PROGRES S PUBLISH ERS

MOSCOW 119021,
Zubovsky Boulevard 21, USSR

COMMUNISM: QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

2

TED EDITION

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PROGRESS PUBLISHERS MOSCOW

...from the Russian by STANISLAV PONOMARENKO and ALEXANDER TIMOFEYEV

Designed by VICTOR KOROLKOV

КОММУНИЗМ ВОПРОСЫ И ОТВЕТЫ

ВЫПУСК 2

First pri... 1975

B $\frac{10504-017}{014(01)-75}$ 110-75

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

By F. Petrenko

SOCIALISM: ONE-PARTY OR MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM?

The opponents of socialism often allege that there is no democracy in the socialist countries. The proof, they argue, lies in the fact that only one party—the Communist Party—exists in the Soviet Union and some other states.

Why does only one party exist in the USSR?— Socialism: one-party and multi-party systems.— Different policies and different destinies.— Cooperation, not confrontation.— Does the number of political parties affect democracy?— One-party system and guaranteed democracy.

History Testifies

Before the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia, there existed several political parties: the Bolsheviks (Communists), Cadets, Octobrists, Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries, Anarchists and others. How is it that only one political party has survived in the USSR? Is it demanded by the Communist doctrine, and the will of the leaders of socialist society, or is it the consequence of some other circumstances and events? A slight historical digression will help us to answer these questions.

In the February (1917) Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution in Russia, the workers, soldiers and peasants overthrew the war-worn tsarist monarchy, thus opening up broad possibilities for all the political parties to present their programmes and prove in practice their ability to fulfil the hopes and needs of the people. Weary of the war which had been going on for two and a half years, the people wanted peace, bread and freedom.

The parties of the bourgeoisie—the Union of October Seventeenth (the Octobrists) and the Constitutional Democrats (Cadets)—which seized power immediately after the overthrow of tsarism, pursued the course of preserving the basis of the former bourgeois and landlord system. The bourgeois Provisional Government formed by these parties advanced the slogan: "War till the victorious end", rather than stopping the war. In fact, the Government refused to solve the urgent problem of the transfer of the privately owned land to the peasants.

Having seized power, the bourgeois parties were quick to forget their promise to improve the life of the working class. Instead, the Provisional Government were concerned that the entrepreneurs should be able to raise their profits: it abolished all laws restricting their activities.

In those turbulent revolutionary years, the parties that called themselves socialist enjoyed a considerable influence in the country. These were the Menshevik Party which rallied certain strata of intellectuals and some workers, and the Socialist-Revolutionary Party which was partially supported by the peasantry. The Mensheviks retained their political influence by skilful use of the slogan "defence of the fatherland", though in reality it meant the continuation of the World War. The Socialist-Revolutionaries stood for the distribution of privately owned land and their words raised hopes in the hearts of many peasants. It was not for nothing that the leader of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, Kerensky, was included into the Provisional Government to give it a "revolutionary" colouring. These parties succeeded in taking over the Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies—the power bodies of the working people set up in the course of revolution.

Having secured the majority in the Soviets, the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries had a real opportunity to force the Provisional Government to satisfy the demands of the people. But they were in no hurry to take advantage of the conquered grounds. They joined the Cadets and the Octobrists in trying to persuade the people

to postpone the solution of the problems of peace, land and bread until the Constituent Assembly, which they were in no hurry to convene.

The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries revealed their true attitude towards the revolution by the fact that they agreed with the Provisional Government to withdraw the troops from the front in order to combat the growing revolutionary movement.

Actually, these parties, though declaring their loyalty to the cause of revolution, did not pass the hard social test posed by it. Although the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries had promised to "control" the bourgeois Provisional Government, in reality they pursued, on an ever increasing scale, a policy of compromise, extending it their support and confidence.

Only the Communists headed by Lenin turned out to be able to offer their country a radical programme: Russia must immediately cease her participation in the war; the land must be distributed, without delay, among the peasants; political power must be completely transferred to the Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies.

The Bolshevik Party, seeing that the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries were not going to defend the interests of the working class, the interests of all the working people, headed for the socialist revolution. The Communists succeeded in convincing the masses in the correctness of their ideas. The working people began to understand with increasing clarity that only the Bolshevik Party was able to solve the fundamental issues

of revolution and to save the country from a catastrophe. Eventually, the people followed Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

At the call of the Leninist Party, which by that time was the most influential political organisation in Russia, the revolutionary workers and soldiers overthrew the bourgeois Provisional Government and established the Soviet socialist republic on the night of October 25, 1917. Thus, in the historic confrontation between the parties and the classes behind them, the working class and the poor peasants were victorious in Russia. It was the triumph of the revolutionary party of the working class—the Bolshevik Party.

A closer look at these and other events of those years, as well as the documentary evidence that has survived reveals the plain fact: the Leninist Communist Party alone represented the interests of the majority of people at the turning point of Russian history. The other parties and political groups eventually lost the confidence of the people's masses—some due to their allegiance to capitalism, others due to their inconsistency, inability or unwillingness to properly understand and express the people's interests.

This underlay the downfall of the Menshevik Party. Although this Party had proclaimed its allegiance to Marxism and socialist revolution, actually it shifted into the position of bourgeois liberalism and compromise. The Mensheviks were unable to take a clear-cut stand on the problem of war; they could not offer the peasants a satisfactory solution of the agrarian problem; and

finally, they failed to find a correct approach to the solution of the acute nationality problem. For similar reasons, the popularity of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party proved to be short-lived and soon it lost its political influence.

The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, however, enjoyed the support of certain sections of the population at the initial stage of the socialist revolution. For this reason, Lenin and the Bolsheviks invited them to participate in the Government immediately after the victory of the October Revolution. But they refused and began to pursue a wait-and-see policy. Four days after the Revolution Lenin stated: "It is not our fault that the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks have gone. They were invited to share political power, but they want to sit on the fence until the fight against Kerensky is over.

"We asked everyone to take part in the government."*

After a while, the leaders of the Left Socialist-Revolutionary Party, seeing that the masses trusted and followed the Bolsheviks and being afraid to completely lose their support, decided to join the Soviet Government. Seven out of 18 portfolios were given to the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, including the posts of People's Commissars (Ministers) of Justice, Culture, Communications, and others. This collaboration was ruptured in March, 1918 by the Socialist-Revolutionaries themselves who quitted the Government under the pretext of

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 269.

disagreement over the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany.

At that time, the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary policies vacillated between revolution and counter-revolution until both of these parties found themselves on the other side of the barricades defended by the majority of people. Following their withdrawal from the Government, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries began a desperate struggle against the Soviet power. They organised armed insurrections in Moscow, Yaroslavl and other regions trying to dislodge Soviet power. By waging this struggle, the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries actually joined the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks who had crushed the Soviets in many provinces and formed a government propped up by the bayonets of the White Guards and foreign interventionists. The Right Socialist-Revolutionaries tried to assassinate the Communist Party leaders and killed several prominent figures. Thus, by joining the forces openly struggling against the new socialist regime, these parties excluded themselves from the nation's political life.

The hostile activities of the Left Socialist-Revolutionary Party compelled the Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets of July, 1918, to expel the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries who were involved in plots against the revolution and engaged in anti-Soviet activities, from the State bodies in which they had participated earlier. Serious internal differences caused a split within the Left Socialist-Revolutionary Party: part of its membership

formed the "Revolutionary Communist" Party and the "Populist-Communist" Party which later joined the Bolsheviks.

As we see now, it was not because of "Communist violence" that the other parties had disappeared from the Russian political scene. The Menshevik and the Left Socialist-Revolutionary parties, notwithstanding their hostility towards Soviet power, were operating quite openly, had their own organisations and published newspapers in the period following the October Revolution. Both of them were represented at the Second, Third and Fourth All-Russia Congresses of Soviets and participated in the congresses of local Soviets. But they used these opportunities for political activity to try to dislodge Soviet power by force of arms, rather than seek cooperation with it.

It was the Socialist-Revolutionary who disrupted the Soviet two-party system that was emerging after the victorious Revolution. Given the non-proletarian parties' position in relation to the new social system set up during the socialist revolution by the working class in alliance with the peasantry, Soviet power had no other option than to ban their hostile activities and adopt stern measures in order to consolidate the proletarian State.

Thus, the one-party system has formed in the USSR due to the specific historical conditions in which the socialist revolution developed, and not because the Bolsheviks opposed a multi-party system in principle, as some unobjective politicians and scientists in the West try to contrive.

The Fate of Political Parties in Other Socialist Countries

The Union of the Bolsheviks and Left Socialist-Revolutionaries in Soviet Russia proved to be short-lived, but the very fact of its existence is proof that the building of socialism on a multi-party basis is possible in principle. Later developments have shown that sometimes such a way is the only possible one—all depends on the concrete historical conditions.

The grim years of World War II came. The broad democratic forces in the occupied countries —the Communists, Social-Democrats, bourgeois Republicans, Catholic parties, workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, and working intelligentsia— united in the struggle against German fascism and Japanese militarism. These were rather broad class unions headed, in the majority of countries, by the Communists.

After the war, the peoples of the liberated countries in Eastern Europe and a number of Asian states took the path of freeing themselves from capitalist exploitation. The democratic parties in those countries were convinced that the aims set by the Communists corresponded to their interests as well. They began to collaborate with the Communists in carrying through democratic, and then socialist changes. The joint political activity in the course of the common struggle against fascism and imperialism has thus led to the formation of multi-party systems: first, in Bulgaria, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, and Czechoslovakia, and then, in the Korean People's Democratic Re-

public, the Chinese People's Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Historical traditions had a marked influence on this process. The majority of the existing non-proletarian democratic parties in the socialist countries were formed many decades ago. The Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union, for example, was set up in 1900. The Polish United Peasants' Party was formed long before the Second World War. The Liberal Democratic Party of Germany, set up in 1945, has become to a great extent the successor to the German People's Party and the German Democratic Party that had existed before the fascists seized power. These and some other democratic parties were associated with the working strata of the population; some of them took part in the revolutionary struggle on the side of the working people. The traditional adherence by some of the population to these parties which were regarded as a mouthpiece of their interests, played a significant role in consolidating these parties on the political scene of socialist society.

In collaborating with democratic parties, the Communists were not ruled by some temporary tactical considerations. They proceeded from their principal object which was to ensure the union of the working class with the peasants and other working people. Communists believe this union to be the necessary prerequisite for carrying through socialist changes in society. It is not only that socialism cannot be built by the Communists alone: socialist aims correspond to the vital interests of all the working people, therefore socialism should

be built by the joint effort of the entire people.

The democratic parties underwent certain changes during the transition from a bourgeois political scene to a socialist one. A new reality emerged—political power and the basic means of production were transferred to the people. Socialist development became a major task. Guided by these developments, democratic parties substantially revised their programmes, rules and activities accordingly. Their social make-up also changed. It was only natural: changes in the economic, social and political structure of society entail changes in its political institutions, their social base and political orientation, as well as changes in the people themselves.

The big and middle bourgeoisie, whose influence had prevented the non-proletarian parties from assuming a truly democratic character, vanished. They found the basis of their activity mainly within the "middle strata", drawing towards a closer union with the working class and the peasantry. Gradually, these parties began to participate in building socialism. The people's (national) fronts and other national democratic organisations and movements were to a great extent conducive to such a re-orientation of the non-proletarian democratic parties.

The majority of the old democratic parties preserved a certain continuity of their organisational principles and traditions. This continuity is manifest in the activities of the Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union, the Democratic Party in Poland, and a number of other parties.

Not all the non-proletarian parties, however, could join the political structure of socialism, but only those which accepted the course of revolutionary social changes and the building of socialism. Naturally, there was a sharp political struggle within the majority of those parties. The Socialist Party and the People's Party of Czechoslovakia, for example, survived a serious crisis. They took their place in political life after splitting with Right-wing forces and after the appropriate reorganisation.

Conversely, in those countries where the non-proletarian parties were dominated by reactionary forces and by concepts alien to the people's interests, where they actually aimed at restoring the capitalist order, these parties either abandoned the political scene by themselves, or were naturally excluded from political life, given their opposition to its main trend of development.

It turned out that *the determining factor for the fate of a non-proletarian party, in conditions of socialist revolution and construction of socialism, was its ability to realise the necessity of the revolutionary remaking of society, to support it and to proceed together with the majority of the working people.*

The non-proletarian parties which had left the political scene did not become "victims" of the Communists, as some of the anti-communist propagandists allege. They became victims of their own policies, their own class narrow-mindedness, and their own impotence vis-a-vis the matured social changes. This is how it happened to be in

Soviet Russia. In other socialist countries, the historical developments were similar.

A number of non-proletarian parties had to be banned because they had taken the path of armed struggle against the lawful power, established and supported by the people. This was the reason for the dissolution in Hungary of the so-called Freedom Party which rallied the counter-revolutionary group split away from the Small-holder Party. In Romania, the National Peasant and National Liberal Parties turned into conspiratorial organisations attempting to overthrow the new regime after the victory of the people's democratic revolution. This was why the National Peasant Party was dissolved by the Parliament, whereas the National Liberal Party had completely disintegrated by that time.

A number of political parties ceased their activities by themselves, considering their mission already accomplished at the initial stage in the development of the new social order. Some parties declared their self-dissolution, among them the *Zveno* (Link) group and the Radical Party in Bulgaria; the Democratic Peasant Party and the National Peasant Party in Hungary; the National Popular Party, the Ploughmen Front and the Hungarian People's Union in Romania.

The Socialist Multi-Party System

The Communist and democratic parties in the socialist countries with an established multi-party system have, so to speak, divided the spheres of influence. The Communists work amidst all the strata of society and represent, first

and foremost, the political party of the working class. The democratic parties are active mainly within their social base—among the peasants, certain sections of the city population and within certain circles of intellectuals.

The non-proletarian democratic parties are fully-fledged participants in State management. They are represented in the supreme and local state organs, in economic and other administrative bodies. Members of these parties are Members of Parliaments and local Soviets; they hold many important posts in the State administrative apparatus.

Now, we shall examine the parties active in the socialist countries with a multi-party system, whom they represent and how they are incorporated into their country's political structure.

In the Polish People's Republic, besides the Polish United Workers' Party whose members are the Communists, there exist the United Peasants' Party and the Democratic Party. The United Peasants' Party—the second largest in Poland—is active in the countryside and expresses the interests of a certain part of the peasantry, in particular, small village landowners. Its representatives held 117 seats (over 25 per cent) in the Sejm (Parliament) and are included into the State Council and the Council of Ministers. The Democratic Party is supported by certain sections of city intellectuals, office workers and artisans. It is also represented in the central and local government; it had 39 seats in the Sejm.

In the German Democratic Republic, besides the Socialist Unity Party which unites the Commun-

ists, there are four more political parties: the Democratic Peasants' Party (representing mainly the peasants' interests); the Christian Democratic Union (uniting the progressive representatives of believers who advocate peace and progress); the Liberal Democratic Party (representing certain circles of intellectuals and petty traders); and National Democratic Party (consisting of the representatives of handicraftsmen and former military).

The democratic parties of the GDR take an active part in state activities and work with the masses. Some half a million people are members of these parties. The Socialist Unity Party had 167 seats in the People's Chamber of the GDR, whereas the democratic parties held 208 seats, and the trade-unions, Free German Youth and other mass public organisations had 167 seats.

In Bulgaria, besides the Bulgarian Communist Party, there exists a peasants' party—the Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union. It continues to participate actively in the fundamental issues of socialist construction. This party holds some 25 per cent of the seats in the People's Assembly; its representative is Chairman of the People's Assembly; some of its members hold ministerial posts in the Bulgarian Government.

In Czechoslovakia, the Communist Party coexists with the Czechoslovak People's Party, Czechoslovak Socialist Party, Slovak Reconstruction Party and Slovak Freedom Party. All of them are represented in the supreme and local bodies of state power and administration.

The other socialist countries have a one-party system. In Hungary and Romania, the workers' parties merged into one party, whereas the former petty-bourgeois and peasant parties stepped down from the political scene. The Communist parties are the only political parties in Mongolia, Cuba and Yugoslavia.

Different historical conditions have thus resulted in a one-party system in some socialist countries and a multi-party system in others.

New Forms of Inter-Party Relations

It is not surprising that the socialist multi-party system differs markedly from the bourgeois one: the class struggle in all its numerous manifestations (including, naturally, the inter-party struggle) is the inevitable consequence of the social inequality engendered in any capitalist society by a clash of interests between the bourgeoisie and the working class, and the bourgeoisie and other sections of the population. The public ownership of the means of production, the socialist method of distribution according to the principle: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work", and the common aims and interests in the socialist countries consolidate the social and political unity of society. For this reason, cooperation becomes a characteristic feature of inter-party relations.

The Marxist-Leninist Party is the inspiration and political core of society both in those socialist countries which have a one-party system, as well as in those with several established political par-

ties. Its vanguard role in every socialist country became firmly established in the course of *history*. It was the Communists who led and organised the struggle against the fascist invaders. The Communist Parties were the leading force in bringing about the democratic and socialist changes in their respective countries. It was they who initiated confiscating the property of those capitalists and big landlords who had collaborated with the occupationist forces and transferring it to the people, and later on, nationalising large-scale industry, transport and banks. It was the Communists who suggested that the land should be distributed among those who cultivate it.

The Communists submitted for the people's approval their programmes for social change and building a new society, which they had based on the laws of social development, on Soviet experience, and with due regard to the national peculiarities of their countries. These programmes offered bright prospects for all the working classes and strata and were supported by them. The democratic parties also backed these programmes.

The Communist parties of the socialist countries are still the sponsors of major state and social measures. They are political leaders and organisers of economic development; they vigorously support the implementation of the latest scientific and technological achievements. They play an important role in developing new social relations and in educating the people in the spirit of socialist ideals. All these factors have naturally placed the

Marxist-Leninist parties at the head of the new socio-political system. The recognition of this reality became the starting-point for the democratic parties' activities in the concrete historical conditions of each country developing along socialist lines. But this has not at all blocked their way to power or to socio-political activities.

Effective relations between the Communists and the non-proletarian democratic parties have developed in the socialist countries during the last three decades. The cooperation is effected, above all, through the people's (national) front—a broad alliance of all the country's socio-political forces, including the democratic parties, Marxist-Leninist parties, trade-unions, youth, women's and other organisations.

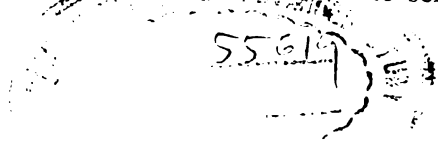
The very nature of the democratic parties' political activity has undergone substantial changes under these conditions, i.e., it has become broader and more versatile. In contrast to the capitalist countries, where party activity is mainly confined to election campaigns and parliamentary speeches, political parties under socialism directly organise and participate in the creative effort of the masses. They do not merely submit various economic, ideological und cultural programmes, but take full responsibility for their fulfilment.

The many years of experience in socialist development, amassed by Bulgaria, the GDR, Poland and Czechoslovakia prove convincingly that the Communists collaborate closely with all democratic parties which are eager to help the working people to transform society. This collaboration

proves fruitful. The Communists and representatives of the non-proletarian parties abide by their common and principal aim—the building of socialism—and respect each other's position. They look for and find, within the framework of socialist relations and principles, mutually acceptable solutions of concrete social problems and take joint measures to carry them out.

It would seem inconceivable to reconcile the principled Communist position on peasants' cooperation with the democratic peasants' parties' principle of individual farming. But the Communist and peasants' parties in Poland, the German Democratic Republic and Bulgaria succeeded in drawing up a joint agrarian policy which took into account both the long-range socialist prospects and the existing economic conditions, traditions and peasant psychology in those countries.

In Bulgaria, the cooperation of peasants was completed long ago. Her agricultural development is based on the cooperatives being merged into agro-industrial complexes—one of the highest organisational forms of socialist agricultural production. In the German Democratic Republic, the overwhelming majority of individual peasant farms have been transformed into cooperative or state farms (people's estates) with highly productive land-cultivation and livestock breeding. In Poland, 85 per cent of the arable land is still in the hands of individual farmers. The socialisation of their farms and the introduction of socialist farming methods are proceeding slowly. The State buys the land of those farmers who wish to sell it. At



the same time, it renders agro-technical assistance to individual farmers on an ever increasing scale.

The Communist parties of the countries with a multi-party system are convinced that it still proves its usefulness: the participation of non-Communist parties in fulfilling political, economic, ideological and cultural tasks is expedient and effective.

Thus, *a multi-party system in the socialist countries was, and still is, an important factor in strengthening the socio-political unity of society and rallying all its classes and social groups in the struggle for socialism.*

A Tendency Towards Unity

The success of a multi-party system in a number of socialist countries does not, however, suggest that a multi-party system under socialism is more advantageous than a one-party system. This is proved by the rich, all-round experience of the Soviet Union which has demonstrated the high efficiency of the one-party leadership by the Communists.

Under the leadership of the Leninist Communist Party which has directed the whole process of social changes in the USSR for some six decades, the once economically backward country has been transformed into an advanced industrial state, second in the world in volume of industrial output. The policy of the CPSU has ensured a high development rate of science and culture and a sharp improvement in the people's well-being.

The Soviet Communists have succeeded, for the first time in history, in involving millions of work-

ing people into the state and social administration, without interaction with any other party. They have ensured the people's true social and national equality within a multi-national state. The ideological and socio-political unity of the people, secured by the Communists, the inseverable union of all Soviet nations and ethnic groups, resulted in such a sound socio-political system and such a great concentration of social forces and resources that the Soviet Union was able to survive the grim trials of the Great Patriotic War against the fascist aggressors (1941-1945); moreover, it can now solve creative tasks of any scale and complexity.

The successful development of the other socialist countries with a one-party system—the Hungarian People's Republic, the Mongolian People's Republic, the Socialist Republic of Romania, and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia—is a sound testimony of the great possibilities open to a society led solely by the strong and united Communist Party.

Sometimes, even those sympathetic to communism argue that other democratic parties are desirable in these countries. But it is not a matter of desirability or undesirability. The development of socialist society, notwithstanding the acuteness and complexity of the existing social contradictions, does not necessitate a multi-party system. There are neither social base nor social reasons for it. It is the majority of the people (not individual social strata), specifically the working class and the Communist Party, who are interested in overcoming certain contradictions arising in the course of socialist

development. To overcome these contradictions entails a struggle which leads ultimately not to social antagonisms, but rather to unity and cohesion. Once all forms of exploitation have been eliminated and the exploiter classes disappeared, once social and national equality has become firmly established, the society which has one common aim—the building of communism—begins to advance towards ideological and political consolidation. The strengthening of unity and cohesion becomes the guiding principle in developing relations within the Party. In these conditions, there is no "nutrient medium" of any significance for the appearance of political parties with different ideological and political programmes, not to mention opposing platforms.

A tendency towards social homogeneity and, consequently, towards a one-party system is natural for socialist society. The leadership of the Communist Party strengthens and unites society. It helps the country to avoid social cataclysms which lead to the squandering of productive forces. It facilitates the concentration of the material and spiritual resources, and the people's energy to solve vital political, economic and cultural tasks.

The Nature of a Multi-Party System in Bourgeois Society

The unbiased observer may infer from the existing political systems that *the level of democratism in a society is determined by the nature and essence of political power, by the forms and methods by which it operates, rather than by the number of parties.* It is no coincidence that apol-

ogists of bourgeois society sing the praises of a multi-party system and avoid specifying whose interests particular parties represent and defend, the interests of which classes and strata.

But the truth remains the same: any political system always serves the interests of definite classes and social strata—those who dominate in the economy and who own the basic means of production. This is the Marxist viewpoint. Human history has provided irrefutable evidence to prove it.

Whether a political system should be based on a one-party or multi-party rule is not a problem of voluntaristic choice. The question of how many parties should exist is never posed since it is impossible to construct artificially either a one-party or a multi-party system. The solution of this question does not depend on the will of individuals or groups. The consolidation of a party's position and role in political life largely depends, as we have seen, on the real position of the classes or social strata they represent, on the vitality of the party programme, and on its support by individual social groups and strata. The entire social experience gained since the emergence of political parties refutes the oft-repeated attempts to prove that a multi-party system was "granted" to society by the bourgeoisie who were "concerned" about the development of democracy.

The capitalist multi-party system is a result of the historically developed division of bourgeois society into various classes and social strata. Political parties are created by classes, social strata and groups to defend (together with other organi-

sations) their political and economic interests. At the present stage of historical development, political parties are the highest form of class organisation; they are the most active and influential "spokesmen" for the class goals and interests of various groups of the bourgeoisie and the working people. This is the ABC of political relations today.

The oft-repeated allegations that bourgeois parties express interests "independent of class" and "shared" by the entire people have never been borne out in real politics. It is simply impossible, given the polar difference between the position and aims of financial moguls and big industrialists, on the one hand, and the multi-million army of hired workers and farmers, on the other. One would have to be very naive to believe in the community of their interests and the possibility of their "equal" support by bourgeois parties.

Under the bourgeois multi-party system, the bloc of the bourgeois parties is counter-posed to the Communist parties and the Left democratic forces which support the interests of the working class and the majority of the population. It is not tactical considerations that guide the Communists in their effort to seek union with the Social-Democratic and other non-proletarian democratic parties, as the anti-communist propaganda tries to contrive. A policy towards the union of all revolutionary and democratic forces in the name of peace, democracy and socialism is the general policy of the world communist movement. The develop-

ment of political struggle in a number of countries in Western Europe and Latin America and the existing historical traditions make this inter-party cooperation vital both in the struggle for power and in the longer transitional period from capitalism to socialism.

The allegations that Communists are opposed to a multi-party system on principle and that they need the union with other parties just for seizing power have been concocted by the enemies of communism. Neither Marx, nor Lenin ever said or wrote that. Not a single document of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or of any other Communist Party in the world stipulates the principle of establishing a one-party rule.

The Basic Guarantees of Democracy under Socialism

The mechanism of decision-making acquires an important role when the domestic and foreign policy is directed by one party. How is a democratic resolution of socio-political and economic problems ensured in the socialist one-party system?

The very nature of the socialist socio-economic system provides the basic prerequisite. The democracy of the masses in the Soviet Union, the Hungarian People's Republic, the Socialist Republic of Romania, and the other socialist countries with a one-party system (as in the socialist countries with a multi-party system) is firmly based on the same foundation, though their state systems differ considerably—the basic social wealth (plants, factories, mines, power stations, the land and its mineral resources), all the basic means of produc-

tion belong to the whole people, rather than to one class or one group of owners. This is, undoubtedly, a decisive factor. The real picture of the 20th century political life shows that no party, however good its intentions might be, is able to ensure true democracy without transferring the basic means of production to the people and without outlawing the exploitation of hired labour.

The transfer of power to the people and the recognition and ensuring of their real (not imaginary) sovereignty is another basic prerequisite for democratic guarantees. *The Communist Party and the socialist state are the tools of the people themselves, their integral part,* rather than something standing above the people. A short factual analysis will help prove it.

To begin with, the Communist parties in the socialist countries are not exclusive groups or the notorious "bureaucratic élite", as they are often portrayed. They are mass political organisations of people sharing the same views; they unite a considerable portion of the working people and are their vanguard. For example, 15 million people, i.e., 9 per cent of the adult population of the USSR, are members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This figure includes over 6 million workers and 2.2 million peasants (collective farmers), i.e., the workers and peasants make up 55.4 per cent of the entire party membership. The remaining party members are representatives of the intelligentsia. Engineers, agronomists, teachers, doctors, scientists, writers and art workers account for over 75 per cent of them.

The Communist parties of other socialist countries are also mass organisations embracing from 12 to 25 per cent of the country's adult population. People directly engaged in producing material and cultural goods hold a predominant position in these organisations. Thus, of the 750,000 Bulgarian Communist Party members, 40.3 per cent are workers and 25.5 per cent—peasant cooperative workers. The Socialist Unity Party of Germany numbers 1.9 million Communists, 57 per cent of whom are workers; the Polish United Workers' Party, 2.3 million, of whom some 40 per cent are workers and 10.5 per cent are peasants; the Romanian Communist Party, 2.3 million members, of whom 47 per cent are workers. The membership of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party totals 750,000 people, 58.3 per cent of whom are workers and 14.2 per cent—peasants.

The make-up of higher and local representative state bodies in those countries is similar. Workers, peasants and intellectuals—rather than professional managers—form the overwhelming majority in such bodies. The figures relevant to the USSR are given in another article of this collection, dealing with the Communists' attitude towards State.

The very social make-up of the Communist parties and representative bodies of state power largely predetermines the interests they must support, and the policy they have to pursue. It is impossible to imagine the industrialists and bankers who would sit in a bourgeois parliament and would not first take good care of their own interests. It is equally impossible to imagine the workers and

peasants who, united in the Communist Party and the representative bodies of state power, would not express and defend the interests of the working people.

Marxism-Leninism is the ideology of the Communist parties and their members. This philosophy is based on the theory of building socialism and, later on, communism which is the most humane and just system in the history of mankind. The very essence of the world outlook of *the Communist parties is that their ideology is aimed at ensuring, to the greatest extent, the material and spiritual needs of the people, at developing democracy as fully as possible, and at involving the broad people's masses into the management of social affairs.* This factor largely predetermines the general trend in the practical activities of both central and local party organs and the rank and file. Indeed, the Communist parties have always moved the ideological criteria to the foreground; and Communists themselves strictly follow the principle of unity of word and deed. The ideological trends and patterns of the Communist parties are very important for ensuring a democratic system in a socialist society.

Obviously, general policy, not to mention specific political decisions, are not predetermined automatically. It is a more complex process, though the socio-economic and ideological basis of a general policy is an important matter of principle, and the social make-up of the Party membership and the people's representative bodies certainly influence the choice of future political actions. This

process, based on the class aims and interests, is closely connected with the real situation in the country, and with the state of world affairs. It mirrors the way the Party leaders understand social priorities. Group and personal interests, as well as some other factors, sometimes influence this process.

The Mechanism of Party Activities

How does the ruling Communist Party cope with the varied and complex functions of a political leader of society, given that there is no opposition which would, as they say, expose the drawbacks and weak points of the leadership? How does it actually ensure the interests of various social classes and working people's strata, nationalities and ethnic groups? The Communist Party handles this complicated problem on the basis of broad and multi-channel ties with the masses, a profoundly scientific approach to intricate social problems, and the efficient democratic mechanism of Party activities.

Naturally, this system was not formed overnight. It improved and is still improving, like any novel mechanism. It did not guarantee the Party and society against any miscalculations or mistakes. But *each component of the system of Party leadership and the entire system itself abide by democratic methods.* The Communist parties' procedure of dealing with social issues, and the established relationship between the parties and the state and public bodies protect society from subjective or arbitrary decisions. The negative phenomena relevant to Stalin's personality cult in the

USSR, and a number of violations of legality in some other socialist countries, were a result of the departure from the principles declared and followed by the Communists, rather than the consequence of the one-party system. The subsequent measures adopted by the socialist countries constitute firm guarantees against any recurrence of similar developments.

All major social and state problems are considered at broad, representative Party forums, rather than by individuals or exclusive groups of Party leaders. This is an important condition of the right approach of the Communist parties to such problems. The Party organisations at factories, plants, collective farms, and various offices and institutions discuss the problems at hand jointly, with the participation of all members of these Party organisations, i.e. the most conscientious and respected people in the working collective. As to the city or other administrative or territorial Party organisations or the Communist Party as a whole, all outstanding issues are also discussed and solved collectively—at Party conferences and congresses attended by the plenipotentiaries of Party members. They are delegates elected from the most experienced, competent and authoritative people.

All the executive bodies of Party organisations at any level are also collective leaders. These bodies range from the Party bureaus and committees of local organisations (at factories, collective farms and cooperatives, and offices and institutions) to the Party Central Committees. The Communist

parties allow none other but a collective procedure for dealing with all major problems. The Rules of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union contain a special provision to this end, which specifies: "The cult of the individual and the violations of inner-Party democracy resulting from it must not be tolerated in the Party; they are incompatible with the Leninist principles of Party life."*

The fact that leading Party organs at any level are elected, not appointed, helps greatly to ensure the democratic character of Party leadership. All Communists at Party meetings or their delegates at Party conferences and congresses enjoy the unrestricted right to reject candidates named for the election to leading bodies. Candidates are elected by secret ballot. This procedure, stipulated in the Rules of the Communist parties, is being consistently translated into reality, helping to staff Party committees with people who enjoy the confidence and trust of both the Communists and the entire people.

The representatives of the workers, peasants and other categories of the working people make a sizable proportion in the higher Party organs, such as Party congresses and conferences, the Central Committee, and various other Party committees. For example, the 24th CPSU Congress, held in 1971, was attended by 4,963 delegates, including 1,195 workers from various branches of industry, construction and transport: metallurgists, miners, machine-makers, textile workers, railroad

* *The Road to Communism,* Moscow, 1972, p. 609.

men, and others. The Congress delegates also included 870 agricultural workers, 75 per cent of whom were ordinary collective farmers and state farm workers. The intelligentsia was represented at the Congress by 597 scientists and higher school teachers, 120 workers in public education and other cultural fields, including writers, composers, artists, and actors.

The delegates to the 8th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (1971) were 60 per cent workers; 79 per cent of the delegates were of working-class origin. This picture is quite typical for the higher Communist Party forums in other countries as well.

The institutes of Party leadership, state and social management in the socialist community of nations function in close accordance with the established legal procedure. The CPSU Rules, for example, provide for convening monthly Party meetings by local Party organisations. And they do so to discuss and adopt decisions on the most important issues pertaining to the life and work of the Party organisation and the working collective in which this organisation provides political leadership. Furthermore, the USSR Supreme Soviet holds its sessions twice a year, and considers and approves the State plan for national economic development and the national budget each year—and it does so consistently.

At the same time, the ruling Communist Party takes into account the significance of the truly democratic functions of each component of the given social system. The Party in the person of corres-

ponding Party organisations, takes special care that the opinion of the broadest possible sections of the people is heard and considered in each case and that the position, experience and interests of the working people are embodied to the fullest possible extent in adopted decisions, whether it be a session of the supreme representative body, called upon to consider the national policy guidelines, or a session of a village Soviet dealing with a small issue of improving the village services.

Any Party committee, from the district level upwards, is also a rather broad collective body, made up of the representatives of all classes and social strata, including a considerable number of ordinary workers and peasants. The example of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is an ample practical illustration. Even the highest governing body of the CPSU includes 32 workers and peasants; the regional, territorial and Union Republic Party committees are composed of 28,400 Communists, 30 per cent of whom are workers and peasants; 363,200 people were elected to the area, city and district Party committees, of whom over 42 per cent are workers and peasants.

The bodies elected in lower Party organisations are less numerous, though they necessarily follow the principle of collectivism. Such bodies exist in almost any enterprise or institution. 3,430 thousand Communists, including 38,3 per cent of workers and peasants, are members of Party committees and bureaus; secretaries or deputy secretaries of the local Party organisations and their subdivi-

sions, and Party leaders of lower Party groups. Workers and peasants account for 50 per cent of the total number of the Party bureau and committee members in local Party organisations.

In other words, some 4 million people, or over 25 per cent of the total membership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, including over 1,200,000 ordinary workers and peasants, are directly involved in the system of leading Party organs. A similar situation exists in the Communist and Workers' Parties of other socialist countries. The *Wojewodztwo* (region) committees of the Polish United Workers' Party included 40 per cent of workers; the *Powiatowe* (district) committees, 33 per cent; and the bureaus of local Party organisations and the Party committees at industrial enterprises, over 54 per cent. *This representation of the Party masses in Party committees at every level and their close day-to-day ties with their working collectives is not only a prerequisite for the profoundly democratic nature of the entire Party activity—it also expresses its essence.*

The Party committees apparatus, rather limited compared to the broad contingent of Party activists, plays an auxiliary (not the principal) role within the Communist parties and does not enjoy the right to tackle policy-making problems and questions of principle in practical Party activities. The active functioning of Party organs, as the organs of collective leadership, is the essential counterbalance to the possible subjectivism of Party leaders and protects the Party and society from possible violations of their rights and interests.

But who can open the people's eyes to the mistakes and drawbacks of the ruling Party if there is no opposition? Indeed, who can assert that it could never make mistakes?

Criticism —the Law of Party Life

True, society and state management is so complex a process that it is rather difficult to exclude certain misjudgements or failures. V. I. Lenin, founder of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the first Head of Soviet Government, used to say that people who never commit mistakes did not and could not exist. He said that political parties could also err. The most important thing, however, is their ability to expose all mistakes and shortcomings in both political and practical activities and correct them in good time. The Communist parties follow exactly this course of action, according to the dialectics of social development and the Party's responsibility before society. This course is ensured both ideologically and organisationally.

Those familiar with Marxism-Leninism know that the critical method underlies all theory and practice in the Communist parties and reflects their essence. The Marxist-Leninist ideology teaches the Communists to proceed from the fact that nature and society develop through the struggle of the opposite forces, of the new and the old, of the emerging and the decaying, and that history advances by overcoming contradictions. A Communist ideological principle is to discern the multifarious manifestations of these contradictions and

expose them in time. This principle applies equally to the outside world, to inner activities of the Communists and to socialist society.

The Communist parties' Rules which lay down the basic laws of Party life include the demand to encourage criticism, irrespective of individuals or their posts, as one of the main norms. These Rules provide for punishment of those who suppress criticism. All Communists enjoy the right to express their opinion as regards major Party policy issues. The CPSU Rules, for example, specify particularly that any Party member has the right "...to discuss freely questions of Party policies and practical activities at Party meetings, conferences and congresses, at the meetings of Party committees and in the Party press; to table motions; openly to express and uphold his opinion as long as the Party organisation concerned has not adopted a decision; ...to address any question, statement or proposal to any Party body, up to and including the CC CPSU, and to demand an answer on the substance of his address".*

Mistakes and shortcomings in the activities of Party and state bodies are discussed at Party and general meetings, conferences and congresses of the Party, trade-unions, youth and other public organisations, and at sessions of the Soviets of Working People's Deputies. Critical articles are regularly published in the press and broadcast over the radio and television. Pick up any news-

* *The Road to Communism*, Moscow, 1972, pp. 600-01.

paper published in a socialist country, and you will see that criticism from below is a constant and effective insurance for the normal functioning of the Party, State and society.

Channels of communication between the Communist parties and the masses are as multiple as the ways of verifying the correctness of Party policies. The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, for example, practises the so-called "Party days" which prove a great success. These are regularly convened open Party meetings attended by non-Party people who make up almost half (and often more) the total number of the participants. Central and local newspapers and radio inform the population well in advance of the forthcoming meeting. Leading Party and state figures are invited to attend such meetings and make statements. Reports on vital political and economic issues are normally discussed in detail. The discussion reveals both the achievements and drawbacks of Party and State activities. Later on, the competent bodies evaluate the results of such meetings and adopt the necessary measures to eliminate the shortcomings revealed.

Apart from open Party meetings, various group discussions have become very popular in the Hungarian People's Republic. They are held by Party committees and various sections of the working people. There is no fixed agenda, and discussion is in the form of questions and answers. As in the case of open Party meetings, the results of this discussion are generalised and the practical problems raised are forwarded to leading Party bo-

dies, ministries, departments or other authorities for appropriate action.

The people criticised in the socialist countries for committing mistakes in their work include foremen, team leaders, chairmen of agricultural co-operatives, factory and store directors, and Party and state officials, up to and including ministers and members of Politburos of the Central Committees of Communist parties.

A strict legal procedure exists in socialist countries: agencies, organisations and officials must legally respond to the substance of criticism, i.e., to rectify mistakes made, and make up for violations and shortcomings; besides, they must inform the newspaper, magazine or person criticising them of the measures taken to remedy the situation.

Experience shows that self-criticism—another method of exposing and overcoming contradictions —is also very effective. Under socialism, a critical analysis of one's activities became just as effective a means of eliminating shortcomings as external criticism. Such a self-analysis convinces the working people that the man under criticism has made the first and very important step towards improving his attitude to work and enhances confidence and respect from other people.

This mechanism of criticism and self-criticism which has become part and parcel of the socialist political system and which is continuously set into motion by many millions of Communists and non-Party people, more than compensates that seemingly lost guarantee of democracy which some

people traditionally associate with the existence of opposition parties.

All Party leadership bodies in the Communist parties, up to and including the Central Committee, are accountable. All their actions are controlled by the Party and society. Party committees at every level submit reports on their activities within strictly determined periods. At factories, plants, offices and institutions, these reports are submitted to a general meeting; within a certain territorial organisation—to a Party conference; and the Central Committees of Communist parties report to Party Congresses. It is the higher bodies of Party organisations and the Party as a whole—general meetings of Communists, Party conferences and Congresses—that have the right and duty to critically analyse and evaluate the activities of their executive organs and to approve or disapprove of these activities.

The activity of the Party and separate Party organisations is open to the scrutiny of both Communists and non-Party people. The press, radio and television cover these activities in detail. Each issue of central and local newspapers contains the relevant information.

Study and Generalisation of People's Opinion

A democratic approach to urgent development problems facing the state and society greatly depends, naturally, on the actual position of the Party. It may either command and administer everything, or (which is quite another thing) effect its leadership skilfully, like an orchestra conductor.

The relationship between the Communist Party and the representative government bodies, state administration machinery and public organisations, as laid down by the Constitutions of the socialist countries and as existing in practice, has a democratic, rather than administrative, character.

The Communist Party is the leader of the masses; it is a collective political organiser of social life. The Communist Party, like many other parties, drafts and submits its policy proposals for the people's approval. But these proposals, unlike those submitted by many other parties, are politically and scientifically substantiated for resolving urgent social problems. Whether they will be approved or rejected depends upon the will of the people, representative government bodies and public organisations.

The general policy of the Communist parties and all their initiatives, with just a few exceptions, evoke the positive response and general approval of various sections of the people. But this does not happen because the Party exerts some kind of political pressure upon society, or influences people's opinions through the mass media and through Communists holding important posts in state and public organisations. The Party's influence and authority stem, first and foremost, from the positions it upholds. The Communist Party upholds the interests of every working man, of the entire people in both high-level politics and everyday affairs.

However, to maintain that making political decisions in socialist society with only one ruling

political party excludes debate and clash of opinion would be an over-simplification.

Naturally, social ownership of the implements and means of production and the transfer of power to the people have created a favourable and decisive prerequisite for the interests of all classes and social strata to merge, and for a close social and political unity of the people. But given the fullest possible community of interests and aims, there is still the problem of coordinating them and attaining them by the best possible means.

The comparison of different opinions, the quest for the optimal alternative, freedom of discussion and criticism—this is the democratic way towards unity under both the communist one-party system, and in a socialist society where the Communist Party effects leadership in collaboration with the democratic parties. The study and generalisation of the people's opinions and experience, the approval of the viewpoint shared by the majority, rather than the rejection of dissidents—this is the method of working out and adopting political decisions by the Communist Party and socialist state at all levels.

Months of discussion, preceding the adoption of their Programmes by the CPSU and other fraternal Communist parties, when thousands of suggestions and proposals were made; discussion, by the entire people, of the most important bills ranging from labour laws to land legislation; wide public discussion, in almost all European socialist countries, of the poor management of national economies that resulted in the economic reforms

of the late 60-s and in the introduction of new systems of planning and economic incentives—these are only a few features of the method which helps the Communists see and take account of the complexities and dialectical contradictions involved in building a new society.

Thus, the social relations and the corresponding political system under socialism, together with the ideological policies and organisational set-up of the Communist Party itself, ensure a situation where the socialist one-party system, far from limiting democracy guarantees its development. This is how the close unity of the Communist Party and the people, which has become the most characteristic feature of socialist system, is taking shape and gaining strength.

By G. Volkov

CAN SOCIALISM PREVENT AN "ECOLOGICAL CRISIS"?

Does anyone bear the responsibility for an "ecological crisis"?— In search of new principles for dealing with nature.— "Man's inorganic body".—Experience and its lessons.— Ways of harmonisation.— Communism and nature.

In recent years, the problem of whether man is undermining the basis of his own existence by his industrial activity, i.e., destroying nature, polluting the environment, interfering with the established processes in the biosphere, is being discussed with a growing sense of alarm. All this may have catastrophic consequences if no preventive measures are taken against an "ecological crisis". What are its causes? It is no secret that the same machinery, technology and resources are utilised both under capitalism and socialism. . . .

On the Way to Doomsday

People often think and talk of nature as something resisting, opposing, alien and even hostile to man, something that one always has to "fight", "conquer", "subdue" and "dominate."

These words, taken from the vocabulary of social antagonism, reveal the origin of such an attitude to nature, which is a feature of the decaying capitalist society in the world as a whole.

Capitalism gave rise to powerful industry which has made the vigorous, massive transformation of nature a reality, of which a "pre-industrial" man dared not even dream. But the same capitalism also produced the spirit of utilitarianism and a narrow pragmatic approach which stimulated and channeled the social energy of "private initiative", and caused nature to be regarded merely as an utilitarian object of severe exploitation. In a society where men confronted each other as competitors or rivals, they cannot help but treat nature as a hostile, alien force. Nature is considered as a source of raw materials which should be taken at any price, as soon as possible and at minimum expense. If a system of "sweat-squeezing" is applied to the worker, then the "resources-squeezing" doctrine comes quite naturally in relation to nature.

In this society, man forgets his blood relationship to Mother Nature. He is no longer her respectful son, and considers the outbursts of her elemental forces as evidence of her despotic yoke. He

is passionately striving to "hit back" and impose his power over nature. The humble slave of yesteryear, who grovelled before her in humiliation and pleaded the stern, supreme sovereign-nature mercy and indulgence on his knees, has regained his spirits and confidently settles his heavy, hammered boot of industry on her lap.

No matter how awesome the achievements of industry at the turn of the 20th century seemed to the contemporary generation, the impact of that technological progress on the Planetary laboratory of nature, this mighty circulation of natural substances, was so limited in scale that it could be compared to the amount of water which one river brings into the ocean.

Nowadays, however, tens and hundreds of thousands of tons of petrochemicals, black oil, tar and other industrial wastes are literally daily drained into rivers, seas and oceans; instead of isolated smoke clouds smudging the sky, dense smog hangs over sprawling urban settlements; forests are rapidly disappearing and exhausted quarries are spreading like a cancer tumour; radioactive decay products have started accumulating in the flora and fauna.

Industrial interference into the affairs of nature is intensifying and broadening. 50 years ago, only some West European states and the US had a developed technological basis. Now the majority of countries have taken the path of active and rapid industrial development and are turning from agrarian into industrialised states. Industrialisation assumes virtually *global* scale.

There is another important consideration. Years ago, science, technology and the economy developed so gradually that generations of people were born, lived and died under almost unchanging conditions of work and life; in our age, people born by the light of a kerosene lamp could witness the mushroom cloud of an atomic explosion, brighter than a hundred suns, and man's first steps on the Moon. New ideas, which could radically transform the life of our sons and grandsons, as well as the life of our own generation in 10 to 20 years, are being developed in research laboratories all over the world.

The intensification, acceleration and the global scale assumed by scientific and technological progress are leading to the rapid spread of nature's transformation by man. This makes us think seriously about not only what material wealth we are leaving for the coming generations, but the kind of *environment* we shall leave behind us. The time has come for an urgent "reappraisal of values", i.e., re-examination of those principles upon which our relationship with nature was built.

No matter how scrupulously and efficiently man utilises natural resources, they are finite on our planet. If they are wrenched from the natural rotation of substances, they are irreplaceable. There is already a shortage of industrial and drinking water in many areas of our planet. In the foreseeable, though rather distant, future oil, iron, coal, non-ferrous metals and timber resources may be exhausted.

Western sociologists and economists are showing an understandable concern over an "ecological crisis". In recent years many interesting works evoking a gloomy picture of the savage devastation of nature, and no less gloomy forecasts have appeared. But who is to be blamed in the conflict with nature? Technology and industry themselves seem to be guilty. And here, apparently, nothing can be done. Capitalism and socialism are equally guilty and equally responsible. Such is allegedly the nature of "technological civilisation": we are making our lives ever more comfortable *at the expense* of nature, which will inevitably be degraded. Such are the arguments in capitalist countries which are also used to explain the social collisions aggravated by the scientific and technological revolution. The argument is based on the fact that man has made a fetish of science and technology.

Of course, much depends on technology, the level of its development, on the standard of knowledge embodied in its advancement and on our experience and abilities to make use of this technology and to manage it rationally. But one should not be drawn into the world of myths and fairytales and attribute technology with the ghostly life of vampires and demons. It should not be accused of vices which are a direct cause of the deficiency of a certain system of human society, its inability to organise an exchange of substances with nature on a rational, planned and scientific basis.

Indeed, how could this task be solved if in capitalist countries land and its resources are divid-

ed among property owners who fiercely compete with each other? With such competition, not only does man confront man and capital stand vs. capital, but the natural resources belonging to one company oppose those of another. A chemical concern, for example, considers it none of its business if its plants are poisoning rivers and the atmosphere.

How could this problem possibly be solved when maximum profits, profit at any cost, and not the interests and destinies of the population are the goals of production? When the inhabitants of industrial districts in Buffalo (New York) started a movement to clean the air, the rivers and the lakes around the city, the executives of Bethlehem Steel called a public press conference. They demanded lower taxes to be levied on Bethlehem Steel, high productivity by the workers in their plants and an end to all "prodding" of Bethlehem Steel about cleaning the environment. In other words, the workers have to pay for the expensive measures to clean the environment. Now and then, the owners confront the working people with an ultimatum: "Take it or leave it! You have a choice of clean air, clean water and no jobs, or polluted air and water, shorter lives and possible jobs."* Capitalism, in an antagonistic contradiction, inevitably brings about a clash between the interests of further development of production—and consequently, of material maintenance of working

* *World Marxist Review*, 1972, No. 8, p. 13.

people—and the interests of society in respect of environmental protection.

Is it not therefore clear that capitalism is to be blamed for the approaching world "ecological crisis"? Capitalism has been the dominant system on our planet for two or three centuries and it continues to control a large share of the earth's territory. But by now, the most industrialised countries of the capitalist world already consume more oxygen from the atmosphere than the vegetation of these countries can regenerate. Is it not a fact that the "contribution" of the US alone to the total contamination of our planet amounts to about 40 per cent? Is it not imperialism which bears a responsibility for the savage plunder of natural resources of former semi-colonial and colonial nations? Is it not true that such pillage continues to be carried out in some under-developed countries still in the imperialist orbit? Did not the US wage an "ecological warfare" in Vietnam by purposefully destroying the flora and fauna of this long-suffering country?

Even American ecologists agree that a huge, tenfold increase in environmental pollution experienced in the United States over 25 postwar years has not only been a result of the population growth and production increase (which have gone up by almost 40 per cent). The most important cause is the specific changes in the technology of industrial and agricultural production whereby many natural products have been replaced by man-made articles; cars on average have become more powerful, and many new technological pro-

cesses have been introduced. Still the main cause of these changes has been the desire to make bigger profits.

It is imperialism that bears the full responsibility for the radiological contamination of the earth's atmosphere and the world ocean. In 1968 alone, Britain, Belgium, West Germany, France and the Netherlands dumped 11,000 tons of radioactive wastes in untested containers into the Atlantic. The water used for cooling nuclear reactors at Hanford is drained down the Columbia river into the Pacific Ocean. In England, contaminated effluents from nuclear installations are discharged into the Irish Sea, and those from the French power reactors— into the Rhône and the Mediterranean. Despite the protests voiced by the public the world over, in August 1970, the US authorities dumped 418 large-size containers of nerve gas into the Atlantic.

Contamination of the environment has assumed such an alarming scale that many capitalist countries recently started a nature-protection campaign. The state assumes the role of a supreme arbiter and a "supervisor", tries, by means of fines and taxes, to put certain limits on the "gangsters of the biosphere", and sets up relevant ministries and commissions. The big question is how effective are these measures when the land, natural resources and the means of production remain as private property. This is why the Communist parties in capitalist countries are linking their struggle for the healthy environment with the fight against the capitalist form of ownership. This is why people

all over the world are asking whether the human race will be able to escape ecological deadlock if the capitalist way of life and production organisation is here to stay?

The more the human race and the technical tools of its existence are growing in number, the more our Earth becomes like the Planet of the Little Prince in the book by Saint-Exupéry. The Prince was concerned with unearthing baobab seeds: "A baobab is something you will never, never be able to get rid of if you attend to it too late. It spreads over the entire planet. It bores clear through it with its roots. And if the planet is too small, and the baobabs are too many, they split it in pieces. . . ."*

No, "baobabs" are by no means the symbol of technological civilisation. They are the symbol of its negative sides, they are its weeds which are to be spotted and uprooted in time.

Mankind has arrived at a point where the roads are diverging. If we blindly follow the road we have previously taken, and proceed along it at an ever increasing pace of scientific and technological revolution without paying the slightest attention to its "weeds", we are sure to become like that idler who failed to uproot in time three baobab seedlings on his planet. This is one way. There is every reason to believe that mankind will not take it, since it will remove its blinkers

* Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, Penguin Books, 1965, p. 26.

and realise more and more clearly what the end of this road looks like.

There is yet another road, and the socialist countries have already taken it.

New Principle of Dealing with Nature

More than a hundred years ago, the young Marx formulated his environmental credo, reflected in a precise, aphoristic, and picturesque phrase "*Nature is man's inorganic body*".*

What does it mean? Let us try to unearth the essence of Marx's definition.

Nature is man's body. This means, first of all, that nature and mankind form an integral and living unity. Human society cannot exist and develop outside nature, as man cannot think without a brain. If man develops the tools of thinking—comprehension, memory and habits of mediation by utilising the energy of his brain matter—he similarly develops the tools of his external activity, the whole of technology, by resorting to nature's materials.

And if by doing so man inflicts irreplaceable losses on nature, then these losses represent a damage to his own inorganic body and this equals to blood-letting and exhausting his own organs of activity.

In Russian fairy-tales, the hero, someone like Prince Ivan or Ivan the Fool, finds himself in a desperate situation when flying on back of an

* Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1975, p. 276.

eagle: in order to reach his destination at any cost, he has to feed it by cutting pieces of his own body. But, happily, Ivan's flight lasts not so long. Mankind which is flying on the wings of the scientific and technological progress is not at all going to stop either in 10 or 50 or 100 years. Here one will not be able to fly for long by exhausting one's own body, even if it is inorganic.

The present greedy, couldn't-care-less attitude to nature is a form of social cannibalism, "dismemberment" and crime against the life and health of the present and future generations. And this idea must be made cristal clear, if mankind is to avoid killing the goose that lays the golden egg.

What is there to be done? To declare war on the "iron-and-fire-spitting dragon" of industry and technical progress? Or to repeat the "Back to Nature" call made by Jean-Jacques Rousseau?

Such calls are made in the West but few people take them seriously: one cannot turn back the wheel of history and jump off the soaring rocket of scientific and technological progress. Hence, the question is where to steer this rocket.

And here we return to the image created by Marx. If nature is man's body, he is free to treat it differently. One can waste away one's health, all the living resources of the body and thus to make one's death closer. One can, on the other hand, develop one's muscles and living organs, train them and perfect their ability to restore the spent energy and living resources.

The history of human civilisation has passed through different stages in its attitude to nature.

Antique philosophy, has, for example, most consistently expressed the view that man is inseparable from nature, is part of it and therefore its laws are his laws. At that time, it stood to reason that man needed to apprehend nature not in order to hold sway over it, but to enjoy the beauty and harmony of the Universe, to find his place and his bearings in the world. Or, as Plato wrote, it is necessary to apprehend nature in order "that we might observe the circuits of intelligence in the heaven and profit by them for the revolutions of our own thought, which are akin to them",* or in other words, one "should bring the intelligent part, according to its pristine nature, into the likeness of that which intelligence discerns, and thereby win the fulfilment of the best life set by the gods before mankind both for this present time and for the time to come"**.

Capitalism and industrial production have given rise to another view, other aims, referred to above, i.e., to apprehend nature in order to change it to one's liking, subdue it to one's needs, enslave it, to snatch away its secrets by means of experiment and break it down by means of industry.

Finally, in the present epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism, a complete change of attitude towards nature becomes all the more urgent: it must be regarded as a living organism embracing human society. We therefore have to appre-

* *Plato's Cosmology. The "Timaeus" of Plato translated with a running commentary.* London. 1937, p. 158.

** Ibid., p. 354.

hend nature and society as something uniform and indivisible, to control nature's elemental forces and to orient them to society's benefits, or to put it more mildly, to "tame" nature, as man once tamed wild animals to their mutual advantage, and to enter organically into nature's life. This means that both the tools of human activity and its technical means and scientific methods have to undergo certain changes.

Mankind is at the threshold of social maturity, it cannot and should not treat any longer its own "body" as a hostile force to be enslaved and squeezed like a lemon. The human race is searching for a path to the harmonious union of industry and nature, of man and his environment, a union in which man and his inorganic body would find optimal conditions for their infinite development.

Let us now see the basis on which socialist society builds its relations with nature. Let us answer the main question whether or not it has at its disposal greater possibilities to regulate these relations than has capitalism.

The decisive factor is that *under socialism, nature and its resources belong not to private companies and persons, but to society as a whole,* it is a national property.

The development of socialist production is determined not by the law of getting the maximum profit, but by the interests of the working people, of the whole nation. This is why under socialism there are no—and cannot be any—unresolved contradictions between the effort to obtain a profit and the necessity to protect the environment,

between the selfish interests of entrepreneurs and the interests of society as a whole.

The development of capitalist production is mainly influenced by contradictory economic interests and only to a limited degree is controlled by society and the state. The development of a socialist economic system, on the other hand, is purposely controlled centrally and on a scientific basis.

Since under socialism, nature and industry are in the hands of one owner (society), it becomes possible to effect a unified, state and planned control over their interrelation, to carry out complex and long-range planning, to make precise calculations of consumed and regenerated natural resources, of distribution and utilisation of productive forces, taking into account not only purely economic, but social and ecological factors as well.

The foregoing does not imply that a socialist society has none of its own special difficulties in relations with nature. Socialist countries are encountering contradictions between the urgent need to step up the rates of scientific and technological progress, to accelerate the development of material production, and the necessity to allocate, at the same time, considerable sums for protecting and restoring the environment. Sometimes, enterprises and ministries, in utilising natural resources, are being guided by their narrow routine and bureaucratic interests. Hasty, incompetent decisions, which do not take into consideration the whole complex of possible consequences of our industrial

interference with nature, may also play a negative part.

However, these contradictions and shortcomings are in the nature of "pains of growth", and they are not in themselves the product of a socialist system. On the contrary, they result from the fact that not all the advantages of this system are yet fully utilised.

As socialist society is developing and reaching maturity, it endeavours to forge a new relationship with nature, increasingly discarding the utilitarian approach.

Soviet Experience

From the very first days of its existence, the Soviet state regarded nature as a national property, which should be kept intact and enlarged. Lenin himself elaborated the basic principles of utilising natural resources. During the first few years of Soviet power, he signed 94 decrees and laws relevant to protecting the environment and utilising natural resources. On his initiative, such documents as "The Basic Law on Forests", "On Protecting Fishing and Hunting Grounds in the Arctic Ocean and the White Sea", "On Protecting Natural Monuments, Gardens and Parks" were adopted. During Lenin's lifetime, the first 6 national game reserves were set up in the country. At present there are huge state preserves all over the USSR territory.

These and other measures have proved to be rather effective. In tsarist Russia, rapacious annihilation of the wild life led to virtual disappearance of the sable, beaver, otter, marten, saiga and

elk. Now there are hundreds of thousands of these animals in the country. In numerous state fish and animal breeding farms, valuable species are reared which are later released into forests and reservoirs. Millions upon millions of hectares of land are planted systematically with trees and shrubbery.

The Soviet Union was first in the world to set maximum permissible rates of concentration of hazardous substances in the atmosphere. In the USSR, the law forbids a new industrial unit to be commissioned unless its effluent-purifying installations are in operation.

Moscow is very proud of its air, which is cleaner than in any other major European city. How was this achieved? During the last decade, about 300 air polluting enterprises have been either moved into the countryside or reconstructed. In Moscow (and in other big cities of the country) all power-stations start operating on low-sulphur fuel in order to reduce the content of sulphur anhydride in the atmosphere.

One of the reasons why the air in Soviet cities has become cleaner is due to the widespread introduction of pipe-lines binding natural gas to industries and homes. The development of central-heating systems servicing the population of the Soviet Union has assumed such a scale that it has no match in any capitalist country. This has made it possible to get rid of tiny boiler-rooms which used to pollute the air.

The state has achieved a considerable reduction in air contamination not only in Moscow and Le-

ningrad but in such industrial centres as Gorky, Magnitogorsk, Donetsk, Krivoi Rog, Cherepovets, amongst others.

In the Soviet Union, much has been and is being done to protect and clean the rivers and lakes. Such work is carried out in accordance with the recently adopted basic laws concerning the use of water and land resources. During five years, 670 complex purifying installations with a daily capacity of 3 million m^3 have been constructed in the Volga and Ural river basins. There are also purifying installations which extract chemical elements from effluents. The state spends large sums of money for such purposes. From 1973 to 1976, around 700,000,000 rubles are to be spent on constructing purifying installations at 421 industrial enterprises located in the Volga and Ural river basins. By 1980, it is planned to stop dumping untreated or insufficiently cleaned domestic and industrial effluents in all towns located in this basin.

Such undertakings are not only costly but they produce no immediate economic effect. From the utilitarian point of view, the outlays for the protection of the environment and its restoration may seem to be unjustified. Still the socialist state spends large amounts of money since it follows the guidelines of a broader social criterion—to create healthy environment not only for the present generation but for the generations to come. People's life, health, and ability to work is the most precious wealth, the "capital" of socialist society. This being so, then clean air and water,

forests and all other resources of nature, with which man comes into a physical and spiritual contact, are really invaluable.

Such a view of man's relationship with nature, which is now widely and universally accepted in the socialist countries, has not always been a guiding principle in economic life: several unsound projects have been carried out which brought damages both to nature and society. Such, for example, was the case with the construction of the Sevan Hydro-Power Station in Armenia. As a result of the dam built there, the existence of a unique mountain lake was threatened. Now some costly measures have to be taken to raise the water level in the lake.

Several years ago, the Soviet public began to show concern over the building of a large timber-processing complex on the shores of the Lake Baikal in Siberia, a unique masterpiece of nature. It was feared that the effluents drained from this plant would deaden all forms of life in the lake. The USSR Government recognised the fears voiced by the public. It issued a special decree providing for effective purification of effluent waters. Some other measures have been undertaken to protect the lake's environment. It was decided to stop floating logs down all the rivers falling into the Baikal. Measures are presently being taken to remove the sunken logs from the lake. The organs of state inspection and scientists are keeping a close watch over the administrators' observance of the adopted measures, and sound the alarm in case of any violation.

Socialist society is able to build its relationship with nature on the basis of a *complex* approach. Preventive measures represent a whole complex of tasks (concerning forests, rivers and lakes, air transport, location of industrial enterprises, principles of town planning, use of natural resources) adjusted within a unified state plan.

The same approach is adopted in specific regions. On the territory of industrial complexes, nature, population points, and the location of industrial projects are all linked to a single plan. Thousands of Soviet geographers, economists, sociologists and administrators are working in close cooperation to improve the organisation of timber industries in Siberia, oil industries—down the Volga River, and iron and steel plants—in the Ukraine and the Urals.

In socialist countries, the protection of nature is a matter of concern for both the state and the people. In view of this, numerous public inspection committees and posts have been set up at many industrial enterprises in the USSR. Students, schoolchildren and young workers actively participate in various measures aimed at nature conservation. Recently created Society of Nature Conservation sponsors so-called "people's universities" and "faculties of nature conservation" all over the country. During the past five years, members of the society have delivered almost 2,000,000 lectures.

It is appropriate to finish an exposé of Soviet experience with a quotation from the Report of the CC CPSU to the Party's 24th Congress

which succinctly defines the Soviet Communists' policy for dealing with nature: "As we take steps to speed up scientific and technical progress, we must see to it that it should combine with the rational treatment of natural resources and should not cause dangerous air and water pollution or exhaust the soil. The Party demands most emphatically that the planning and economic bodies and design organisations, all our cadres, should keep the question of nature protection within their field of vision when designing and building new enterprises or improving the work of existing ones. Not we alone, but the coming generations should also be able to use and enjoy all the gifts of our country's splendid natural environment. We are also prepared to participate in collective international schemes for nature protection and the rational use of natural resources".*

We have very briefly described the experience of the Soviet Union. Similarly, the problem of man's relationship with nature in the contemporary scientific and technological revolution is being solved in other socialist countries. These countries coordinate their efforts in environmental protection and restoration of the natural resources. Scientific and technical cooperation within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance is organised with due regard to the problems of environmental protection. Any positive experience in solving these problems obtained by each of these countries is shared within the whole social-

* *24th Congress of the CPSU*, Moscow, 1971, pp. 69-70.

ist community. Socialist states are the sponsors of tackling environmental problems on a world scale. They were the first to move these problems for discussion at the United Nations. The first large-scale international meeting devoted to this question, the Symposium of the UN Economic Commission for Europe, was also held on the initiative of a socialist country (Czechoslovakia) in May 1971.

Problems, Searches, Prospects

Communists consider that restoration and conservation of nature is only half the problem. We have no intention of freezing our technical and economic advance. We are aiming at an equilibrium between nature and society, but this equilibrium should be dynamic and not static. It is not meant to restrict the scientific and technological revolution but to lead it along a path which is safe, but provides rapid movement.

Are there any possibilities for this? Yes, there are some quite tangible ones, opened up by the development of science and technology. But as we have shown, only a society where there are no contradictory interests on the part of private owners exploiting nature, a society which, in starting up production, builds its relations with nature on a unified plan the essence of which is to take care of the environment for the coming generations, may realise the full extent of these possibilities.

As man makes the transition from an imperfect technology to a sophisticated one, he will possess

an ever growing range of possibilities for harmonising his relations with nature.

As Antoine Saint-Exupéry rightly pointed out, we are just starting to get used to the house called "technical civilisation". This house is not yet too cosy, since the new way of life is taking shape too rapidly and all novelties are causing discord in the household.

Society may channel the development of technical means in such a way that they would improve not only from the economic point of view, but would meanwhile organically and quite naturally "become part" of man's life and work, on the one hand, and nature, on the other.

Take, for example, one of the most perilous blind alleys of "technical civilisation"—the problem of industrial waste. It is rapidly growing along with stepped-up production, and it is this waste that threatens to turn land into a dump yard, rivers—into gutters and the air—into dense smog.

Where is a reliable and economically effective way out?

The development of technology itself prompts it. It lies in the complete elimination of industrial waste, just as there are no wastes on board a space-ship. In other words, wastes may be recycled; liquid effluents, after purification, may be reused. They are included into a closed technological circulation cycle, similar to the one existing in nature. There are examples of such closed-circuit technology. The world is aware of the negative consequences of building huge thermal and

electric power plants, the unit capacities of which are reaching tremendous figures. In future, mankind will consume hundreds and thousands times more electricity than at present. If we produce it by traditional methods, we shall be obliged to use exhaustively all the energy from rivers and to burn all the fuel available. In such a case, this industry alone will endanger the climatic and atmospheric conditions of man's existence.

Luckily, modern science offers some hope of solving even this problem. After successfully testing the Soviet "Tokomak" machine, the prospect of building fusion power plants has become a reality. The advantage of such electric power plants lies, first of all, in the fact that they will produce energy by using the fuel whose resources are practically inexhaustible: deuterium, i.e., heavy water. The efficiency of such power plants will range from 60 to 90 per cent.

It seems, however, that the most important aspect of such a method of energy production lies in the fact that it will not pollute the environment and will remove the possibility of radioactive contamination which always exists in operating nuclear power plants. Moreover, by using the flow of heated gas expelled by a fusion reactor, it would be possible, according to some experts, to destroy varied industrial wastes and then to separate out the required elements for their later reuse in production.

Automobiles with internal combustion engines pollute the atmosphere of cities, but designers are already working out designs for electromobiles.

Tremendous noise which may be heard in many workshops is detrimental to the worker's health, but this evil could be eliminated by changing over to new technology (for example, from die stamping to casting), and in future by creating closed, fully automated, distance-controlled technological lines. Many chemical plants producing hazardous substances already have semi- or completely closed technological lines.

The most vivid example of creating technology which completely excludes any pollution of the environment is offered by the USSR uranium industry where closed cycles using new extracting and sorbtion processes were introduced from its very outset.

The use of pesticides in agriculture is causing a serious concern. One consoles oneself by thinking that such application of chemicals is only a temporary feature of agricultural development. New, more effective and man-safe biological and biochemical means of stimulating the growth of plants and animals and of their protection from weeds, pests and bacteria are sure to appear.

One Western author in his science fiction story describes the return of astronauts to Earth after a long space mission. During their absence, several centuries had passed and astronauts were expecting to see tremendous technological progress. But they were disappointed to see quiet forests, calm meadows and picturesque landscape on the old planet. They could not spot any factories, roads or roaring highways. With the creation of a techno-

logically new means of communication, enabling people living on the opposite sides of the globe to come easily into contact with each other, long-distance voyages turned out to be of no use and people rode specially-bred animals to pay visits to the neighbours. Quite different kinds of animals, plants and bacteria produced all the foodstuffs, clothes and household articles needed by people. In other words, the *biological civilisation*, which offers a harmonic unity with nature and creates the best conditions for the moral and physical development of man, has come to replace the industrial civilisation.

Of course, one can question the precise details of futuristic life, as they are set out in the story; nevertheless many naturalists, sociologists and ecologists believe that in the future biological methods will acquire prime importance.

At a time when cybernetics, bionics, engineering psychology and industrial design are trying to give man's working environment "a human face", there already exist interesting prospects and possibilities of improving man's natural environment.

The world, "created by the Deity" is far from man's ideal abode, and it needs a thorough shake-up. Let us take the Soviet Union. Its territory totals 22,300,000 sq. km., but a huge portion of it is desert, semi-desert, tundra, and forest-tundra. Out of the total 240 million hectares of arable land many tens of millions of hectares are subject to either constant or periodical droughts. Besides, due to low average temperature, in the USSR the

growing season of crops is on average longer than, for example, in the USA.

Should Soviet man put up with the situation? Of course, not. Much has already been done, for example, the irrigation and planting trees in the arid regions of the Central Asia and down the Volga River, the drainage of malarial marshlands in Kolkhida (Georgia) and planting of protective forest-belts. The development of science and engineering gives new powerful means for performing such transformations.

For example, the problem of controlled climate becomes an urgent matter. Soviet people are now capable of preventing hails which used to inflict serious damage to vineyards in Moldavia. In a number of places, forest fires are extinguished by means of artificially induced rainfalls. But these are only the first steps. We can not even yet make absolutely reliable weather forecasts. The solution of this problem alone would greatly facilitate agricultural development, while a controlled climate would mean a tenfold increase in agricultural produce.

Various projects aimed at radical climatic transformation were discussed in the Soviet press. They included melting ice in the Arctic Ocean, transfer of waters of certain Siberian rivers into the Central-Asian deserts, changing the direction of some warm and cold ocean currents, development of "artificial suns" by using the energy of nuclear fusion. But environmentalists have solid grounds to object and they insist that realisation

of such projects would cause a host of negative side effects.

Such reasoning has a dampening effect. But they do at least convince us that without a thorough analysis, we must not try such experiments. In socialist society, it is, in principle, possible to carry out climatic transformation projects on a very large scale, since the long chain of interconnected causes and consequences would be placed under an active and strict control, carried out by man on a genuinely scientific basis.

There is another very important aspect. In order to make a model of a particular natural process by using technical means, vast amounts of money and energy are required. But to gently push a natural process into the direction needed by man, a comparatively small effort is sufficient. It works as a sort of "trigger relay action" starting the whole chain reaction of interconnected causes and consequences. That is the "trick" of controlling nature.

This explains the urgency of scientifically forecasting the ways in which the whole biosphere will develop as a result of scientific and technical activities. Without its solution, it is utterly impossible to carry out large-scale projects of nature transformation, and a transfer to the organisation of optimum environment, to re-making of the biosphere, with due regard to its own laws and the interests of mankind, is totally unthinkable.

Socialist society with a centralised planned economy is capable of executing reproduction and building its relations with nature on a strictly

scientific basis, with prior adjustments to avoid negative consequences. For example, the solution of ecological problems is, at present, included in a long-range development plan of the USSR economy up to 1990.

Another social aspect is of no less importance. Large-scale geo-technical projects cannot be carried out by one country, one nation. A drastic change in the climate of one area of the Earth cannot help affecting the climatic equilibrium of the whole planet. Any large-scale interference with the natural course of things would affect the whole Earth's biosphere and cannot be a strictly local phenomenon. The biosphere does not recognise any national boundaries or state borders.

Man's thought and actions are challenged by the problem of controlling the planet's biosphere as a single system in his interests. Neither any particular state nor a "bloc" of countries can shoulder such a task. The global scale which the relations of man and nature assume, demands joint efforts on the part of all countries and continents, their national and social consolidation which becomes a reality only in the course of communist transformation of the planet. The contradiction, brought about in the social structure of the world capitalist countries by this requirement made by nature herself, is proof that human relations based on private property have become outdated not only socially, but *technologically and ecologically* as well.

The human race has settled over the whole planet, with its numbers doubling every 35-40 years.

But still it occupies a tiny place in the living mass of the biosphere. It has been calculated that the total weight of all living organisms on our planet exceeds that of people by 6 million times. Man's power, it seems, is not a function of sheer numbers, but rather of mankind's combined intelligence, its transforming activity, being directed by a certain social organisation.

We are living through a decisive epoch of the Earth's geological history, when a spontaneous evolution of the biosphere gives way to its conscientious, purposeful control, when possibilities for this control are arising. Mankind is getting ready for its new planetary role and is passing through a period of drastic, unheard-of changes in social relations, which will culminate in building communist society.

In this connection, we should mention one more, purely personal factor. According to Karl Marx, the universal character of man is linked with that of his environment. This is a profound thought. In the socialist countries we are creating a new social environment for forming the new man, and this, of course, is of prime importance. But a natural environment is not a factor to be overlooked in this process.

How can a child possibly develop fully his inquisitiveness, his active self and emotional character if, from the moment of birth, he lives in the asphalt, roaring jungle of a big city, where his movements are restrained, transistor radios replace bird's singing and a TV set is a source of the most acute experiences? Is it not this lack of outlet for

their energy, in a creative contact with nature, which drives some teenagers to seek some relief in anti-social behaviour? However, it is no secret that "patriarchal", remote villages are no more able to activise man's inner world.

The solution, it seems, lies in the organic combination of the achievements of the urban civilisation and the many-faced beauty of Mother Nature into a single cultural complex, into such social and natural environment which would allow the all-round creative abilities of man to be developed and fully utilised.

The transformation of the planet's nature into a humanised nature presupposes that the nature of social relations would also become humanised. Hence, such a natural and social environment will be created which would make the all-round development and formation of one's creative abilities a reality.

By A. Lukyanov

WHAT IS THE COMMUNIST IDEA OF THE STATE?

Mankind's eternal satellite?— Prompted by the practical experience of the masses.— From the dictatorship of the proletariat to a state of the entire people.— People's power or power over people?— Perfecting the state apparatus.— Two forms of democracy.— The future of a socialist state.

Critics of Marxism sometimes portray Communists as people who deny or undermine the state and try to liquidate it as quickly as possible. It is also often alleged that Communists want to bring all society's major aspects of life under state control and wish to reach a stage where the state controls everything, even human relationships. What are the Communists' real views? What is the reality?

Why and When Did the State Become Necessary

One can still come across a dwindling number of sociologists who hold that the state appeared together with man and human society and that it is characteristic of the biological, social and psychological nature of man and his eternal inclination to hold power and to submit to power.

Is this really so? Archaeological, ethnographical and historical studies conducted over the last 150 years have made it convincingly clear: the state is not mankind's eternal satellite. There was a time when people managed without a state—i.e., primitive society with its tribal system. Of course, in a primitive community, whether it was the ancient German mark or the Slavs' *zadruga,* Iroquoian Indian tribes, or a family in India, there existed common interests, the protection of which was trusted to particular persons, vested with certain powers, acting under the control of a self-governing community. But the state as a specific form of organising society did not exist at that time.

When and why did the state appear? What functions did it perform? Why did it emerge at varying chronological periods—with some peoples, for instance, the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans—many centuries B.C., while with others, for example, the Germans and Russians,—many centuries later? They say that a definite level of technological, productive and cultural development was essential. Yes, certainly. But precisely what level?

In studying these questions, Marx and Engels analysed a vast amount of data on the development of human society which had been obtained by archaeologists and ethnographers, as well as those contained in the works of the most prominent historians, in Plato's, Aristotle's, Kant's, Hegel's, Saint-Simon's and Fourier's works on the state and in those of other great thinkers.

All this enabled Marx and Engels to declare that the state is a necessary and natural result of social development at a definite historical stage of society's life. It appears in society where and when it becomes divided into classes, i.e., into large groups of people, one of which may appropriate a definite share of the results of work done by others. But most people would not work voluntarily for the benefit of the others and be subdued by them unless they were forced. There appears a need for a special organisation, supported by an armed force which would keep the masses in obedience. The state is such an organisation. Such was an ancient state—an organisation of slave owners, assigned to keep a tight rein on slaves. Such was a feudal state which ensured the obedience of the peasants and working people in the towns. Such is a bourgeois state, which, irrespective of its form, remains an instrument of capital's domination over labour.

What unites these types of state? Of course, any state is bound to take upon itself a certain amount of work in order to run any society. Such, in particular, are communal services, irrigation,

transport facilities, traffic safety, etc. But the main thing uniting them all is the fact that they represent an organisation of the *propertied minority*, which forces its orders and views upon the vast poor majority. The wealthy minority and its politicians naturally try to conceal the real purpose and essence of the state. For this very reason, they were impelled, in the long run, to represent nominally the whole society. But however much such a state may decorate itself with democratic attributes, it remains, in essence, a defender of that predominant part of society which owns the main means of production.

Take the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. Workers accounted for 14.6 per cent of its population, office workers—2.4 per cent, peasants and artisans—66.7 per cent, rich peasants (kulaks)—11.4 per cent, town bourgeoisie and landlords—4.9 per cent. Thus, the proletariat, deprived of any means of production, plus the poorest small farmers, amounted to 81.3 per cent of the country's population. At the opposite pole, there were the big capitalists, landlords and top-level executives, accounting for roughly 2 per cent of the population. They owned the bulk of the social riches and protected their interests by means of the tsarist autocracy and the Russian bourgeois-landlord state, which consisted of the officialdom, the army, police and jails. Representatives of the propertied classes alone occupied all the key posts in that state.

Thus, in the 1906 elections to the State Duma (a Russian-style parliament), the landlords, who

held only 0.2 per cent of the votes, elected over 50 per cent and the bourgeoisie some 25 per cent of the total body of electors. It is quite clear that under such a system the overwhelming majority of Duma's members were landlords, industrialists, wholesale merchants or their supporters.

The logics of the working class struggle promted the Communists to conclude that *the liberation of the working masses from exploitation is impossible and unthinkable without the decisive abolition of the bourgeois state machinery.*

The Communists, however, have never objected to all institutions of a state. There is, certainly, no need to abolish the administrative apparatus in every field of state activity.

In order to liberate themselves from exploitation, the working masses must first abolish the oppressive part of the state machinery; if these mechanisms are not broken down, the people will be unable to express their actual will.

But what should replace the crushed state machinery? How should the administration of society be organised once its control has passed into the hands of the working people?

The Birth of a New State System

It took some time for the Communists to find the answers to these questions. They realised they could not simply invent the organisational structure of a state, which would be the first of its kind. It could not just appear like Minerva from Jupiter's head. Its forms had to be prompted by revolutionary practice.

The Paris Commune, the first working people's state, established as a result of the 1871 Revolution, lasted only 72 days. It was a state which expressed the will of the majority for the first time ever. The Commune was made up of workers' representatives, elected by a general vote, who were directly responsible to the working people and could be replaced at any time according to the latter's wish. Elected representatives not only adopted laws—they also made them effective. The officialdom was stripped of all privileges. The army and police were replaced by the armed working people. In a word, it was a state representing the people, organised into communes.

Several decades later, in 1905, during the upsurge of the revolutionary struggle by Russia's proletariat and poor peasantry, the workers set up their mass organisations first in Ivanovo, an industrial centre, and later in many other towns. These organisations were made up of workers' deputies, elected at plants and factories, and were called Soviets of Workers' Deputies. After the February Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution of 1917, Soviets again sprang up everywhere in Russia, but this time as Soviets of the Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. In fact, they were elected bodies, uniting the whole country's working population, which opposed the bourgeois government.

Hence, the revolutionary innovation of the masses has shown what the organisation of the workers' state should be. And the Communists, with Lenin at the helm, drew the conclusion that "*the*

people themselves, . . . united in the Soviets, must run the state".*

After the victory of the October Revolution in Russia, the first Soviet Constitution was drawn up in 1918, defining the character of the new workers' and peasants' state: "Within the territory of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, all power belongs to the country's working population, united in town and village Soviets."**

The Communists have never concealed either the class character of their new state or its general goals. This is illustrated by the first Constitution of the Soviet Ukraine, adopted in March, 1919: "The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic is an organisation of the dictatorship of the working and exploited masses—the proletariat and the poor peasantry—over their centuries-old oppressors and exploiters, the capitalists and landlords. . . . The goal of this dictatorship is to achieve a transition from a bourgeois system to socialism by carrying out socialist transformations and systematic suppression of all counter-revolutionary moves by the propertied classes; after all these goals have been accomplished, the dictatorship will cease, and in its wake, when the future communist system has finally been formed, the state will disappear too, thus making way to free forms of communal life, built on the organisational principles of common labour to the general benefit, and of the fraternal solidarity of peoples."***

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 107-08.
** *RSFSR Law Book*, 1918, No. 51, p. 582 (in Russian).
*** *Ukraine Law Book*, 1919, No. 19, p. 204 (in Russian).

So, the Communists openly declared: a state with the dictatorship of the proletariat would not last forever. This is how the Communists thought and spoke when the revolution, for the first time ever, handed over the power to the working people.

More than fifty years have since passed and other socialist states have emerged, learning from the experience of the Soviet state. Each one has introduced new shades and peculiarities into the whole picture of setting up a state socialist structure and in tackling these and other problems. But whether it be the Soviet in the USSR, or the Rada Narodowa in Poland, the National Committee in Czechoslovakia, or the People's Khural in Mongolia, the essence of these representative power bodies is the same: they are the organisations of the working masses, led by the working class. And now, one can judge not only what Communists think of a state of the working people, but give a comprehensive appraisal of what such a state represents *in reality*, and how it was tested by time and experience.

The winning of political power by the Russian working people, led by the working class, and their creation of a state in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat was just the first step in transforming a capitalist society into a socialist one. This process required a transitional stage.

From the very outset, the young workers' state began performing quite new functions, unknown to any previous state. After the private ownership

had been liquidated, the state began to manage the economy, the whole complex of economic organisations: plants, factories, mines, banks, shipping lines, which all became state property. Schools and children's institutions, theatres and printing plants, museums and colleges all came under state ownership. The state thus had to shoulder not only economic and organisational responsibilities, but also the task of educating and enlightening the people, of overcoming the scorn for "common" labour and the worship of profits made out of somebody else's work. The state had to organise a reliable control over the measure of work and the measure of consumption, set up a system of promoting and supporting diligent labour for the benefit of society and ensure strict observation of the socialist principle "He who does not work, neither shall he eat."

Moreover, in the initial period, the Soviet Communists had to combat the fierce struggle waged by the exploiting classes against the young workers' and peasants' state. Supported by international capital, the counter-revolutionaries plunged the country into a long and bloody civil war. The Soviet state had to act decisively and nationalise the banks, industry and transport. The military struggle against the Soviet state compelled it to deprive the exploiting elements of their suffrage, to prevent them influencing the activities of the organs of power. This was done in 1918. Who had to be deprived of the right to vote? Those who employed hired labour in order to make profits; those who lived on an unearned income;

private-sector traders and their middlemen; ministers of religion; members of the tsarist family; former policemen and gendarmes. Taken together, they accounted for no more than two or three per cent of the population.

Does this give any grounds for anti-communist scholars to continue saying that the dictatorship of the proletariat is incompatible with real democracy? By depriving the toppled exploiters of their right to vote, the Soviet state encouraged broad sections of ordinary working people to administer the country. The main role was played by the Soviets whose deputies were elected by a show of hands at workers' meetings, held either at enterprises or in the localities. Compared with peasants however, workers had a certain advantage in their rate of representation in the Soviets. For the first time in history, the worker, the peasant and the soldier entered the organs of power. In the first ten years of Soviet Russia's existence, over 19 million working people were elected as Soviets' deputies, delegates to the Soviets' congresses and as members of their executive committees. All organs of state administration received their powers specifically from the Soviets, and the People's militia came to be subordinated exclusively to them. The working people also began to select People's judges and assessors from their midst.

Such was the state apparatus during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Even these individual features show how democratic the socialist state was even at that remote and hard time.

Profound changes in the general balance of forces in favour of socialism and the assistance offered by the Soviet Union have created more favourable conditions in a number of countries for the transition from capitalism to socialism. This has been manifested not only in the rates and methods—somewhat different from those in the USSR —of reconstructing the economy along socialist lines. In many of these countries where the revolution was relatively peaceful, much of the old state machinery was gradually adjusted to operate in the interests of the working people, rather than destroyed. It proved unnecessary to deprive anyone of the right to vote. Parliamentary organs where they had existed previously, took on new functions; they also used some other democratic provisions from the old constitutions applying to the workings of the administrative system. The situation justified such an attitude to the old representative organs, since the Communists have always stressed that the solution to the parliamentary problem does not lie in abolishing representative institutions and the electoral system, but in transforming them from "talking shops" into control centres, combining both law-making and law execution.*

Historical experience, the emerging of possibilities for working peacefully towards socialism have amended attitudes towards the question of abolishing the bourgeois state machinery, though the common patterns of creating a new

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 423.

workers' state have remained unchanged everywhere.

From the Socialist Basis to Developed Socialism

Every country where the power is passed into the hands of the working people naturally needs time to get rid of the remnants of capitalist relations and to build the foundation of socilaism. The duration of this period depends on the particular historical conditions existing in the world and the country in question.

In the Soviet Union, the first to build a new society, this period ended in the late 1930s, i.e., it lasted around 20 years. One of the main results achieved was the complete domination of socialist ownership of the means of production. By 1937, the socialist sector was already yielding 99.8 per cent of the industrial output and 98.5 per cent of the agricultural produce. The victory of the socialist sector in the economy has caused profound changes in the social structure of society and, above all, the complete abolition of exploiting elements.

Having established the basis of socialism, the USSR's working masses were then faced with the task of constructing a developed socialist society.

What does "developed socialism" mean? First of all, it entails a society with a powerful, comprehensively developed economy, built on the basis of the latest scientific and technological achievements, high rates of production growth and labour productivity. To quote but a few figures, the Soviet Union's national income has grown more

than 100-fold compared to the 1922 level; the 1972 growth of industrial output alone was almost equal to the country's gross output in 1940.

At the stage of developed socialism, the two main forms of socialist ownership—state (that of the whole people) and cooperative—are consolidated and rapidly drawn together. The relations of production and distribution in collective farms are becoming increasingly similar to those of state enterprises (though the collective forms of management at the collective farms are, of course, preserved).

These economic processes are bound to effect society's social structure. Where are these effects manifested?

The proportion of the working class in the population is growing, and its determinative influence in all spheres of life is increasing. It now accounts for over 60 per cent of the employed population and remains the main productive force of society.

Thanks to the mechanisation of agricultural processes and the organisation of peasants' work, their working conditions and social standing are gradually levelling up to those of industrial workers. On this basis, the contradictions still existing between town and countryside, between workers and peasants, are being slowly eliminated. The union of workers and peasants is becoming ever stronger. Moreover, the extensive mechanisation and electrification of farm production makes it increasingly possible to reduce the number of people employed in agriculture.

The intellectuals are playing an increasingly important role in society. In 1926, there were less than 3 million people engaged in predominantly intellectual labour in the USSR, whereas in 1974, their number was around 34 million. Many of these people are directly contributing to a higher level of socialist production. On the other hand, work done by certain categories of workers and peasants is acquiring an increasingly intellectual nature.

The following table shows the changes in the class composition of Soviet society during the period of socialist and communist construction. (Percentage of the total population.)

	1928	1939	1959	1974
Factory workers	12.4	32.5	48.2	60.6
Office workers	5.2	17.7	20.1	21.6
Collective farmers and co-operated handicraftsmen	2.9	47.2	31.4	17.8
Individual peasants and non-cooperated handicraftsmen	74.9	2.6	0.3	—
Bourgeoisie, traders and kulaks	4.6	—	—	—

Let us take a close look at the changes in the social structure. They all point to the obvious fact: *Soviet society is on the way to becoming a greater monolith, a closer social homogeneity.*

A new historical community of people has gradually taken shape—the Soviet people, which

represents the socialist unity of working people of many nationalities engaged in industry, agriculture, culture, manual and intellectual labour. The social base of the socialist state has thus been drastically broadened.

Creation of a Socialist State of the Entire People

The goals and functions of State have naturally been modified as a result of the changes in society's economic and class structure. The most significant milestone would seem to be that since the late 1930s, one of the major functions of a socialist state during the transition period—the suppression of hostile activities of the exploiting class within the country—has been abolished. Relations of mutual assistance and close cooperation between the working class, collective farmers and the working intelligentsia—the main social groups of Soviet society—have been established.

The changes in the goals and functions of the state have brought about corresponding changes in the organisational form of state power. After the USSR Constitution came into force in 1936, the Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Red Army-men's (i.e., soldiers') Deputies were transformed into the Soviets of Working People's Deputies. Instead of a system of Congresses of the Soviets held periodically, direct elections of deputies to all the Soviets, from the village and town Soviets and up to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, were introduced. At the same time a new election system came into force which ensured citizens the right of general, equal and direct ballot.

At that time, the Soviet Union was surrounded by hostile capitalist countries. The tense international situation and then the war against the USSR unleashed by the German fascists and the necessity of restoring the national economy damaged by the war, have impeded not only the economic but also the political development of the Soviet state.

The Soviet people have overcome all these difficulties. In building a developed socialist state in the USSR the state of the proletariat has been transformed into a state of the entire people. Its description will give us a clearer picture of this state.

The goal of a people's state is "to organise the building up of the material and technical basis of communism, and the transformation of socialist relations into communist relations, exercise control over the measure of work and the measure of consumption, promote the people's welfare, protect the rights and freedoms of Soviet citizens, socialist law and order and socialist property, instil in the people conscious discipline and a communist attitude to labour, guarantee the defence and security of the country, promote fraternal cooperation with the socialist countries, uphold world peace, and maintain normal relations with all countries".* Such is its definition in the Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and this is, in fact, how the Soviet state actually functions.

* *The Road to Communism*, Moscow, 1962, pp. 547-48.

The development of economy and culture represents the basic domain of the state's activities. Yet the tasks in this field are becoming increasingly complicated. The further the socialist state's organism grows, the more complex and diversified its economy becomes. It includes numerous plants, factories, industrial associations, agricultural organisations, building sites, transport, research and development organisations, a vast number of trade, communal, and service establishments at the public's disposal. Since the overwhelming majority of them (with an exception of varied cooperative units, mainly in the countryside, which are engaged in agricultural production and in selling goods to rural dwellers) belong to the entire nation in the person of the socialist state, the latter must ensure uninterrupted, balanced and interlocking operation of this intricate economic complex.

Hence, the majority of the problems facing the socialist state organs concern managing the economy and improving management methods. Therefore, the organs of economic planning and management occupy a prominent position within the system of state organs, and specialists engaged in various fields of production play a leading role among civil servants. Of course, the development of production is not an aim in itself. The state tackles it as a first-priority matter because it ensures the steady, rapid rise of the population's living standards.

The problems which the people's state is solving in the field of culture and education are no

less broad and complex. Moreover, the state owns major scientific, cultural and educational institutions and the majority of the mass media which exert a profound influence on people's minds. This whole system of institutions allows the state to make quick advances in raising the cultural level and satisfying the moral needs of all sections of society. Of course, even now the Soviet state still has to take measures to eliminate such phenomena as improper attitudes to work, lack of discipline, violation of law and order, all of which are incompatible both with socialism and any normal human community, for that matter.

The vast scope of economic, organisational, cultural and educational activities, the scope previously unknown in the history of the state, is typical of a developed socialist state.

The economic and social results of these activities are evident, and even a biased observer would find them difficult to dispute.

"Yes, this may be true", the opponents of communism often have to concede nowadays. "We shall not refute the fact that the economy may develop without private entrepreneurs, and that the state can manage it. We shall not even reject the idea that in a society without private entrepreneurs, the citizens' wellbeing is a matter of the state's relative concern. But such a state should be democratic. You cannot really call the state which the Communists have built democratic. This is not people's power, but a 'totalitarian' rule over people." Such is the theme of hundreds upon hundreds of books, booklets and articles in which

bourgeois politicians, journalists and scientists deal with the problems of a socialist state.

But let the facts speak for themselves. Let us examine them thoroughly and objectively.

Who Becomes a Deputy and How

Under socialism, as we have seen, the administration of state power is by no means confined to its traditional interpretation—issuing decrees and ensuring law and order. What is meant here is the daily management of hundreds of thousands of units in numerous fields of the economy and culture. This means the state organs take daily decisions on a great many major and minor problems, taking into account a vast assortment of historical, national and other peculiarities and interests of the population.

The most important feature of a socialist state is that millions of people help to run it. Their participation is neither sporadic nor consultative, but constant and decisive. And it is not just a communist ideological gimmick, but an objective requirement of an administrative system with no private ownership of the means of production.

In socialist countries, the people delegate millions of worthy men and women into a widely developed system of representative organs of state power. In the USSR, for example, there are over 50,000 organs of power, i.e., various Soviets. They consist of over 2,200,000 elected deputies. Jules Moch, a prominent French Socialist, wrote in his book "*URSS. Les yeux ouverts*" that a whole

pyramid of Soviets is built with deputies elected in vast numbers, a system which is "quite compatible with true, genuinely free democracy".*

In socialist states, deputies are elected by the entire population through a secret ballot; the people have the right of the general, equal and direct vote. In socialist countries, the law ensures the possibility of including more candidates onto the ballot-paper than would be eventually elected from a particular constituency. However, the rules and practice of holding elections vary according to the traditions and customs of different states. In some of them, constituencies with several mandates are set up, in others, a system of electing deputies and vice-deputies is practiced, in still others, only one candidate is left on the ballot-paper after candidates' screening. But everywhere the main objective is to elect the best representatives of workers, peasants and the intelligentsia who would most fully express the will and interests of all the working people.

Who nominates candidates for election and how is it done? Candidates are, as a rule, representatives of a democratic election bloc—Communist parties, other parties and public organisations or a bloc of Communist parties and non-party people. It is not necessarily members of a Communist Party who constitute the majority of candidates: in the USSR, in 1973, the Communists accounted for less than half the deputies elected to

* Jules Moch, *URSS. Les yeux ouverts*, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1957, p. 304.

the Soviets (44 per cent), whilst the rest of deputies were non-party members.

During a pre-election campaign the main emphasis is on the general appraisal of each candidate's personality. Candidates are nominated by public organisations such as the Party, trade unions, youth organisations and workers' collectives at plants, factories, institutes, and establishments in the service sector. Their personal and business qualities, merits and shortcomings are thoroughly discussed at public meetings. For example, in 1973, during a campaign before the election to the local Soviets over 400 registered candidates were struck out from the list at the voters' suggestion. Moreover, in 80 constituencies the candidates did not receive the required absolute majority and were not elected.

What kind of deputies do the people want? In the USSR 1973 elections to the local Soviets, workers accounted for 39.3 per cent of the elected deputies, collective farmers—27.9 per cent, people working in various fields of the economy and culture, including civil servants—32.8 per cent. The latter category includes many teachers (5.8 per cent) and doctors (3.2 per cent). There are deputies of over 100 nationalities. Over 47 per cent of the deputies are women and almost one in three deputies is under 30.

The highest organ of state power in the Soviet Union, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, consists of 1,517 deputies. More than half of them are workers (498) and collective farmers (221). If we compare the composition of the Soviet organs of

state power with that of the former Russian State Duma, it becomes clear why some unbiased politicians, having no communist leanings whatsoever, see the Soviets as a really democratic and representative organisation.

But what matters, apart from *who* is elected as a deputy, is the question of *how* relations between the deputy and his voters are established after the election. This, to a large extent, determines whether or not the deputy forgets what he promised his electorate the morning after the vote, which is often experienced by citizens of non-socialist countries. In socialist countries, a deputy is obliged to maintain constant contact with his voters, with the collectives of working people and public organisations which nominated him as a candidate. The law states that *the deputy is responsible to his electorate and is obliged to report to them; the electorate can at any time, after taking a vote, recall the deputy if the latter has failed to justify their confidence.*

And this is not only a principle but is routine practice. Over nine years (1965-73), the Soviet voters have recalled 3,740 deputies, including 11 deputies from the USSR Supreme Soviet and around 100 deputies from the highest organs of power of the Union Republics. The main reason for such action is the voters' dissatisfaction either with the way the deputy has fulfilled his election promises, or with his moral or business qualities.

Deputies participate in state administration while retaining their normal posts and they do not get pay for performing their deputy's duties.

Socialism not only draws the producers of material and cultural values into government, but, to a certain extent, combines law-making and administration. This means in practice that deputies combine legislative work and decision-making with control over the way these laws and decisions are implemented. Thus, a deputy must constantly check that his decisions correspond to the rapidly changing requirements, interests and needs of his electors.

The social and national composition of socialist-type organs of people's representation, entailing the participation of all kinds of workers and the close contact of deputies with their electorate and the everyday life of workers' collectives at plants and offices enables the organs of power to act competently. And this is very important, considering the broad scope of activities tackled by the Supreme and local Soviets. They encompass the national economic plan and budget, the development of industry and construction, transport and communications, agriculture, environmental protection, the organisation of communal services, education, culture and sports, ensuring law and order. In a word, it is difficult to imagine a problem of national or local importance which would escape the Soviets' attention.

Of course, representative organs may discuss many questions, say the opponents of communism, but the point is, they add immediately, that in socialist countries, elected deputies have long since been moved to the side-lines by the policy-making executives. Moreover, many publications suggest

that this is a commonplace and global trend, typical of all countries without exception. The cause lies in the current scientific and technological revolution, which, they claim, inevitably leads to the weakened authority of parliaments and other representative organs, and, at the same time, sharply strengthens the role of the executive organs, bureaucrats and experts since they alone are in a position to manage the complex economic and technical processes of society's development.

But should we really attribute features which are in fact characteristic of many capitalist countries to the whole world, including the socialist countries? Let us examine the matter in detail.

Elected Representatives and the State Apparatus

In socialist society it is certainly impossible to perform complex state functions without specialists and a special administrative apparatus.

Contemporary scientific and technological progress, the necessity of quick decision-making at management level in varied economic and social fields inevitably entail enhancing the specialists' role in management in many different spheres of activity. Communists are aware that under these circumstances it is essential to gradually increase the workers' control over the work of executive organs, officials and specialists.

Does the structure of an administrative system existing in a socialist country offer such a possibility? The facts indicate that it does. These functions are being successfully performed by the elect-

ed organs of people's representation, from which all the other state organs directly or indirectly receive their powers. On the other hand, the actual results of management may be fully felt and appraised by those who actually produce material and spiritual values, who live constantly among working people and are, at the same time, nominated by the people to express their interests.

Hence, in socialist countries, the highest and local representative organs are paying increasing attention to control and checking of the work performed by the state apparatus.

We can see, from the example of the Soviet Union how this is done in practice. More and more often we come across instances when the deputies of the Supreme Soviet submit the work of some ministries and other government offices to public analysis or listen to reports on some aspects of the Government's activities in general. At the Supreme Soviet's sessions held in 1972-75, the deputies not only considered, as usual, the reports of the Council of Ministers on the progress of fulfilling the State Economic Plan but thoroughly discussed the Government's reports on its activities in such fields as medical care, public education, nature conservation and the rational use of natural resources. At one of its sessions the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR discussed the report of the Chairman of the Republican Council of Ministers on the progress in realising the five-year development plan. The governments of Karelia, Tatar, Chuvash and some other Autonomous Republics reported on their activities to the deputies

who had given them their mandate. Many such examples may be cited.

Local Soviets exercise an extensive control over the executive organs. Suffice it to say that in 1973, practically all of them (99.5 per cent) considered reports of the relevant executive committees engaged in the daily management of economic and cultural life, in providing communal services and ensuring public order in their region, area, town or village.

Standing committees, formed by the deputies, are playing an increasingly important role in exercising control by the Soviets. These committees function in the periods between sessions. The experience accumulated by the USSR Supreme Soviet is very significant in this respect. During the four-year term of the 8th Supreme Soviet (1970-74), its committees held about 150 sessions, at which reports on the activities of ministries, departments, republican and local organs, entrusted with managing varied branches of the economy and culture, were discussed.

In those instances when the standing committees' recommendations touch upon some major state problems, which happens quite often, the USSR Government considers these recommendations and takes an appropriate decision. Such was the case, for example, with the problems of observing laws concerning the health protection of miners, of ensuring safety conditions for women's work, of the rational and complex utilisation of natural resources, and of developing a network of motor-roads.

Local Soviets' standing committees are becoming more and more active. In 1965, there were 298,000 such committees, whilst in 1973, their number reached 326,000. Almost 1,800,000 deputies—including hundreds of thousands of varied specialists—work in these committees. Standing committees of local authorities may deal quite competently with complex economic matters and initiate discussion by the Soviets on a number of burning issues. In 1973 alone, these committees preliminary discussed 443,000 problems subsequently forwarded for discussion at the Soviets' sessions, and 756,000 problems—at the meetings of executive committees.

It is therefore incorrect to reduce the activities of Soviets, particularly the USSR Supreme Soviet, as critics of the Soviet system sometimes try to do, to merely the deputies' work in the sessions. Since Soviet deputies combine their state duties with productive labour, this presupposes relatively short sessions of the Soviets. But a session, involving discussion and subsequent adoption of decisions and laws is, as a rule, only the final stage of active work, lasting sometimes for months, which deputies perform in standing committees.

Inquiries by the deputies on matters which are of specific interest to the population also serve as a form of control over the activities of the state apparatus. In four years (1970-73), the deputies made almost 190,000 inquiries at sessions of local Soviets, and got precise answers on the majority of them, thus enabling the Soviets to take relevant decisions.

Many additional facts and figures may be cited but the foregoing proves that *in socialist countries, the activities of the organs of people's representation*, far from being curtailed, are, on the contrary, *gradually developing by encompassing ever wider range of issues, acquiring new experience, using new forms of control over the work of executive bodies and the whole state machinery.*

At the same time, it would be a mistake to present Communists as politicians who see the present-day structure of the socialist state as the height of perfection.

The appearance of new branches of the economy, and the development of the economy as a whole, the necessity of rapidly introducing scientific and technological achievements into production, the desire to satisfy more fully the rapidly growing material and cultural needs of the people —all this demands that the state machinery be constantly improved. What met our demands yesterday and seemed to be justified from the political, economic and organisational point of view, today turns out to be unsatisfactory and is subjected to sharp criticism. During the last few years, the task of improving the state administration, especially economic management has been occupying a central place in the work of highest organs of power in the socialist countries and in the work of the ruling Communist and Workers' Parties, their Congresses and Plenary Meetings of their Central Committees.

What does this involve? Major concerns are: the improvement in planning national economic

development, and strengthening its complex nature and scientific validity; enhancing the role of economic incentives; better coordination between sectoral and regional economic management; the setting up of large-scale industrial and agricultural production associations. All this makes it imperative to re-arrange and adapt the heart of the state machinery—the organs of economic planning and management—to the present-day requirements of economic development, to teach and retrain specialists working in this apparatus and to get rid of people who are out of touch with reality and replace them with new cadres, and consistently introduce work-study methods into management.

The problem of combining centralised state administration with the initiative of local bodies is no less complex and it inevitably causes arguments and clashes. Modern computer techniques, other modern means of information and management, a high level of production concentration—all this promotes centralised control over the state's operations. Yet this beginning can successfully develop when local needs are precisely known and when local bodies actively and independently utilise all the available resources and possibilities. This is why in recent years in socialist countries, along with measures for improving the system of state planning, some steps have been taken to specify and broaden the scope of activities of the local organs of administration and management.

Much attention is being paid to improving those cadres of the state machinery who are directly concerned with meeting the population's

needs, to raising the qualifications of civil servants and their skill in satisfying the working people's requirements, and to the strict observance of laws by each official. Communists have no rosy illusions that in a socialist state machinery there can be no more bureaucrats, cold-hearted officials or people who try to by-pass the law. An uncompromising struggle against red tape, and individual instances of disregard to the interests of the working people continue to be a matter of concern.

Direct Control by the Masses

The practice whereby state organs or officials submit reports to the community helps to increase the officials' discipline and responsibility and cuts down red tape and formalism. To quote a single example: in 1973, almost all (99.1 per cent) the executive committees of the local Soviets reported to their communities. More than quarter of the country's adult population (45.4 million people), discussed their reports at 261,000 meetings.

The improved functioning of the state machinery is closely linked with the increased activity of the people's control organs existing in the majority of socialist countries. These organs are made up of ordinary working people. In the Soviet Union, in particular, almost 9 million workers, collective farmers and professionals were elected by their work-mates to the people's control groups at enterprises, construction sites, collective and state farms and offices.

The working people's powers are not limited to expressing and realising their will through the

state organs alone. *The constant development of the working people's direct participation in managing the society's and state's affairs—the essence of a genuine people's democracy—is typical of socialism.* This is an important peculiarity of a socialist system. Of course, both forms of people's democracy (representative and direct) cannot be technically separated or, more than that, opposed. They supplement each other and constitute a single whole.

To get an idea of the way this mechanism actually operates, we will consider the pivotal point of society's management under socialism, i.e., management of the economy and culture. Let us examine the working people's possibilities of participating in the management of workers' collectives, especially production collectives.

In the Soviet Union, for example, the state cannot administer many enterprises or offices without the help of their workers' collectives and other organisations (the Communist Party, trade unions, youth organisations, etc.).

In this respect the workers' collective participates in management through workers' meetings or standing production conferences. These conferences are set up at every enterprise where the workforce exceeds 100 people. Over 50 million factory and office workers, technicians and engineers take part in these conferences, which discuss plans for their plants' and factories' industrial and social development, many questions pertinent to the organisation of production, working conditions and wage rates, technical norms, etc.

The effectiveness of these forms of participation can be judged by one fact: each year the workers at production conferences make up to 2,000,000 proposals aimed at rationalising production. These help plant and office workers in their work and bring them and the enterprise great economic benefits.

The socialist order is such that the extent of the people's participation in management does not depend on the will of top executives. Soviet laws, for example, define the rights of the workers' collectives and organisations in detail. All questions pertinent to working procedures, the review of output quotas, wage rates, distribution of the material incentives fund, social and cultural events and housing construction must be decided either with the trade union committee or be subject to its agreement. In particular, the law establishes the trade union's right to request reports from enterprise managers on all the above questions and to demand that shortcomings be eliminated. The administration has no right either to hire or fire a worker or an office employee on its own initiative without the agreement of the trade union committee. Workers may be promoted only after taking the opinion of the trade union committtee into account. Trade unions may and do propose sanctions to administrative bodies to be taken against top executives if the latter violate the labour laws, act bureaucratically or pay little regard to the needs of the working people. Cases of sanctions against administrators, including their removal, initiated by the trade unions should not be regarded as ne-

gative. This is real evidence of the effectiveness of socialist democracy.

The participation of workers' collectives in managing society's affairs is not limited to the internal problems of an enterprise or a cooperative association. They have many political rights too. Workers' collectives or residents' meetings nominate candidates to the Soviets, hear reports from deputies and people's judges, elect people's assessors and appoint members of election boards to organise elections to the Soviets. As we have already said, workers' collectives have an exclusive right to recall a deputy.

Mass organisations are given great powers in running a socialist state. They have the right to initiate laws and to introduce draft decisions to be considered by the Soviets. Thus, a number of environmental laws were adopted on the initiative of environmental societies which unite thousands of environmentalists. Mass organisations take part in important state organs and decide aspects of their work. For example, Soviet Young Communist League members are placed on the boards of all ministries and state committees whose activities are associated with education, training or ensuring the rights of young people. There is a wide range of problems which the state organs have no right to decide independently and are obliged either to consult, work with or seek the agreement of mass organisations.

Moreover, mass organisations have taken over some functions of the state organs, such as labour protection, social security, management of the

wide network of sanatoria, rest homes and camping sites where the working people spend their holidays, and so on.

Hence, the functions of state and non-state organisations are closely interlocked. They are combined but they do not coincide. The precise definition of the state and non-state organisations' rights and duties, and the subsequent fulfillment of their roles allows events in society to be considered from different points of view, including the workers' view-point; it gives a better idea of the actual situation, helping to reveal and overcome contradictions; it also allows alternative solutions to be argued and compared and proper guidelines to be worked out.

No matter which aspect of improving the state machinery we touch upon, they are all founded on the working people's participation in state decisions, in managing the state's affairs and in control over state bodies, i.e., democracy in the full sense of the word.

The Communist Party is the motive force of the state machinery and is the organising and coordinating force behind the process of making it more democratic.

The more complex and multifarious the processes in society, the richer is its economic and cultural life, and the more precise must its guidelines for further progress be formulated. This progress, like any development, means overcoming contradictions and difficulties, dovetailing multifarious interests and formulating the general will of the

people. Such complex problems cannot be solved simply by using the administrative means at the state's disposal. The state's administrative and economic influence is essential and justified, but by itself it is not sufficient.

The tasks confronting the socialist countries can only be solved through the joint efforts of the working people, the state and public organisations.

The Communist Party, acting as the guiding nucleus of all organisations, is a collective force able to unite society and its organisations and ensure that all of them energeticaly encourage the masses' participation in management and act strictly within their own field without duplicating each other's efforts. The Party is the nucleus of power, but it should not be identified with state power. Contrary to the claims of communism's critics, it never had nor does it have any state power. The Party performs its leading role first of all through the Communists who were either elected to the Soviets or work in other state organs. The Party does its utmost to ensure that state is ruled by the people and for the people. That is why strengthening of the leading role of the Communist Party is absolutely essential to develop democracy.

The development of democracy, which, on the one hand, reflects a steady economic and cultural growth and, on the other, exerts an active influence upon this growth, is most closely linked with the nature of a state of the entire people.

The Communists do not forget that a state of the entire people, at present unique to the Soviet Union, is just on the first step of its development. In the present Soviet state system there are many features from the past. A number of new phenomena are still in embryo and need improvement.

Prospects for Development

Soviet society's historical experience along with that of the other socialist countries which had finished building the foundations of socialism in the 1960s and are now building a developed socialist society, allows more precise definition to be made of a state of the entire people as a qualitatively new stage in the political organisation of socialism. At the same time this experience allows the way, in which the state structure will develop, to be determined more clearly, i.e., the withering away of the state.

The organisational structure of future society, based on people's power, will not fall from the skies, nor emerge just because the present organisation of society disappears. The more developed socialism becomes, the more organisational forms it will acquire, which after certain transformations will function in communist society. This refers, first of all, to those state institutions which are entitled to regulate society's economic life, and the development of science, technology and culture. It also refers to those multifarious state and public institutions which encourage the working people's participation in running their society's affairs.

Given the great differences in the organisational structure of the future communist self-government and present socialist society, one can still see their similarity and hence continuity. The very best of a developed and highly organised socialist society's political organisation will have been refined and will be used to establish communist self-government.

The future will dictate the concrete ways in which a socialist state system is to be transformed into communist self-government.

In their attitude to the state, the Communists are guided by the previous human experience. They say: The state should not serve the interests of the propertied minority nor suppress the working majority. The Communists view the development of state in the following perspective: the exploitative state was abolished and replaced with the dictatorship of the proletariat, which was a socialist state of the working majority; the latter was transformed into a state of the entire people, which in turn will gradually wither away and become communist people's self-government.

By I. Kichanova

WHAT IS THE COMMUNIST POLICY TOWARDS RELIGION AND BELIEVERS?

The break with religion in the USSR and other socialist countries is often considered an artificial process, alien to human society. Some people try to trace its origin exclusively to Communist atheism, presenting it as the persecution of religion and the oppression of believers. But religion is losing ground in the non-socialist countries as well. . . .

The "Communist invention" or a general tendency?— State disestablishes the church.— From the opposition to socialism to loyalty.— Freedom of religious beliefs in action.— Education and the development of social activity, rather than compulsion.— The findings of one sociological study.—For the genuine values.

Soviet society is justifiably called the society of mass atheism. The overwhelming majority of Soviet people do not believe in God. Nevertheless, a visiting foreign journalist, tourist or businessman can easily spot a functioning church, synagogue, preaching-house, or mosque. A similar situation exists in any socialist country. In the GDR, for example, he can meet a representative of the Christian-Democratic Union: in the Polish People's Republic—an active member of a public Catholic organisation.

The Old Assertions

Atheism is a principle on which the Communist parties base their world outlook. However, in the Soviet Union, for example, religious magazines, the Bible and the Koran are published regularly. In Poland, there are specialised publishers which put out classical and contemporary theological works.

How does it all co-exist?

If you seek an answer to the question: "How do the Communists treat believers?" in Western publications, you would discover striking variations of opinion and contrasting judgements.

The author happened to attend a lecture on the subject: "Religion and Communism", which was delivered in Rome by Don Loyacono, a Catholic prelate known for his expressly anti-communist articles. He had just returned from the Soviet Union. Sensing his congregation's lack of trust in his preaching, the prelate resorted to personal impressions to back up his sermon. What did he say in his homily? He had to admit that there are in

the Soviet Union state institutions which ensure religious liberty; he had to remark on the beauty of churches, mention that church buildings are being restored and that both the flock and the priests live well enough. At the same time, he asserted that atheism was forced upon Soviet man and society, and that the Communists oppressed the believers, since communism fights religion. Many books and articles on religion in socialist countries are based on these two assertions; they therefore deserve detailed scrutiny.

An Artificial Phenomenon or a Sign of the Times?

There is nothing new in the assertion that atheism is alien to society. The idea was born together with religion itself. In the 20th century attacks on atheism were stepped up and now special emphasis is laid on the fact that atheism is widespread in those countries where the Communists came to power. Various explanations were given, but the leitmotif was the same: atheism is a political phenomenon forced upon society in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

Today, it is easier to make such propositions than to defend them. Indeed, leading clergymen themselves call the 20th century a century of religion's lost prestige. The spreading of various forms of atheism is a source of worry for the ideologists and leaders of all religions. It is an irrefutable fact that people are now generally less religious. It is also indisputable that secularisation, i.e., freeing all spheres of social life from the influence of religion, is gaining strength as a fun-

damental progressive tendency of social development.

Atheism, secularisation, the criticism of religion are not only typical of socialist countries. The organised movement of free-thinkers has been in existence for over a century and has long become international. The World Union of Freethinkers and the International Humanist and Ethical Union are the most representative organisations. The Vatican defines them as "non-Marxist forms of militant atheism". Many world-renowned scientists, philosophers, and authors—people who can hardly be called the champions of communism—belong to these organisations. Among them: Bertrand Russell, Alfred Ayer, Corliss Lamont, Chomsky. They develop, under modern conditions, the ideas of the Enlightenment philosophers and Encyclopaedists, the ideas of anticlericalism; they substantiate the secular origins and character of morality and affirm the moral merits of values void of any religious sanction.

Communists highly appreciate the humanistic and educational activities of the freethinkers and maintain contacts with them. Soviet specialists on religion and atheism participated at the 38th Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers, held in November, 1973. The papers read at the Congress of International Humanist and Ethical Union included also a paper by a Soviet representative.

Thus, the attempts to present atheism as an artificial, autonomous and "purely communist" phenomenon prove to be unsubstantiated. Atheistic

tendencies manifest themselves to varying degrees in many different social and cultural-historical situations (moreover, they sometimes contradict each other), but one thing is beyond any doubt—they are acquiring a global character and scope.

Major church documents of our time recognise the importance and influence of these tendencies on both intellectuals and the broad people's masses.

In his encyclic "*Mater et Magistra*" published in 1961, Pope John XXIII acknowledges the developing process of secularisation. He says: "However, no folly seems more characteristic of our time than the desire to establish a firm and meaningful temporal order, but without God, its necessary foundation."* The encyclic calls the establishment and legalisation of "temporal spirit", an important feature of our time. It points out the spread of legal consciousness and particularly stresses the existence of Constitutions based on temporal law and appealing to temporal consciousness.

This was the first time the church made such declarations. Now, it cannot pass over in silence the fact that the growing idea of cooperation between all religions as the first-priority task of the church policies is, actually, an attempt to pool the efforts of all religious organisations in order to draw up a new strategy and tactics for the struggle against secularistic principles, against atheism. Its humanism is regarded by the church

* *The Social Teachings of the Church*, N. Y., 1963, p. 266.

as the most serious danger. The voluminous "*L'ateismo contemporaneo*", published by the Vatican recently,* notes that the humanistic character of atheism becomes obvious to the common people and enhances the prestige of atheistic positions.

Thus, church leaders and authoritative theologians themselves recognise that religion is losing its adherents throughout the world. One may ask: "Is there any reason to believe that the alienation of believers from religion in the socialist countries is an artificial phenomenon, foreign to human society?" Would it not be more reasonable to say that the Marxists, the Communists, express in theory and realise in practice, most consistently and fully, the profound tendency of the historical and social development of society? This tendency, though contradictive, has become extremely pressing for our time.

The Historic Decree

The tedious, intricate work aimed at overcoming the influence of religion is regarded as an important task in the programme of building communism. The Communists proceed from the principle of the humanistic struggle for man. They support the emancipation of man from any form of alienation, and his liberation from all false and delusive forms of consciousness. Their policies aim to mould the real, all-round personality, satisfying the ever increasing spiritual and material needs. This is the fundamental programme of the Com-

* "*L'Atheisme dans la vie et la cultur contemporcines*", 1967, V. 2, p. 412.

munists, which has been consistently implemented in varying degrees, and at various stages in the Soviet state's development, sometimes in rather difficult historical conditions.

After the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, leaders of the religious organisations in Russia took the path of political struggle against Soviet power. They joined the counter-revolutionary movement and used every possible means, including their ideological influence, to restore tsarism and the bourgeois landlord system.

Why did it happen? The Orthodox Church was always a mainstay of the Russian tsarist autocracy. It was the largest land owner (its land possessions amounted to 2,850,000 hectares), and one of the biggest financiers (it levied 90 million gold rubles from the population each year). The clergy were responsible for the loyalty of their flock, thus helping the tsarist regime to politically enslave the people's masses. The Orthodox Church was also a tool of oppression of the non-Russian nationalities and ethnic groups in Russia, since it occupied a privileged position as compared to other religions and cults.

The Revolution had given over to the peasants hundreds of thousands of hectares of land owned by the church. Over 1,5 million people moved into the premises possessed by the cloisters.

The overthrow of tsarism and the bourgeois landlord system in Russia meant the church's loss of its stalwart role in society. It is no wonder, therefore, that the problems of shaping the relationship between the church and the newly emerged

state were among the first to be tackled by the Communists. As early as January 23, 1918, the Council of People's Commissars (the Government of the young Soviet Republic) issued a Decree entitled "On the Separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church". It was a turning point in the relationship between the Russian state and the church. We shall, therefore, discuss the Decree in more detail.

The Decree begins with the clear-cut declaration: "The church is separated from the state."* This proposition was elaborated upon in the formula: "Every citizen may or may not profess any religion."** Every citizen enjoys a guaranteed right to be a believer or non-believer. "Any deprivation of rights in connection with the profession or non-profession of any religion whatsoever is abrogated."***

The democratic principles of religious liberty and the separation of the church from the state are declared simultaneously in the Decree. This means that, in practice, no reference is made to religion in any official document (such as census questionnaires, etc.) filled in by a Soviet citizen during his lifetime. The law forbids this to be mentioned, since it is purely a matter of every man's conscience.

The Decree guarantees free performance of religious rites, as long as they do not violate law

* *The Decrees of Soviet Power*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1957, p. 373 (in Russian).

** Ibid.

*** Ibid.

and order and do not encroach on the civil rights and liberties of other Soviet citizens. Since a believer is a citizen like any other member of society, he is obliged to fulfil the relevant civil duties.

The Decree abolished all religious oaths, which is significant if we recall the protracted, stubborn and dramatic struggle of the 19th century English freethinkers who sought to abolish the obligatory procedure of taking an oath on the Bible (in courts, in Parliament, at official ceremonies). We may also recall the stormy debates in Parliament on the problem of secularism, the persecution of freethinkers, etc.

The separation of the school from the church eliminated the clergy's pernicious influence on the upbringing of the younger generation and ensured temporal principles of education. The Decree established the democratic principles of the Soviet state and its institutions. Citizens could receive religious upbringing and education on a private and individual basis only.

The same Decree deprived the church organisations of their right to levy arbitrary and ruinous taxes from the population. No force or punishment of the flock, no taxation or fees to support churches and religious societies were allowed.

The nationalisation of the church land and the handing over to the people of some church buildings did not result in the physical liquidation of the church, as some non-objective historians and clericals in the non-socialist world try to allege. They forget that the Soviet Communists handed over church buildings and premises, as well as

church-owned church-plate and objects of worship to religious communities for their free use.

Religious Freedom is Reality

The church was stripped of its economic influence, and its claim to a dominant role in the spiritual life of society and its potential as a political pressure on believers were seriously undermined. But believers themselves remained, as did the family traditions and customs based on religious rites, and the religious requirements formed centuries ago and passed over from generation to generation. It was to fulfil these requirements, in keeping with the principles of religious freedom, that the church was recognised by the new state and received a certain status in social life. We have already mentioned, however, that following the Revolution, many clergymen abused this status and supported the overthrown classes and foreign interventionists. Soviet power was compelled to resort to certain suppressive measures in such cases.

Some publications dealing with the position of religion in the USSR distort the historical truth. The foes of communism paint a picture of repressions, a war against the church and its organisations, and persecutions of believers by the Soviet authorities. These allegations are like a screen shielding the actual events. In 1921, for example, when the greater part of Soviet Russia was ravaged by a severe drought, the state was compelled to confiscate a certain part of material wealth owned by various church institutions in order to purchase bread from abroad. The church sabo-

taged this decision and declared it predatory and unprecedented in the history of relationship between the church and the state.

But that was nothing new in Russian history. Peter I and Catherine II resorted, in their time, to the secularisation of the church property. The tsarist Government confiscated a large amount of gold from the church to satisfy the needs of World War I. However, when the Soviet governmental commission began, in response to the appeal of the population of the hunger-stricken regions, to confiscate valuables owned by the church, it ran into open sabotage. Such action aroused indignation among many believers and led to their collision with the clergy. The believers were fully aware that only recently (1916) the church had granted the possessions of one of the richest Russian monasteries, the famous Yuriev Monastery, for the military needs of the tsarist Government. Anathema and imprecation were by no means the strongest actions taken by the church leadership and some clergy who supported it against Soviet power.

Other facts, too, might be brought to the attention of those who narrowly and negatively interpret the complex process of carrying out the new principles of relationship between the state and the church. By declaring the equality of all religious cults and by refusing to support a privileged position of any religious organisation, the Soviet Government had put an end to the privileges and dominance of the Russian Orthodox Church which had been oppressing the other cults. In 1917, it

returned to the Moslems the ancient text of the Koran (the so-called "Othman Koran"), considered sacred. It had been taken away by the tsarist Government. At the same time, certain religious sects were banned since their rites did damage to human dignity and health (*Khlysty*, *Skoptsi*, and some other sects).

In the ensuing period, the Decree on the separation of the church from the state was supplemented with a number of enactments regulating the state-church relationship. Thus, Article 143 of the Penal Code now in force in the largest Soviet constituent republic—the Russian Federation —provides for punishment for "preventing the exercise of religious rites insomuch as they do not violate the social order and infringe upon the citizens' rights...". The Penal Codes of the other constituent republics contain similar provisions.

The state also guarantees by law other rights of believers. For example, Article 9 of the Fundamentals of Labour Legislation, adopted by the USSR Supreme Soviet in 1970, contains a special provision which forbids labour rights to be restricted or employment privileges to be granted depending on one's relation to religion. Therefore, not a single personnel record file or application form which a person has to fill in when given employment (name, date and place of birth, home address, etc.) contains questions regarding his religious standing.

The relevant state enactments delimit the state-church relationship, while power bodies and the Council for Religious Affairs, specially set up un-

der the USSR Council of Ministers, supervise their fulfilment.

There are a number of monasteries, Russian Orthodox and Moslem religious training centres in the USSR. The clergy of some creeds undergo training abroad (the Baptists—in Britain, Moslems —in Egypt, and so on). Journals, published in the USSR by various religious communities, have their readers abroad. Soviet religious organisations maintain widespread contacts with their foreign counterparts. The Russian Orthodox Church, for example, participates in the activities of such influential international religious centres and associations as the Christian Peace Conference, the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches.

Freedom of religious worship is a fact of life in Soviet society. The legal status and rights of religious organisations are guaranteed, religious training centres are functioning, and religious periodicals are published. Soviet democracy guarantees the rights of believers of all creeds (except small fanatical sects). True, certain extremist groups and individuals do appear occasionally in the country and demand the revival of the old order, i.e., the reinstatement of church influence in a particular field of the political or spiritual life of society. As a rule, such people find negligible support even amongst adherents to various religious creeds. They occasionally publish their articles in the Western press: the former Russian Orthodox Church clergyman, Levitan-Krasnov, for example, once put forward a whole

programme of measures, including the introduction of teaching religion in school. Similar claims were sometimes made by the split-away elements of the Evangelical Christian Baptists and some Judaic communities.

As we see now, the problem of religion does have its contradictions and difficulties. These difficulties are mainly engendered by the objective complexity of the multiform religious manifestations. The sphere of everyday life and family traditions, passed over from one generation to another, is "stronghold" of religious influence. The Communists are not going to take it by force. The cultural influence of our society on all the spheres of activity is a slow and gradual process. Some clergy do not observe Soviet law and try to evade the laws and provisions regulating the church-state relationship, thus creating certain difficulties.

A religious procession, for example, was organised in one of the cities to mark a local religious feast. It resulted in a huge traffic jam, although the law provides for the performance of religious rites on the church territory. There was a case when somebody tried to open a school for teaching religion to children, and still another, when a mother forced her young boy to be baptised. But these are no more than episodes in a business-like and rather efficient system of relationship between the Soviet state and various religious organisations.

As regards other, younger socialist states, the state-church relationship there was largely influenced by the different historical conditions of

the victory of socialism, by the peculiarities of religious traditions in every country, and by the initial position taken by religious organisations in relation to a new power—the power of the working people.

In the Bulgarian People's Republic, for example, the Orthodox Church was not politically experienced and enjoyed only marginal prestige amongst the masses. It took the path of loyalty to the new regime comparatively quickly and easily, and abandoned its clerical claims. In the German Democratic Republic, the political activity of believers in building socialism engendered new forms of their political representation—the uniting of believers of various Christian creeds into the Christian Democratic Union included into the National Front of Democratic Germany.

The establishment of a relationship between the socialist state and the church proved especially difficult in the Polish People's Republic due to the existing traditions and peculiarities of its historical and cultural development. In tackling this problem, the Government and the Polish United Workers' Party have always proceeded from the traditionally strong religious sentiments in the country. Religion is taught in school for all wishing to learn. Active believers are united into various national organisations (the "Znak", "Pax", etc.) which are included into the National Unity Front representing all the patriotic forces in the country.

As we see, socialism does not standardise state-church relationship: it differs, sometimes in a rather specific way, in various countries. But every-

where, the church enjoys freedom of action, provided, naturally, it does not violate the law.

Communist Atheism: Aims and Practice

The freedom of religious worship and its realisation is one aspect of the problem. No less important is its other aspect —the freedom of atheism. The separation of the church from the state and freedom of conscience are inseparably linked to the freedom of anti-religious propaganda and guarantees for the freedom of materialist propaganda. This is the basis of atheistic activities in the socialist countries. In the Soviet Union, for example, the magazine *Nauka i Religiya (Science and Religion)* puts forward scientifically based criticism of religious thinking. The problems of atheism and religious criticism are studied at a special research centre—the Institute of Scientific Atheism. Students, teachers, workers and specialists in various branches of knowledge deliver lectures on atheism to the population.

The author, a member of the editorial board of the *Nauka i Religiya*, happened to attend a discussion with a group of clergymen from various churches, who came to the USSR from the United States in 1972. Almost all of them expected to encounter persecution and criticism of religion. But as the discussion proceeded and the guests got a closer look at the publications criticising religious dogmas and ideas, they saw for themselves that such notions of the principles and methods of anti-religious propaganda in the USSR were unjustified. One of the American priests showed genuine interest and surprise when he found in our

magazine an essay dealing with Kant's philosophy of ethics and exposing the contradictions in the thinking of this philosopher. Articles dealing with the religious ideas of Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and others were also a great revelation for them. They admitted that none of them expected such a competent knowledge of religious and philosophic ideas, which is the basis of atheistic education in the Soviet Union.

The gradual overcoming of religious beliefs is an intense ideological struggle, a stubborn, uncompromising struggle for a morality free of fear and hope for recompense in the other world, a struggle for reason, intrepid, open to trials, passions and victories. It is a struggle for full aesthetic enjoyment of the beauty of the surrounding world, for social contacts between the people who do not need any intermediary from the other world, for a socially active man, a citizen and a builder of progressive society.

What is harmful about religion under socialism? It is not only that religion signifies a non-scientific, illusory perception of the world and social life. Indeed, a believer does not take all the opportunities presented by the new society for fully enjoying an active social life. It would also be correct to say that he himself gives less to society. A religious person squanders his energy—both moral and physical—preparing for the "future" life. He regards this as his moral duty. But the true morality is expressed differently: has a man done everything to make life—both his and other people's—better, fuller and more beautiful here,

in this world? In this respect (which is most important), the humanism of atheists largely coincides with altruism and is conductive to overcoming egoistic aims.

It is a matter of creating conditions for the full self-realisation of man, for removing the very need for religion as a compensation for a drab life. Marxists are, however, fully aware that the transformation of material conditions does not lead automatically to man's rejection of religion. The latter has its own logical development. It is closely connected and interwoven—both objectively and in believers' consciousness—with cultural, ethnic and national factors, with everyday traditions, etc. Frederick Engels, a profound thinker and uncompromising opponent to philosophic idealism and religion, expressed very exactly the Marxist concept of overcoming religious beliefs ideologically whilst apprehending critically the universal values. ". . .For it is by no means a matter of simply throwing overboard the entire thought content of those two thousand years, but of a criticism of it, of extracting the results—that had been won within a form that was false and idealistic. . . ."*

Foreign tourists are often surprised to read posters announcing a forthcoming performance of Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" or Rakhmaninov's "Vespers" at the Moscow Conservatoire, or to see biblical paintings in Soviet Art Galleries.

Is it not paradoxical that atheists are fond of religious music? Not at all. Broad-mindedness, the

* F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, Moscow, 1974. p. 198.

ability to perceive beauty without being restricted by a narrow anti-religious orientation—this is what characterises the cultural trends and tastes of the broad masses of the Soviet people. A rise in cultural standards is conducive to the emancipation from religion.

The conscientious mastering of the materialist world outlook and Communist morality presupposes a high level of education and a knowledge of the history of social thought. Knowledge, erudition, culture and a high level of moral consciousness are the basis of the anti-religious arguments advanced by atheists in their discussions with believers.

It is particularly important to emphasise that the confrontation and struggle of the ideas and world outlooks of atheists and believers is waged in a situation where they are both equally aware of the social ideal of communism. Both believers and atheists are patriots: they are building jointly a new society under the banner of Freedom, Equality, Fraternity.

New human relations are taking shape as socialism and communism is being built, and the high-principled moral ideal of communism is materialising. This ideal has assimilated the universal norms of human morality and justice and enriched them with social activity, the idea of high social duty, and enthusiasm for transforming the world, nature and social relations.

The correspondence of communist ideals to man's profound aspirations and needs underlies the broad mass social basis of communism. The

clergy are fully aware of this since they witness every day the unity between the Communist parties and the people in the socialist countries. In his paper read at the Conference of representatives of all religions in the USSR "For Peace and Cooperation Between the Peoples" (July, 1969), Leningrad and Novgorod Metropolitan Nikodim described the significance of communism to believers: "As a result of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the world was confronted with the new social form of a state, which, in the 50 years of its existence, has experienced many trials and evolved a new democratic pattern of life and a new moral social order. It is on the way to evolving ever more just human relations. For a Christian, it is important to see that the ideals brought to the world by the Word Incarnate are being materialised in this new world."*

He went on to approve fully the moral principles formulated by socialist society: "The general principles of social ethics in our socialist society are as follows: love of the socialist Motherland; conscientious work for the good of society; the principle: "He who does not work, neither shall he eat"; general concern for the preservation and increase of the public wealth; a keen awareness of one's duty to society; collectivism and comradely mutual assistance: each for all, and all for each; humane relations and mutual respect between individuals: man is a friend, comrade and brother to man; an uncompromising attitude to injustice,

* *The Conference of Representatives of All Religions in the USSR*. Zagorsk, 1969, p. 87 (in Russian).

parasitism, dishonesty, careerism and money-grubbing; friendship and brotherhood of all peoples of the USSR; intolerance of national and racial hatred; an uncompromising attitude to the enemies of peace and the freedom of nations."* The clergy recognise the value of these principles which apply both to believers and non-believers in Soviet society. They understand their moral attractiveness and do not wish to come into conflict with their flock.

Marxism's chief weapon in the struggle for materialism is that it offers man the possibility of *gaining self-awareness*. In trying to compromise the communist ideal and make it less attractive to the masses, our opponents frequently allege that it is mass-oriented and that the paramount concern for the collective is detrimental to the individual. They tend to portray the social ideal of communism as the ideal of an "ant-hill" and its practical realisation—as work "in general" which is divorced from concern for individual's material and spiritual requirements. The believers are described as the "victims" of this scheme. The class approach is interpreted as the alternative to simple humaneness, whilst concern for "the distant", for the entire people is counterposed to love for living man.

Facts, however, testify otherwise. Even in the grimmest years of the Soviet state's history, humaneness and care for real people, i.e., the individual, were a distinguishing feature of the Communists and did not contradict their class revo-

* Ibid., p. 85.

lutionary conscience. Lenin's reply to a letter from the military commissar Danilov is extremely interesting in this connection. Danilov wrote to Lenin of the necessity to develop a sense of "love, compassion, mutual assistance *within the class*, within the camp of the working people."* Note that this was written in the years of an acute class struggle when people suffered hardships and trials. In his reply, Lenin stressed: "It is absolutely *necessary* to develop a sense of 'mutual assistance', etc., both 'within the class' and towards the *working people of other* classes."** In Lenin's thinking, care, assistance and solidarity are extended to every individual working man, rather than simply to the sum total. This did not contradict at all the social ideal of communism.

Marxists are fully aware of the existing individual, purely personal, subjective, and sometimes circumstantial motives and reasons for turning to religion. Unstable convictions and an uncertain position in life, augmented by an individual's personal conflicts sometimes compel him to seek consolation in religion. A mother who has lost her child is inconsolable: the grief of solutide, morbid loneliness, despair, anguish.... Human care, extended by various institutions in socialist society, is a remedy in this case, too. It is true that, depending on the specific nature of a situation or individual's fate, this remedy is not always exclusive or 100-percent effective: it is not so easy to over-

* V. I. Lenin, *Complete Works*, Vol. 53, p. 415 (in Russian).

** V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, p. 296.

come one's urge to seek consolation in religion.

The spotlighting of changes in the system of values amongst the population helps us comprehend how religious beliefs are overcome in various sections of the Soviet people. The following data shows the correlation between religious and secular values in the minds and behaviour of people living in a typical Central Russian area—the Penza Region.*

In the Mirror of a Sociological Analysis

The people's opinion of the role religion played in various spheres of life was one of the criteria of their attitude to religion as a value. 13.5 per cent of those questioned said that religion consoles them in their hour of need; 0.6 per cent—that it teaches them good and helps to be men of high moral standards; 0.6 per cent—that it helps them bring up their children; and 0.2 per cent said that it provides answers to questions concerned with the essence of various natural and social phenomena. 71.1 per cent of the inhabitants said confidently that religion plays no role whatsoever in their lives.**

As regards the question whether religion has any influence on the moral standards of the individual and society, 35.9 per cent answered that it has a negative influence; 6.7 per cent—that it

* The data were obtained in 1967-69 by polling 9,000 people.

** Here and in some other cases the total percentage is less than 100 because some subjects found it difficult to answer certain questions.

may have both negative and positive influence: and 5.2 per cent said that it has a positive influence. The remaining part of the sample (slightly more than half) said that religion has no influence or that they have no definite opinion.

The answers testify that non-religious sentiments are predominant in the sphere of moral conscience. Only a small proportion still believed that religion remains a positive factor in ensuring high moral standards of the individual and society as a whole.

Although subjective data are important for indicating personal values, they alone are insufficient. We shall, therefore, supplement them with data characterising man's actions. The practice of confession is among the most reliable criteria of religious behaviour. All non-religious motives in performing this rite are, apparently, excluded. The survey disclosed that as little as 3.5 per cent of the sample confessed regularly, and another 9.5 per cent—occasionally. The data on religious feasts are interesting, too. 56.6 per cent of the inhabitants do not observe them at all; 9.1 per cent —from time to time; 23 per cent observe them at home but do not attend church services; and 5.7 per cent celebrate them and attend church services. It follows, then, that a considerable proportion of those observing religious feasts are not interested in purely religious aspects of these rites.

The following two facts complete the picture. In reply to the question: "Is there any object of religious worship in your home?", 52.6 per cent said "Yes" and 44 per cent—"No". It would seem

that the first figure contradicts all the previous data disclosing a small percentage of religious-minded persons. But when asked why they kept these objects, 9.6 per cent said that they satisfied their religious requirements, and 8.2 per cent stated that they satisfied such requirements of their relatives. The majority (32.6 per cent) said that they kept these objects by tradition. Thus, the participation in religious feasts and keeping the objects of religious worship at home are not religiously motivated for the majority of the sample. When asked: "What future awaits religion?" 42.8 per cent of the inhabitants think that religion will wither away, 4.8 per cent believe that religion will remain, and 42.5 say they do not know. These data also relate indirectly to the sphere of personal values. They definitely help to evaluate the popular attitude towards the future of religion in socialist society.

The correlation of religious and non-religious values in a person's conscience and behaviour, disclosed by this and other similar polls in the USSR, reveals a tendency towards a high degree of secularisation in the most important aspects of life under socialism. Religion as an arbiter of man's conscience and behaviour has universally decreased in importance. This specifically expresses the general process of secularisation which is mostly manifest under socialism.

The humanitarian values, aims and ideals, consistently defended by Communists fighting against religion, are the real values that help man live a full and worthy life.

To take a stand on a new social system one needs accurate information about it. This is precisely the purpose of this book, the second in the

COMMUNISM:
QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

series to be brought out by Progress Publishers. The contributors, representing a wide cross-section of Soviet opinion, discuss communism as a theory of socio-political movement and sum up the experience of building the new socialist society; they consider and critically analyse various viewpoints.

Progress Publishers would appreciate your suggestions and criticisms. We will [illegible] questions on any of [illegible] shall be pleased to answer.

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