instructions from the electorate.

In May 1959, having summed up the electors' instructions, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan, passed a special decision "On the Mandates to the Deputies of the Fifth Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh Republic". A year later, the Presidium verified the execution of this decision and heard a report by the Chairman of the Republican Council of Ministers. It was found that of the 2,874 mandates to the Supreme Soviet deputies 1,070 were implemented: 100 electric power stations and several hundred municipal and cultural establishments, etc., were built and run in. At the same time, the Presidium pointed up some serious shortcomings: tardy consideration of mandates by the Republican Council of Ministers, the absence of appropriate control over their fulfilment, inadequate participation of local Soviets in organising the fulfilment of mandates. It instructed the Government of the Republic to make a systematic check-up on the fulfilment of mandates by the ministries, departments, the Republican Economic Council, the Executive Committees of regional Soviets, and to hear regular reports from them. It also bound the local Soviets to discuss the results of the fulfilment of electors' mandates to Supreme Soviet deputies and to keep the electorate informed of the results.

An analysis of the decisions to implement mandates taken by Soviets at all levels shows that they are determined to secure the realisation of the electors' will as expressed in the mandates and to organise their work in such a way as to enable the Soviets, their members, standing committees and executive bodies to consult the people on the improvement of public services.

7. Executive Committee Reports

The new practice of regular accounting by the Executive Committees, their departments and administrations to their Soviets, in keeping with the decision passed by the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. on January 1957, is of great importance.

This practice is promoted by the established periodicity of E.C. accounts as provided for by the Statutes of Local Soviets. Thus, in accordance with the Statutes of Regional Soviets of Working People's Deputies in the Ukrainian Republic, endorsed by the Presidium of its Supreme Soviet on May 31, 1957, a regional Soviet "hears and discusses reports by the Executive Committee on its work at least once a year" (Art. 31). There is a similar rule in the Statutes of City Soviets of Working People's Deputies of the Moldavian Republic, endorsed on November 29, 1957 (Art. 30). Under the Statute of Rural Soviets of Working People's Deputies of the Ukrainian Republic (adopted on May 31, 1957), Executive Committees report to their respective Soviets at least twice a year (Art. 29).

Statistics show that these rules are observed by the vast majority of Executive Committees. In 1961, over 90 per cent of the Executive Committees in the Russian Federation reported on their work to the Soviets, as against 67.5 per cent in 1955.

The responsibility of Executive Committees to the Soviets is enhanced by the practice of the Soviets' hearing E.C. reports on the fulfilment of decisions adopted at previous session. In some Union Republics this custom became law. Thus, the Statute of District Soviets of Working People's Deputies of the Moldavian Republic specifically enjoins the Executive Committees to do this (Art. 55).

An analysis of these data testifies to the growing prestige enjoyed by the local Soviets and their role as sovereign democratically constituted representative bodies—the organs of state power and of public self-administration.

8. Supreme Soviet Sessions

Supreme Soviets, like local ones, operate mainly through sessions. The main feature of Supreme Soviet sessions today, as distinct from those in the recent past, is the higher level of discussion of affairs of state. Apart from making policy, the Supreme Soviets decide many concrete questions involving the vital interests of the working people. The activity of the Supreme Soviets provides striking evidence that in the Soviet system legislation is not divorced from administration, and that these Soviets combine the functions of adopting bills and putting them into effect.

To secure a business-like and concrete approach to proceedings at the sessions it was essential for Supreme Soviets to strengthen their ties with the masses. It is now common practice to invite representatives of the public and experts to attend sessions with a consultative vote.

The following example gives an idea of the atmosphere prevailing at these sessions.

The Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian Republic, assembled for its session in November 1957, discussed means and ways to improve medical services. The Republican Minister of Health was the rapporteur and the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet's Standing Committee for Health Services and Social Security was the co-rapporteur. A lively debate ensued, with deputies and the invited specialists taking part. They followed the deliberations with keen interest lending an attentive ear to the critical remarks addressed to the Ministry of Public Health, hospitals, clinics and other medical establishments.

A fruitful discussion also unfolded around the question of implementing the State Pensions Law. Deputies and the invited chiefs of the local social security E.C. departments, trade unionists and pension officers took part in the debate. When the important problem of land-reclamation and the maintenance of land-improvement structures was brought up for discussion at a later stage, many experts were invited to participate in the debates.

Decisions have become more effective now that preparations for and the holding of Supreme Soviet sessions are more efficient. Concrete measures outlined in decisions to improve the standard of living are, as a rule, quickly realised. To take an example. The fourth Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan Republic, having discussed, at its third session in August 1956, the measures to improve health services in the rural localities, passed a special decision. The results were in evidence within six months: by March 1957, 133 doctors and some 2,000 junior medical personnel had been assigned to work in the Republic's districts, and a total of 13 hospitals, 15 collective-farm maternity homes, 19 first-aid stations and midwifery centres, and 20 winter pasture dispensaries for animal breeders had been opened up.

An important indication of the growing ties between the Supreme Soviets and the masses is their promotion of citizens' initiative in making a case for new legislation. This is true of the Union as a whole and of its constituent Republics. On the initiative of the masses the Supreme Soviets of Union Republics have adopted many important acts of legislation. For instance, the public in Estonia suggested the idea of a Law on Nature Conservation while the people of Lithuania asked the Presidium of their Supreme Soviet to pass a decree to that effect. In Byelorussia, numerous meetings of working people discussed a draft Statute of Rural Soviets before it was brought up in the Supreme Soviet. To meet the wishes of their citizens most Union Republics have passed laws to combat petty hooliganism, speculation and other social irregularities.

The law on "The Further Development of the Collective-Farm System and the Reorganisation of Machine and Tractor Stations" may serve as an example of popular legislative initiative. The idea, as Khrushchov said in his speech at a conference of prominent Byelorussian farmers on January 22, 1958, arose during talks between Party and government leaders with local executives and Party functionaries, collective-farm chairmen and machine-and-tractor directors. Under a decision of the Party Central Committee Meeting, the theses of Khrushchov's report on the projected bill to the Supreme

Soviet of the U.S.S.R. were published for nation-wide discussion. Its results were subsequently summarised by the first session of the fifth Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., which adopted a relevant law. Thus, an idea borrowed from the people and synthesised by the Party's Central Committee and the Soviet Government, and also tested in practice was made into a law, whose effects on Soviet agriculture were equal in revolutionary importance to the collectivisation of farms in the late twenties and early thirties.

Let us see how discussions are arranged in the legislatures and what their results are. The State Pensions Bill was published in the press two months before the fifth session of the fourth Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. The Soviet people had ample opportunities of voicing their opinion on this bill and took full advantage of them. Party, government and trade-union bodies and also the editorial offices of central and local papers received thousands upon thousands of letters endorsing the bill and proposing amendments and suggestions.

The bill was prepared by the Ministries of Social Security of the Union Republics, the State Labour and Wages Committee of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and other all-Union bodies. In recent years this has been one of the glaring examples of the close co-operation between the republican and federal bodies in the drafting of a Union bill.

The trade unions arranged discussion of the bill; they organised thousands of general meetings at enterprises and offices and drew numerous pensioners into the discussion.

The final wording of the law, compared with the original text of the bill reflects the results of the country-wide discussion. The law contains 61 articles, whereas the original draft had only 46. Fifteen articles were added as a result of the amendments and addenda accepted by the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and seven articles were reformulated. As Supreme Soviet deputies said at the session, the State Pensions Law was the result of immense collective work.

In recent years, the higher organs of state power in the Union as a whole and in the Union and Autonomous Republics have increased their control over the activity of the bodies

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accountable to them, whose chiefs regularly report to the Supreme Soviets, answer questions from deputies, and keep them informed of measures taken following criticisms and suggestions made at sessions. Much has also been done to make their sessions more efficient. These measures ensure thorough Supreme Soviet control over the work of the administrative apparatus.

Take legislation by the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. in the economic and cultural spheres. The Soviet Parliament used to consider only the long-range plans for economic development, but now deals also with annual economic plans, which enables it to monitor the execution of state economic plans with greater regularity. It used to discuss and adopt annual State Budgets not on the eve of the fiscal year, or at its beginning, but in the middle and even in the latter part of the year. For instance, the 1950 State Budget Law was approved on June 17, 1950, and the 1953 State Budget Law—on August 8, 1953. This meant that throughout the greater part of the year it was not the law itself but the Government-approved draft that was in operation. The Soviet Parliament now examines and enacts State Budget laws just before the beginning of the fiscal year. Thus, the 1961 State Budget Law was approved in December 22, 1960, the 1964-65 State Budget Law—in December 19, 1963. This enables the Supreme Soviet to designate the sources of revenue and supervise the appropriations, and also make any criticisms of the Budget more effective by correcting mistakes there and then.

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In those days, the State Budget was adopted by the Supreme Soviet, and annual national economic plans were passed by the Government, which complicated the co-ordination of the Budget and the plan. It has been the new practice since 1957 for the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and similar bodies in the Union Republics to examine in full and approve the annual economic plans together with the budgets for the coming year.

9. Supreme Soviet Standing Committees

The Supreme Soviets have an elaborate committee system, which has been substantially extended in recent years, with committees playing a great role in improving the preparations for Supreme Soviet sessions and in strengthening control over the operation of state administrative bodies. The Twenty-First Congress of the C.P.S.U. said in 1959 that "to link up their activity more closely with the practical tasks of economic and cultural development, the Republican Supreme Soviets set up a total of 58 new standing committees".

In 1955, the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics had from three to four standing committees: credentials, legislative proposals, budget, and (in some Republics) foreign affairs. In 1959, they had up to nine standing committees each. The Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics (fifth convocation) set up 119 standing committees, on which nearly one-third of the deputies served. For instance, the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian Republic had six new standing committees: agriculture; industry and transport; cultural work and public education; health services and social security; town planning, utilities and public works, and trade.

The growth in the number of standing committees has helped to enlist the assistance of more Supreme Soviet deputies in elaborating the various social and political measures to be brought up for discussion at sessions.

From 9 to 31 deputies ordinarily serve on each standing committee.

Under a custom that has been given statutory force in some Republics, deputies who are members of bodies accountable to the Supreme Soviet—the Republican Council of Ministers and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet—do not serve on the higher committees. The explanation lies in the functions of the standing committees.

What are their terms of reference?

According to the Statute of the Kirghiz Supreme Soviet Standing Committees, approved on December 10, 1959, the

committees submit their recommendations on matters before the Supreme Soviet of the Republic or its Presidium, table new questions arising from economic and cultural development, promote the implementation of decisions taken by the higher organs of state power and administration of the U.S.S.R. and of the Kirghiz Republic, control and check the execution of these decisions, specifically verify the operation of the Economic Council, republican ministries and departments, and draw deputies, specialists and activists into committee work.

To discharge these functions, the committees have the right to demand and obtain from various republican institutions documents and other material and also to hear functionaries of the organs of state administration. The committees are entitled to require explanations from the heads of offices, organisations and enterprises and other functionaries concerning the reasons for non-fulfilment of any decisions taken by the Supreme Soviet, its Presidium or the Republican Council of Ministers.

Supreme Soviet standing committees are an important factor in the operation of the higher organs of state power. Suffice it to say that they submit to Supreme Soviet sessions many valuable proposals to improve bills and make full use of the potentialities of the socialist economic system and the political organisation of Soviet society.

To cite an example. The budgetary committee of the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R. verified the draft expenditures and proposed that revenues should be increased by some 240 million rubles. On the strength of applications from various organisations for greater appropriations for certain projects, it recommended that the greater part of the additional funds should be used to pay for repairs of schools, cultural and educational establishments, hospitals and polyclinics, and to provide equipment for them.

Supreme Soviet standing committees in Union Republics set up in 1956-57 by key branches of the economy and culture enable the sessions of higher representative bodies to go more thoroughly into all bills, particularly draft economic

plans and Republican annual budgets. Of late, these plans and budgets have been examined not only by budgetary committees but also by all the other Supreme Soviet standing committees, which submit their own suggestions and conclusions to sessions.

Thus, the Armenian Supreme Soviet Standing Committee for Culture and Public Education recommended that some districts of the city of Yerevan, where no provision had been made for new schools should build additional storeys to the existing schools—a measure which did not call for great capital outlays but helped to enlarge the school premises.

Supreme Soviet standing committees promote the work both of legislatures and other Republican and local organs, and submit recommendations to all these bodies. The Council of Ministers, the Economic Council, Ministries and local organs are duty-bound to consider these recommendations within a definite period of time (from two to 30 days) and to inform the committee concerned of the measures adopted.

This power has given rise to a new form of committee work. Supreme Soviet committees now frequently have circuit meetings. For instance, the Kazakh Supreme Soviet Standing Committee for Public Health and Social Security held a circuit meeting in Karaganda in April 1958 to deal with the state of sanitation and urban and rural improvements in Karaganda Region. The preparations were carried out by the Committee members, local Soviet deputies, Economic Council officials, health workers and representatives from mass organisations. Their joint effort yielded positive results.

The standing committees of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. have greatly stepped up their work in recent years. They have elaborated several bills, later adopted, and made many recommendations on the bills submitted by organs other than the Supreme Soviet. At the same time, these committees exercise control over the bodies accountable to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.; they hear periodic reports by Ministers and other members of the Government, chiefs of all-Union departments, demand the facts from state organs and officials, ask their opinion on questions thrashed out by

the respective committees, hear reports on the drafting of economic plans, budgets and other bills submitted for the Supreme Soviet's consideration.

The number of U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet Standing Committees has remained substantially the same in recent years. Each of its chambers has a credentials committee, a legislative proposals committee, a budgetary committee, and a foreign relations committee.

A novelty is the Economic Committee of the Soviet of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet, which was set up in February 1957, in accordance with a directive of the Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U., "in order to further improve economic planning and take comprehensive account of the Union Republics' needs, and to secure the proper solution of their economic, social and cultural problems against the background of their economic, national and other features". These aims determine the procedure governing the formation of the Committee: it is elected from among the deputies to the Soviet of Nationalities (two from each Union Republic). When questions affecting the interests of an Autonomous Republic, Autonomous Region or a National Area are examined, deputies from the place in question take part in the work of the Economic Committee.

These are its basic terms of reference: preparation of findings for the Soviet of Nationalities concerning conformity of the national economic plans submitted for the Supreme Soviet's consideration with the tasks of the Union Republics' economic and cultural development; submission to the Soviet of Nationalities of recommendations on economic, social and cultural projects in the Union Republics; preliminary consideration of the Soviet Republics' needs in public education, health services, urban and rural improvements, construction of housing and cultural and other welfare establishments.

Members of the Economic Committee participate actively in the Supreme Soviet's legislation. They study draft economic plans and submit recommendations. Thus, a law amended by the Budgetary Committees of both chambers and the Economic Committee binds the Council of Ministers to consider

the findings of the chamber committees and deputies' remarks and suggestions, and to pass appropriate decisions.

The Economic Committee regularly examines the draft annual plans for economic development and State Budgets and makes its own recommendations.

In accordance with its recommendation capital spending in the Union Republics under the State Budget for 1961 was increased by 18 million rubles. The Economic Committee passed a decision earmarking the additional sum of 440 million rubles, appropriated by the Supreme Soviet for distribution among the Union Republics, for the chemical and building materials industries. In this case the Economic Committee did not act as an auxiliary or consultative organ, but as a deciding organ.

The C.P.S.U. Programme maps out measures to enhance the role of the Supreme Soviet standing committees. It points out that these committees "must systematically control the activities of ministries, departments, and economic councils; they must actively contribute to the implementation of the decisions adopted by the respective Supreme Soviets. To improve the work of the legislative bodies and increase control over the executive bodies, deputies shall be periodically released from their regular employment for committee work."¹

All these data, far from complete, show that the organs of representation of the Soviet state consistently practise the Leninist democratic principles of collective guidance of the state and democratic centralism, lay emphasis on work among the masses, draw the widest possible sections of the working people into the elaboration and implementation of key government decisions and exercise the broadest possible control over the work of the state apparatus.

The functioning of the Soviets is characterised by ever broader public self-administration.

¹ *The Road to Communism*, p. 550.

The Soviets and Grassroots Democracy

Representative democracy in the contemporary socialist state is the basic form in which the people's will is expressed and given juridical embodiment. The Soviets, elected as they are on the most democratic principles, are capable of giving full expression to popular opinion, summarising the interests of society as a whole and of giving the legal concepts of the people the form of imperative injunctions.

Lenin, explaining the first Soviet Constitution, pointed out that the "Soviets are the highest form of popular rule". The present Soviet Constitution defines the Soviets of Working People's Deputies, from top to bottom, as the political foundation of the U.S.S.R. and establishes that "power in the U.S.S.R. is vested in the working people of town and country as represented by the Soviets of Working People's Deputies" (Art. 3).

The working people, however, do not rule only through the Soviets. The U.S.S.R. Constitution and other constitutional laws provide for numerous forms of direct rule by the people. This means that imperative decisions are adopted not only by their representatives, but also through a direct expression of their will. These forms are the referendum, election of representatives to state organs, revocation of a mandate by electors, decisions by meetings of constituents, decisions by village rallies, etc. Laws approved by referendum, electors'

decisions approving reports by Soviets and their deputies, and decisions taken by general rural meetings, within their competence, are final. They are as binding as the decisions of representative bodies. Certain decisions directly expressing the will of the masses have particular moral and political force and incontestable legal force. For instance, electors' decisions on the election of deputies to representative bodies at all levels or revocations of mandates, adopted in conformity with the law, are acts of supreme power by the people: such decisions are not subject to approval and cannot be annulled. Decisions by constituents' meetings on the activity of Soviets and their deputies orientate the representative bodies and are an incentive to improve the operation of the state apparatus in the sphere of public services.

But direct rule by the people is not limited to the immediate expression of the popular will as a final decision. Particularly numerous are the forms of immediate democracy which help to bring out public opinion by way of consultation. Because of their impact on social and political affairs they are as important as final state decisions.

It should be borne in mind that the embodiment of the state will, either in the acts of representative bodies or in acts adopted directly by the people, passes through three stages.

The *first* stage is *initiative*, which means that representative organs, their standing committees and deputies, or mass organisations, or separate citizens motion questions requiring government decision. Such initiative entails organisational action.

If, for instance, a question raised at a session of the local Soviet requires a government decision, the Soviet customarily instructs its Executive Committee or Standing Committees to study the question, report to the session and draft a relevant decision. Study implies the ascertainment of public opinion, the taking account of the people's experience and their readiness to support such a decision and to carry it into effect.

To secure the smooth development of an initiative into a state decision, the representative body secures the support of the appropriate (city, regional, etc.) Party organisation.

Very often questions requiring state decisions are initiated by the Party organisations, which canvass workers' collectives on the merits of the question raised. An example was given in Chapter II showing how legislative initiative originates with regard to a major social problem, such as the reorganisation of the machine and tractor stations.

In standing committees, initiatives in raising questions that require state decisions take the same course: the committee meeting where a pertinent question arose decides to set up a special group of its members to scrutinise the question and to verify the situation on the spot, enlisting the participation of local mass organisations and individual citizens. When that is done the standing committee adopts a recommendation. On the strength of the committee report the Soviet passes a final decision.

Standing committees have lately been broadly applying new forms of their activity conducive to the greater development of direct rule by the people. One is standing committee meetings at enterprises or establishments, which makes it possible to draw workers' collectives and wider sections of mass organisations into the discussion of state problems, measures of control over the fulfilment of decisions taken by the Party and Government, and local Soviets and their Executive Committees.

Legislation is often initiated by mass organisations, primarily by trade unions. For instance, on many occasions their Central Council¹ has submitted proposals for consideration by the Legislative Proposals Committees of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. These were subsequently made law. The Central Council has sponsored a number of decrees. Among those adopted by the Presidium of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet were the decrees on labour and wages, working hours and workers' holidays.

Citizens may initiate state decisions both individually and collectively. An example of collective initiative is provided by

¹ All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions is the highest directing organ of Soviet trade unions which is periodically elected at their all-Union congresses.

the mandates to Soviets and deputies adopted at electors' meetings. Electors' mandates assume the form of final state decisions, when approved by the Soviet and put into effect. These mandates are not mere initiative on the part of electors; they have moral and political force and some juridical force as well, since a Soviet turning down an electors' mandate must state its reasons. As for the mandates approved by the Soviet for execution, the Soviets and deputies are duty-bound to be guided by them in their activity and to make regular progress reports to their constituents.

Applications of citizens to state organs are an example of individual initiative in motioning questions for state decisions.

Individual initiative at country-wide discussions of projected government measures has become very popular in recent years. It is supplemented by collective initiative, because proposals from individual citizens are first discussed by general meetings and then submitted to state bodies on behalf of the meetings. Take the following highly important documents discussed at citizens' meetings in 1957, 1958 and 1959: the theses on "The Further Improvement of Management in Industry and Construction", the theses on "The Further Development of the Collective-Farm System and the Reorganisation of Machine and Tractor Stations", and the theses on "The Target Figures for the Economic Development of the U.S.S.R. for 1959-65". Over 160 million people took part in these discussions, and some 10 millions made comments, additions and proposals. No bourgeois-democratic state in history has ever had legislative initiative displayed by ordinary people on such a mass scale.

Individual initiative by citizens who sponsor valuable suggestions also assumes the form of close contact between electors and their deputies. Extensive preparations for the purpose of eliciting public opinion precede every Supreme Soviet session. Deputies scrutinise the question to be submitted to the Supreme Soviet's consideration and meet their constituents. For instance, before the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian Republic was summoned for its session to discuss, among others, measures to improve public education in the

Republic, a total of 153 Supreme Soviet deputies went to the localities, and brought back advice and suggestions from the population.

To study the question of how to improve the distribution and public catering systems, which was submitted for the consideration of the Kazakh Supreme Soviet, four committees of deputies (with 6 or 7 members each) were set up and sent to regions to meet electors. In appraising these meetings as an important feature of the Supreme Soviet's elaboration of decisions at its sessions, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian Republic stressed the need to hold meetings between deputies and constituents in the period preceding each session.

The second stage in the shaping of the state will be *the consideration of draft state decisions* by sessions of the Soviets. This is often preceded by citizens' discussions of drafts, a most important type of consultative referendum, in the course of which rank-and-file citizens influence the formation of bills.

There was only one nation-wide discussion (the State Pensions Bill and the theses on "The Further Improvement of Management in Industry and Construction") in 1956 and in 1957, but in 1958 there were *two* major discussions (on "The Further Development of the Collective-Farm System and the Reorganisation of Machine and Tractor Stations" and "The Strengthening the Ties Between School and Life and the Further Development of Public Education in the U.S.S.R."). In 1959, there were *five* nation-wide discussions on the following bills: "Fundamentals of Labour Legislation of the U.S.S.R. and Union Republics", "Enhancement of the Role Played by the Public in Combating Offences Against Soviet Law and the Rules of the Socialist Community", "Model Rules for Comrades' Courts", "Model Rules for Commissions on Cases of Juvenile Delinquency" and the theses on "The Target Figures for the Economic Development of the U.S.S.R. for 1959-65". All this shows that the practice of applying this form of consultative referendum by the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. is growing.

It is also used by many local Soviets. Before a session, the Executive Committee makes public in the local press and through other information media its draft decisions on questions submitted for the consideration of the Soviet. As a result, citizens are able to familiarise themselves beforehand with the draft decisions to be adopted by the Soviet and to submit their comments or suggestions either to the Soviet's session or its Executive Committee, which then refers them to the Soviet.

Consider the following case. A draft decision of Valmiera District Soviet (Latvian Republic) on ways to improve cultural and social services was published in the district paper. Following this, deputies met their constituents at mass meetings and discussed the draft. The local newspaper, *Liesma* (Flame), published letters from electors proposing additions to the draft. An *ad hoc* committee formed by the District Soviet's Executive Committee studied all the suggestions, most of which were written into the draft decision.

This kind of consultative referendum is held by many Executive Committees throughout Latvia and in other Union Republics.

The third stage in the shaping of the state will be *the adoption of state decisions*. These are taken primarily by the representative organs of state power and also by the state organs under their control. They express the collective guidance of the state which is secured not only by collective discussion in the Soviets and the adoption of decisions by a majority of their deputies, but also by extensive canvassing of public opinion regarding these decisions in a variety of consultative referendums. To take stock of mass experience, of public interests and requirements is to lay the groundwork for proper decisions by the organs of Soviet power. Decisions sponsored by electors, that is, by the masses, assume the nature of state decisions, provided that a majority of votes was cast by constituents for this decision either at the election of a deputy or the revocation of his mandate. The assessment of a Soviet's activity requires the concurrence of opinion of a majority of electors of the given Soviet, and in

the case of a deputy, that of a majority of electors in the given election district. Decisions at rural gatherings are approved by a majority of votes cast by the citizens attending and constituting the required quorum. This means that the collective approval of decisions is also the underlying principle of all forms of direct democracy.

Decisions taken by higher state organs and also decisions adopted at nation-wide referendums express the people's sovereignty. This principle finds expression in the decisions of the local Soviets taken *in toto*, the will of electors expressed in the constituencies and at general meetings being viewed as a whole.

Thus, at every stage of development the state will under socialism combine representative and immediate democracy. There is more to it than the adoption of a state decision, however important it may be as the final stage of embodying the state will. It is preceded and prepared by the other stages, in the course of which the interests and requirements of the masses are most fully elicited. It is quite clear the bourgeois conception of immediate democracy, which only extends to the electorate's participation in elections and referendums, is very limited and narrow.

Soviet immediate democracy interacts with representative democracy not only in the elaboration and deliberation of state decisions but also in their implementation. This above all reveals the advantages of the Soviet system which enable the representatives of the people to discharge their legislative functions and to *execute laws*. Lenin emphasised the latter aspect of their activity, since the practical work of implementing laws is in general alien to bourgeois parliamentarians, and ordinary citizens under capitalism are actually barred from state administration. The great importance of the socialist revolution lies in the fact that it created real conditions allowing the people at large have a decisive say in running the state. The variety of forms of grassroots democracy practised in implementing the Soviets' decisions is particularly great. They do not, of course, boil down to the execution of decisions. The forms of immediate democracy also fre-

quently serve the purpose of displaying initiative regarding the improvement of existing legislation and raising new questions of administration. But in most cases these forms are utilised in order to elaborate measures aimed at implementing the approved decisions.

Let us dwell on some of these forms. All-Union, republican and local branch conferences and congresses of front-ranking people engaged in various sectors of communist construction, deserve special attention. All-Union conferences are, as a rule, convened by the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. and the Soviet Government, branch organs of state administration of the U.S.S.R., or central bodies of mass organisations. Republican and local conferences are normally sponsored by republican and local organs.

The composition of conferences is determined by the tasks each conference, or branch organisation sets itself. The conferences are attended by heads of branches of state administration, Party and government officials, chiefs of enterprises and industrial and agricultural experts, scientific and cultural workers, representatives from mass organisations, innovators, and leading workers nominated by production collectives. Many conference participants are delegated by their organisations, and in this respect, too, the conferences are representative, although the procedure for this kind of representation is not always laid down.

In some cases the participants in conferences and congresses are elected according to the established rates of representation. For instance, the Credentials Committee formed by the All-Russia Congress of Teachers, held in July 1960, pointed out that the elections to the Congress "had been conducted in full keeping with the rate of representation". A total of 1,209 deputies had been elected to the Congress at meetings of teachers held in regions, territories and Autonomous Republics. They represented nearly a million teachers in the Russian Federation. Almost half the delegates (514) were deputies to the higher and local organs of state power.

The fact that branch conferences and congresses are attended by many deputies to the Soviets at all levels testifies to

the close ties between the Soviet system of representation and this form of immediate democracy. It came into existence because of the need to strengthen the collective guidance of the state in various spheres of social life.

National and local branch conferences are convened because this form helps to co-ordinate the work of the state apparatus with the activity of the masses in the most important spheres of state administration, with a view to implementing the Party's directives and the Soviets' decisions. These conferences and congresses make wide use of the vast positive experience accumulated by the congresses of Soviets in the early Soviet years.

Addressing the Third All-Russia Congress of Trade Unions, Lenin said: "Take the mere number of congresses held. Not a single state has convened so many congresses in the hundred years of democratic institutions, but this is the way we work out our common decisions and forge our common will."¹

It stands to reason that working people's conferences, as distinct from the congresses of Soviets, have no plenary powers. They are consultative assemblies through which the organs of Soviet power consult the people on how best to improve state guidance and the executive branch, to draw more citizens into the political, economic and cultural work.

Let us return for a moment to the All-Russia Congress of Teachers, which summed up the first results of the implementation of the Law on the Ties Between School and Life and the Further Development of Public Education. The work of this Congress (agenda, reporters, etc.) reflects the combination of state and public principles. After its discussion closed, the Congress adopted a very important document: "Appeal to Teachers, Parents and the Public of the Russian Federation". It summarised the chief results of the reorganisation of the school system and mapped out a programme of communist education for the younger generation.

Many of the republican and local conferences adopt such appeals to the workers of their economic and cultural sectors.

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 477.

These documents are then discussed at sessions of the Soviets, which record in their decisions the proposals contained in the appeals. The appeals are frequently discussed at general meetings at enterprises, organisations and on state and collective farms, where the collectives pledge themselves to fulfil the plans of economic and cultural work through socialist emulation.

There has been a revival in recent years of a popular form of mass participation in state administration as practised in the thirties—enlisting the masses in carrying out the Soviets' decisions. Some thirty years ago Leningrad and Kharkov each had a district, which had no paid officials, and was run by volunteers.

Some local Soviets have departments run by public-spirited men and women.

The October District Executive Committee in Sverdlovsk set up a distribution and public catering department operated by volunteers in place of the old commercial department. This new department has 22 unsalaried inspectors, who are teachers of the local commercial school, shop managers and assistants, and pensioners. Its functions are determined by a set of special Regulations adopted by the District Executive Committee. It operates on behalf of the District Executive Committee and is accountable to it, and is formed on the recommendations of the E.C. by the District Soviet. The department has no administrative powers, but it submits suggestions to the Executive Committee, the administrative commission and other bodies vested with administrative powers.

The basic tasks are: to influence the work of trading and catering establishments, to remove shortcomings in their work, to watch over the proper development of the distribution and public catering system, to verify the observance of the rules of Soviet trade and the fulfilment of sales plans, to check up on the implementation of electors' mandates in the organisation of trade and public catering establishments, of the decisions taken by local Party and government bodies and higher trading organisations.

The volunteer department, in contrast to the abolished

paid-staff department, operates on the collegial principle. It meets to discuss current affairs, sum up the results of its work and that of its sections, hear reports from the chiefs of trading establishments on the fulfilment of decisions adopted by the Soviet and its Executive Committee. The work of the volunteer department is not only conducted at its sittings. It performs a great deal of operative work, for which purpose there is a roster for the volunteer workers taking due account of their main jobs. The person on duty receives applications from citizens, registers them and takes the necessary steps. The department then inquires into the work of the trading establishment or canteen in question, renders them the necessary assistance and takes appropriate measures aimed at removing shortcomings. Vital questions are submitted to the City Soviet and other city organisations which then realise the volunteer department's proposals.

The experiment has been rewarding. The district trade turnover plan was fulfilled. The volunteer department, in co-operation with the Trade Standing Committee worked out measures to extend the network of trading and public catering establishments and improve the public services, and these were approved by a District Soviet session. Thus, in the October District of Sverdlovsk an entire branch of the city's social life is run by the public. Similar volunteer departments are set up in other districts, cities and regions.

In present-day conditions it is not always fully possible to substitute volunteers for salaried executive staffs, but citizens can participate on a truly large scale practically in all branches of administration. This aim is well served in the executive sphere by the Soviet institute of volunteer instructors and inspectors. This may be illustrated as follows: the City Health Department in Novosibirsk has a group of 22 volunteer inspectors, who check up the work of medical institutions, the establishment of measures to improve the qualifications of doctors and junior medical personnel, and the application of the latest medical achievements. The City Trade Administration in Chelyabinsk has 65 volunteer inspectors who render day-to-day assistance to it. The Moscow City

Soviet bound the Sokolniki District Soviet to set up groups of volunteer inspectors from among the best district activists to work under its Executive Committee and departments.

Volunteer inspectors help carry into effect the Soviets' decisions and promote their organisational work among the masses. Groups of volunteer inspectors and instructors usually act as public relations officers for state organisations, conduct methodological and organisational work in mass organisations, and help local Soviet standing committees and deputies. Volunteer instructors and inspectors are *field men* who organise the fulfilment of decisions taken by Soviets, chiefly by persuasion, and make the people aware of the need to support these decisions by taking part in their implementation; they teach the people how to run the state and society.

In recent years, other volunteer institutions have become popular, such as people's volunteer squads for the maintenance of public order, and commissions and councils for promotion of the work of administrative organs in various fields. All these organisations are massive, embracing millions upon millions of rank-and-file citizens.

The tasks and functions of people's volunteer squads are laid down in the Decision of the Party Central Committee and the Soviet Government of March 2, 1959, "The Participation of the Working People in Maintaining Law and Order".

Alongside the performance of tasks directly arising from the maintenance of law and order people's volunteer squads are active in preventing law-breaking. They carry work with the population, explain the rules of socialist society and organise public opinion against drunkards, hooligans and other delinquents. These guardians of the peace help people to bring influence to bear on those who break the rules of socialist community life. In many cases citizens now turn for help to these volunteers instead of going to a uniformed guardian of the law.

Executive Committees give every encouragement to those volunteers who have distinguished themselves. At their sessions local Soviets discuss problems of maintaining law and

order and take measures to create the best conditions for the people's volunteer squads and increase their ties with the workers of enterprises, and members of collective farms and mass organisations. For example, the fourth session of the Ulyanovsk City Soviet considered the question of maintaining public order and passed a decision to enhance the role played by the public in this matter, particularly the people's volunteer squads.

Local Soviets give every encouragement to the new forms of assistance rendered by the public to executive bodies, namely, to volunteer councils and commissions set up by Executive Committees, Soviets' departments and sections and vested with consultative functions.

After the machine and tractor stations were reorganised, voluntary technical and production councils were established under district Executive Committees. The decision of the Party Central Committee and the Soviet Government adopted on April 18, 1958, "The Further Development of the Collective-Farm System and the Reorganisation of Machine and Tractor Stations", said that it was the duty of voluntary technical and production councils to work out proposals for the long-range development of agriculture and application of scientific achievements and advanced experience in agricultural production. The council includes the chief of the district agricultural inspection, chairmen and experts of collective farms, directors and specialists of state farms, representatives from the administrations concerned, scientific workers and front-ranking farmers. The composition of technical and production councils, approved by district Executive Committees, ranges from 20 to 100 members. In 1960, over 200,000 people sat on these councils. They have no administrative powers, and only adopt recommendations, which acquire legal force only when approved by an Executive Committee. In most important cases the approval of a district Soviet is required.

Volunteer councils are also set up by E.C. departments and administrations. In Sverdlovsk, the Trade Administration of the City Executive Committee, the Educational Department, the Housing Administration, the Cultural Department and

others set up such volunteer councils. Their counterparts were also established in the city of Chelyabinsk.

Volunteer councils are constituted by decisions of Executive Committees or by orders of chiefs of departments and administrations. Sometimes such councils consist only of people engaged in a particular field, but frequently also of people from all walks of life, primarily local deputies. This helps them to maintain close relations with representative organs and, through their elected members, to moot the most urgent ideas at the sittings of Soviets.

Volunteer councils consider the major problems connected with the trends and prospects of development of economy and culture, the application of scientific achievements and advanced experience.

Since the decisions of volunteer councils are in the nature of recommendations, they are often carried into effect by orders of the chiefs of departments and administrations, if they agree with what is proposed. Decisions arrived at in councils become, upon the representations made by chiefs of the departments, the basis of decisions finalised by Executive Committees. Sometimes the council suggestions backed by a local Soviet committee are submitted for the consideration of the Soviet's session.

Such, in broad outline, is the mechanism of interaction between the Soviet system of representation and the numerous forms of grassroots democracy.

The further development of these forms is of tremendous importance. Lenin pointed out that under socialism the *mass* of the population rise for the first time in the history of civilised society "to the level of taking an *independent* part, not only in elections, *but also in the every-day administration of their affairs*".¹

The Soviet reality abounds with an infinite variety of forms of the people's direct participation in administration, which is distinguished by its exceptional dynamism and diversity. Even a brief survey of these forms makes it possible to draw

¹ V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 1961, p. 200.

the conclusion that as socialist state institutions grow into communist public self-administration, the Soviet organs of representation will be perfected both through the extension of their ties with the masses and the steady strengthening of the principles of public self-administration in their activity. The new forms of immediate democracy also undergo steady change. Together with representative democracy they constitute the truly democratic mechanism of popular rule.

In this process "the functions of public administration will no longer have a political character, and will pass into the people's direct administration".¹ Socialist democracy will become full and comprehensive. But, as Lenin put it, "full democracy equals no democracy".² In advancing this proposition, Lenin meant democracy in the political sense, which will wither away under communism. But democracy in the non-political sense will persist under communism. What is more, it will find its broadest and fullest expression. Communist self-administration will be just such a democracy. It is inconceivable without representative organs elected and replaced by the people. It will not dispense with the well-known forms of expression of the will of society as a whole on the basic questions of social life. It will give full scope to the people's direct participation in the administration of social affairs. Consequently, non-political democracy under communism will result from the integration of representative and immediate democracy.

¹ N. S. Khrushchov, *Control Figures for the Economic Development of the U.S.S.R. for 1959-65*, 1959, p. 126.

² V. I. Lenin, *Miscellany XIV*, p. 266.

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

В. КОТОК

СОВЕТСКАЯ ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛЬНАЯ
СИСТЕМА

На английском языке