SOVIET DEMOCRACY

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Soviet democracy is the expression of the sovereignty of the Soviet people, exercised through the medium of their Socialist state.

The principles of Soviet democracy were affirmed by the Great October Socialist Revolution. These principles were later consolidated in the severe battles of the Civil War, in the struggle against the numerous enemies of Soviet power. In this war the exploiting classes were supported by foreign interventionists who strove to subjugate the country and its people.

The working people of the U.S.S.R. have not only liberated themselves, once and for all, from the yoke of the exploiting classes, but have upheld their national independence
against the attacks of foreign interventionists.

But this was not the end of the struggle. Routed in open battle, the enemies of the Soviet state attempted to offer resistance by other means. They organized conspiracies against the Soviet Government and insinuated themselves into the Soviet state apparatus in order to use it to the detriment of the working people.

Under the conditions of the Civil War and the subsequent struggle against the covert agents of the defeated classes, there could be no equality between the people who were defending what they had won in the revolution and the remnants of the exploiting classes, who persisted in their efforts to continue their subversive activities. This explains why, prior to the adoption of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. in 1936, there were franchise restrictions in the case of the bourgeoisie and persons who had constituted the pillars of the overthrown regime—former members of the tsarist police and gendarmerie, etc.

The Communist Party and the Soviet Government, however, never regarded the restriction of rights, and particularly the disfranchisement of certain groups, as a measure for all time.

As far back as 1919, during the Civil War, V. I. Lenin stressed the fact that “... in the not distant future the cessation of foreign invasion and the completion of the expropriation of the expropriators may, under certain conditions, create a situation in which the proletarian state power will choose other methods of suppressing the resistance of the exploiters and will introduce universal suffrage without any restrictions.”

It must be pointed out that the Socialist state, in depriving an insignificant handful of exploiters of the franchise, at the same time drew into the activities of the Soviets the great mass of the people, who had enjoyed no political rights under tsardom.

Likewise, certain inequality in the basis of representation which formerly existed.

1 Elections to All-Union Congresses of Soviets were held on the following basis: from urban Soviets—one delegate for every 25,000 electors and in the case of rural districts—one delegate for every 125,000 of the population.
was of a temporary character. It served to consolidate the leading role of the working class, which, because it was more organized, conscientious, staunch, bold and resolute in the fight against the enemy, in alliance with the peasantry, prepared the conditions for the extension of Soviet democracy. Under the leadership of the working class, the peasants, that vast mass of small property owners, resolutely took the path of large-scale collective farming, the path of Socialist development.

By fighting for the vital interests of the whole people, the working class has learned to administer the state. The alliance of the working class with the peasantry was forged in the joint struggle against the enemies of the Soviet power. The colossal successes achieved in the creation of the new, Socialist society have won over the wavering elements to the side of the working class.

The training of executives for all spheres of state and economic activities has always constituted a special concern of the Soviet Government. A new intelligentsia which serves the people in all branches of Socialist construction has come to the fore from among the people, from the ranks of the workers and peasants.

The indissoluble contact between the Soviet state apparatus and the people has made it possible to achieve results unparalleled for their significance, in a short space of time and in a country occupying one-sixth of the earth's surface and inhabited by scores of nationalities living amicably in an atmosphere of fraternal co-operation.

The Socialist economic system fully prevails in the U.S.S.R. The entire wealth of the country—the land, waters, forests, mills, factories, mines, railways, etc.—belong to the whole people. The Stalinist Five-Year Plans of economic development have served to multiply manifold the wealth of the U.S.S.R. Exploitation of man by man has been completely abolished. The rapid growth of Socialist economy forms the basis for the steady rise of the material well-being and culture of the working people.

The mighty Stakhanov movement, aimed at increasing the productivity of labor, is an expression of the creative enthusiasm of
the masses. The working people of the U.S.S.R. realize that they are working for themselves and that the increased prosperity of their country leads to an increase in their own well-being. In this ever growing activity of the people lies the power and might of Soviet democracy.

The Constitution of the U.S.S.R. is the legislative consolidation of the victory of Socialism. The elimination of the exploiting classes, the increased political activity of the working people, and the growing might of the Socialist state have rendered the former franchise restrictions unnecessary. The Constitution of the U.S.S.R. marks an important stage in the extension and strengthening of Soviet democracy.

The very manner in which the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. was adopted furnishes a model of genuine democracy. The nation-wide discussion of the new Constitution, unprecedented for its scope, brought out with remarkable clarity the activity and political maturity of the people. At the same time, this nation-wide discussion showed that the Constitution of the U.S.S.R.
embodies the aspirations and vital interests of the wide masses of the multi-national Soviet population.

The distinguishing features of Soviet democracy were especially evident during the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and to the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous Republics, which were conducted on the basis of the Constitution.

Candidates were nominated by the various organizations of the working people. In every electoral area hundreds of meetings were held at mills, factories, on collective farms, state farms, in Red Army units, etc., at which the merits of each candidate were very thoroughly discussed. The confidence of the electorate in the given candidate was determined by his or her activities in the interests of the people, manifested in the various fields of Socialist construction—industry, agriculture, science, art, etc.

The Soviet electoral system, too, is a model of the broadest democracy. The Electoral Law, based on the Constitution of the U.S.S.R., contains no restrictions with re-

Men of the Frontier Gaards voting in the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R.
ward to property status, standard of education, domicile, sex, nationality or race. Suffrage in the U.S.S.R. is indeed universal, since it has been extended to all citizens, men and women, who have reached the age of 18, with the exception of insane persons and persons who have been convicted by a court of law to sentences involving deprivation of electoral rights.

Soviet elections are direct elections, i.e., Soviet citizens elect all Soviets, from top to bottom, by direct vote.

Elections in the U.S.S.R. are equal, each citizen being entitled to one vote.

Finally, voting in Soviet elections is by secret ballot and the law provides for strict punishment for any attempts to exercise influence on the voter during the polling.

The relations between the deputy and his constituents are a characteristic feature of Soviet democracy. Soviet electors entrust their deputy with the elaboration of laws designed to strengthen the Soviet state and to facilitate the further development of Socialism. The electors exercise systematic control over the activities of their deputy. It is the duty of every deputy to report to his electors, and the Constitution provides that he is liable to recall at any time should he deviate from the policy adhered to by the electors.

The Constitution of the U.S.S.R. expresses the moral and political unity of the multi-national Soviet people. It provides the conditions for a still greater development of the public and state activities of the people. This was particularly clearly displayed during the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and to the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous Republics.

The election campaign began with the study of the Electoral Law by all the voters. Study circles and lectures on the Electoral Law were organized in the mills, factories, and in apartment houses. Each citizen received a comprehensive explanation in his native language of his rights and duties as an elector.

The election campaign involved millions and millions of people, who on their own initiative, or through their various
public organizations, took an active part in the campaign. In addition to members of local Soviets, hundreds of thousands of volunteer workers took part in drawing up and verifying the lists of electors. The ballot papers were printed in the native languages of the population of the given district. These conditions made for the widest possible participation of the electors in the election campaign and for a high attendance at the polls.

Altogether, public organizations delegated about one million of their representatives, including a large percentage of women, to the area and ward electoral commissions. This form of public control excluded any possibility of foul play, which is so frequent an occurrence during elections in other countries.

The extent of popular activity is shown by the fact that on December 12, 1937, the day of the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., 91,113,153 people or 96.8 per cent of the total electorate of the country went to the polls. The Communist Party formed a bloc with the non-Party workers,
peasants, office employees and intellectuals—a bloc with the trade unions, the Young Communist League and other non-Party organizations and societies and put up joint candidates. In the elections to the Soviet of the Union 89,844,271 or 98.6 per cent of all who voted, cast their votes for the candidates of the Communist and non-Party bloc. In the elections to the Soviet of Nationalities (the other Chamber of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.) 89,063,169 people or 97.8 per cent, voted for the candidates of the Communist and non-Party bloc. In the elections to the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous Republics, 93,013,433 people participated, 92,461,146, or 99.4 per cent, voted for the candidates of the Communist and non-Party bloc.

The development of Soviet democracy has enhanced the creative activity of the great mass of Soviet people in the construction of a new Socialist economic system. Democracy in the Soviet Union is not democracy in the abstract, but Socialist democracy.

One of the outstanding features of Socialist democracy consists in the fact that it not only proclaims the rights of the citizens but actually guarantees the exercise of these rights by placing them on a firm economic foundation. This economic foundation of Soviet democracy is the Socialist ownership of the means and instruments of production, which guarantees the rights of the Soviet people, their material well-being and cultural development. The Soviet state guarantees to the people real liberty.

"... It is difficult for me to imagine," said J. Stalin, on one occasion "what 'personal liberty' is enjoyed by an unemployed person, who goes about hungry, and cannot find employment. Real liberty can exist only where exploitation has been abolished, where there is no oppression of some by others, where there is no unemployment and poverty, where a man is not haunted by the fear of being tomorrow deprived of work, of home and of bread. Only in such a society is real, and not paper, personal and every other liberty possible."
Such a society has been established in the U.S.S.R.

The Constitution of the U.S.S.R., that clearest expression of Socialist democracy, proclaims that:

“The right to work is ensured by the Socialist organization of the national economy, the steady growth of the productive forces of Soviet society, the elimination of the possibility of economic crises, and the abolition of unemployment.” (Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Article 118.)

The Socialist state presents the greatest possibilities for creative labor. The Stakhanov movement cements the union of science and labor. By their enthusiasm and practical experience, the Stakhanov workers contribute greatly to the scientific organization of labor and increase labor productivity. The tremendous facilities at the disposal of the working people for mastering science and technique open up unlimited perspectives for the development of the productive forces and, consequently, for the progressive rise in the well-being of the working people. The Socialist state manifests particular solicitude for the working people. The Constitution guarantees to the working people the right to rest and leisure.

“The right to rest and leisure is ensured by the reduction of the working day to seven hours for the overwhelming majority of the workers, the institution of annual vacations with full pay for workers and employees and the provision of a wide network of sanatoria, rest homes and clubs for the accommodation of the working people.” (Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Article 119.)

This article of the Constitution ensures the workers not only rest and leisure, but also the possibilities for cultural development and education.

Citizens of the U.S.S.R. have the right to maintenance in old age and also in cases of sickness or loss of capacity to work. (Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Article 120.)

The right to education is ensured by education being free of charge and by the system of state stipends for students in the universities and colleges. (Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Article 121.)
The development of the native languages of the various peoples of the U.S.S.R. has become a powerful means for the introduction of Socialist culture among the formerly backward nationalities.

Women in the U.S.S.R. are accorded equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life. (Constitution of the U.S.S.R., Article 122.)

The Constitution provides legislative guarantees for the equality of rights of all citizens of the U.S.S.R. without exception. Article 123 of the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. emphasizes:

"Any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of, or, conversely, any establishment of direct or indirect privileges for citizens on account of their race or nationality, as well as any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt, is punishable by law."

Soviet democracy has saved the small nationalities who were oppressed under tsardom and doomed to extinction. It has granted them equality, inspired them with a new confidence in their strength and abilities and has directed them along the path of economic and cultural development.

Socialist democracy, based as it is on a firm economic foundation, has raised the dignity of man. It has once and for all put an end to class and national oppression. It has led to a situation in which the working men and women of all peoples of the U.S.S.R., regardless of language, nationality or race, march forward as a united and single Soviet people, as masters of the country and its national economy.

Having established the moral and political unity of the people, Soviet democracy ensures for the country further victorious development and further successes on the path to the complete triumph of Communism.