

A background to  
**Political  
Democracy**  
in the  
**USSR**

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and **A. Ardatovsky**

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## **A Background to**

# **Political Democracy in the U.S.S.R.**

By G. Moiseyev and A. Ardatovsky

Who holds the power in the USSR? The simple answer is also the accurate one: the people.

The country is run by the Soviets. These are councils—the word “Soviet” means “council”—elected by secret ballot on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage.

There are over 47,000 of these councils in the USSR, and they include nearly two million councillors with whom collaborate 20 million ordinary men and women, working on council committees and commissions, helping to make policy and to carry it out.

In their present stage, these Soviets embody the beginnings of real-self-government, the sort of government which will replace the state in the communist future.

## **PARLIAMENT**

The Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the highest organ of state power, is the Soviet parliament.

It holds all legislative power for the country as a whole.

It represents the USSR in international relations, concludes and ratifies treaties with other countries and establishes the general procedure in the relations between the union republics and other states.

The Supreme Soviet is responsible for questions of war and peace.

It supervises observance of the USSR's Constitution and deals with all boundary questions.

It organises the defence of the USSR, directs the armed forces and defines the guiding principles for the organisation of the republic's military formations.

It also has the task of conducting foreign trade policy, for foreign trade is a state monopoly in the USSR.

It must safeguard the security of the state, approve budget and economic plans, and many other matters.

The Supreme Soviet elects a full-time Presidium, which acts for it between sessions. It also appoints the Soviet government—the Council of Ministers—and elects the Supreme Court.

There are over 1,400 MPs in the Supreme Soviet, which serves for a term of four years.

Sessions are normally called twice a year, though special sessions may be convened at the discretion of the presidium or on the demand of any of the union republics.

## TWO HOUSES

The Soviet Union is a multinational, federal state uniting over a hundred different peoples. The USSR Supreme Soviet, therefore, is made up of two equal Houses—the Soviet of the Union, elected from numerical constituencies, irrespective of nationality, and the Soviet of Nationalities, in which each national grouping has its special needs and interests represented.

Each House has its standing and other committees, which prepare questions for discussion by the Supreme Soviet.

The Houses have equal rights in initiating legislation, and a law must be passed by both Houses to be adopted.

Members are elected to the Soviet of the Union from the whole population, irrespective of national state structure.

Members of the Soviet of Nationalities, however, are elected by the citizens of the various union republics, autonomous republics, autonomous regions and national areas, and the basis of representation does not depend on the size or population of a particular national state structure.

The largest union republic—the Russian Federation—with a population of 125 million, has 25 seats in the Soviet of Nationalities. So has Estonia, the smallest union republic, with only 1,200,000 citizens.

## ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Everyone over the age of 18 has the vote—and each voter has one vote only.

A candidate, too, can stand for election in only one constituency. Constituencies are based on size of the population.

All voters have equal rights in nominating candidates, and campaigning for their return. Radio, the press, public meetings and so on may be used in these campaigns.

The vote is direct. All organs of power, from the Supreme Soviet to the smallest local Soviet are elected directly by the population. The ballot is secret.

The cost of election campaigns is entirely borne by the state.

In selecting candidates, the Communist Party and other organisations and individuals join forces to put forward agreed candidates, who are sometimes communist, sometimes non-party.

The fact that usually more than 99 per cent of the electorate goes to the polls shows that the electoral system enjoys full public confidence.

## ELECTING A PARLIAMENT

USSR Supreme Soviet elections must be held at least every four years.

At the expiration of its normal term of office—or on its dissolution prior to the expiry of that term—its presidium fixes the dates for the new election.

For the Soviet of the Union election, the country as a whole—irrespective of its federal boundaries—is divided into electoral districts, each with about 300,000 inhabitants.

At the last—1962—elections, there were 791 such districts.

For elections to the Soviet of Nationalities, 25 electoral districts are formed in each union republic, 11 in each autonomous republic, five in each autonomous region, and one in each national area.

In 1962 that made a total of 652 districts.

Each district returns one member. The electoral register is published at least two months before election day.

Each electoral district is divided into wards of from 3,000 to 500 or even fewer voters.

These wards must be formed at least 45 days before the polls.

The elections are conducted by electoral committees—ranging from the Central Electoral Committee down to ward committees.

These committees are made up—on strictly elective principles—of representatives of trade unions, co-operatives, Communist Party organisations, the youth and various other unions and societies of the working people.

Any organisation or society, as well as public meetings held in factories, farms and elsewhere may nominate candidates. Such candidates must be registered with the appropriate electoral committee at least 30 days before the poll.

Polling is carried on on one day—usually a Sunday—throughout the country. The polling stations open at 6 a.m. and close at midnight.

A candidate must receive more than half the votes cast to be considered elected. If no candidate receives a majority, fresh elections must be conducted within a fortnight.

Any Soviet citizen who has reached the age of 23 can be elected to the Supreme Soviet.

## CANDIDATES

Soviet electoral law provides for several candidates being nominated and standing for election in each electoral district. All electoral documents, incidentally, are designed to provide for several candidates standing for election.

In practice, however, only one candidate is actually finally nominated in each constituency.

The explanation partly lies in the nature of Soviet society, and partly in that word “finally”.

The first point is that in the USSR, there are no groups with genuinely conflicting basic interests, no social forces or bodies who might come to the polls with different programmes and struggle for control of representative bodies.

All conceivable candidates would be struggling for the same thing—to advance the building of Soviet prosperity—though naturally they would vary in approach and ability.

The question, therefore, comes down to one of deciding which is

the best and most suitable candidate to represent the people out of any names put forward.

Both the electoral law and the entire practice of elections ensure a free, thorough and critical discussion of the merits of any number of candidates at the meetings which nominate the candidates.

Which particular candidate is to be nominated by a particular meeting is decided by a majority vote.

A recent example was that of Mikhail Shavrin, Mayor of a district Soviet in Leningrad. The workers at a local factory found him unworthy to represent them in the city Soviet.

At an election meeting, Shavrin's candidature was rejected by a majority vote, after speakers described him as a man who often displayed callousness and bureaucratic methods in his work.

These meetings also elect representatives to district electoral conferences, which then consider all the candidates put forward by organisations, institutions and individual groups of working people in the area.

At such conferences the personal qualities and abilities of each candidate again come up for thorough discussion. Finally the electoral conference decides democratically which name to put forward as best fitted for the honour.

In the vast majority of cases, therefore, the most suitable candidate really is selected—but the poll itself gives the voters another safeguard.

The vote is genuinely secret and free, and if an elector believes the wrong candidate has been nominated he can—and does!—vote against him.

In the 1961 elections, for instance 249 candidates for election to local Soviets failed to get the necessary majority of votes and were not elected.

## COMPOSITION

Elected in March 1962, the present Supreme Soviet has 1,443 members: 1,053 men and 390 women.

Of this total 1,007—five in seven—were elected to the Supreme Soviet for the first time.

About a quarter—349—of the members are non-party. The others are members or candidate members of the Soviet Communist Party.

Over half the members—781—are either still working in industry or on the farms, or began their working life in that way.

The parliament includes 646 workers engaged in production; 277 working in Communist Party, trade union, YCL or other organisations; 239 working in Soviet and economic organisations; and 152 working in cultural, literary, artistic or scientific fields.

There are 209 members under 30; 405 between 30 and 40; 435 between 40 and 50; and 395 over 50.

Fifty-six nationalities are represented in the Supreme Soviet.

## MEMBERS' RIGHTS

A member may, of course, elect or be elected to any of the elective bodies of the Soviet to which he belongs.

He may put forward any relevant question or proposal for consideration, propose amendments and changes to proposals under discussion.

By authorisation of the Soviet or its standing committees, or at the request of any of its executive bodies, he has the right to check up on the work of institutions, enterprises, state or collective farms.

He can demand of the heads of enterprises, organisations and departments any information or figures necessary for the performance of his duties.

A Supreme Soviet member has the right to question the government or any minister—and replies to such questions must be given within three days.

A member cannot be prosecuted or arrested without the consent of his Soviet or, in periods between sessions, without the consent of the Soviet's executive body.

## ... AND DUTIES

The member of a Soviet is responsible both for the general direction of its activities and for carrying out the specific instructions electors usually give to it and its members during the election campaign.

These may include the most varied demands, dealing with housing and civic construction, public amenities and services, schools, hospitals and the like.

In all cases a member is in duty bound to do all he can to see that the demands made by the electors are met.

It is his job, too, to keep his electors informed about the decisions passed by the Soviet. He must explain them, and persuade the working people to take an active part in carrying them out.

He must check that decisions taken by the organs of power are in fact put into practice.

He must keep in close touch with his constituents and, whether a member of the Supreme Soviet or of the smallest district council, he must fix regular reception days on which his constituents can meet him.

Twice a year members report back to their constituents, at public meetings. They report both on their own work and on the activities of the Soviet.

A member may be sacked by his electors at any time.

If there is such a demand, special electors' meetings are called by the executive of the appropriate Soviet or by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.

The decision as to whether or not to recall the member is taken at these meetings by a show of hands.

A new election is then conducted.



Recent examples of this were two members of the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan who were recalled.

A member of the Byelorussian Supreme Soviet was also recalled recently.

## NO REMUNERATION

Soviet members get no remuneration for the performance of their duties—the USSR has no professional parliamentarians.

They may, however, be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as members.

To meet such items as postal and telegraph expenses, the member of the USSR Supreme Soviet gets an allowance of 100 roubles a month.

Members of the Supreme Soviets of the Russian Federation and the Ukraine get 60 roubles, while members of the other Supreme Soviets get 50.

During sessions, all members are reimbursed for the expenses involved in their participation, and travelling expenses to and from the session are paid by the Soviet.

While away from work engaged on his official duties, the member still gets his average pay at his place of regular employment.

A member of the USSR Supreme Soviet gets free air and rail travel for the performance of his duties. Members of other Supreme Soviets get free rail travel.

Members of city and district Soviets in large towns have free municipal transport privileges.

The fact that the member of a Soviet carries on with his ordinary job when not carrying out official duties in no way restricts his opportunity of taking part in the consideration of major political and economic problems.

On the contrary, deep knowledge of concrete affairs and their close ties with everyday life gives him a much better outlook for coping with problems in general.

Of course a member can always get extended leave of absence if he has to work on a standing committee for some considerable period of time.

The Soviet M.P., however, spends most of his time not in the House but in the thick of the people, helping to give effect to the decisions passed.

The development of socialist democracy shows a strong trend for more and more citizens to take part in one way or another in the conduct of the affairs of state.

This explains one otherwise surprising feature of the USSR Supreme Soviet statistics we have quoted.

Five in seven of the present Supreme Soviet, we said, are serving for the first time. It is now established practice that at least half the candidates in a Soviet election should not have been members at the previous elections.

## PASSING A LAW

Each of the Houses of the USSR Supreme Soviet has a permanent committee on legislative proposals. These committees sift all the innumerable proposals for new legislation, coming in from members, from the press, from organisations or from the public.

The committees select the recommendations which they consider deserve attention.

This is followed by preparatory work on a Bill, in which members, experts and various institutions take part.

A new Bill is often put up for discussion throughout the country, so that its general idea and each concrete proposition in it receive thorough thought and consideration—and amendment!—before it ever comes on to the floor of the House.

Highly important laws adopted in recent years include the new system of state pensions; the seven-year plan; the re-organisation of education; the reduction of working hours; and so on.

In all these cases, the ideas and the Bills were subjected to wide public discussion, in the course of which many amendments, remarks and proposals were submitted.

When the Bill comes before the Supreme Soviet, it must get a majority of votes in both chambers to become law.

For an amendment to the Constitution—adopted in 1936—a majority of two-thirds of the votes of all members of both Houses is needed.

A Bill may also be the subject of a referendum.

Each of the 15 union republics has its own parliament—its Supreme Soviet—and these bodies operate in the same general way as does the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

The Soviet of the Union has three standing committees and the Soviet of Nationalities four. Each House has:

A Budget Committee (39 members) which prepares a report on the country's draft budget from the House's viewpoint and checks up on the way the budget is carried out.

A Committee on Legislative Proposals (31 members), the work of which we have already considered.

A Foreign Affairs Committee (23 members) which studies problems of the USSR's relations with the rest of the world, and prepares drafts of steps to be taken on these problems by the Supreme Soviet.

The Soviet of Nationalities has a fourth standing committee—the Economic Committee of 31 members, elected on the following principles: a chairman usually nominated by a group of deputies from several union republics; and two members from each of the 15 union republics.

This committee sees to it that the economic plans and the budget approved by the Supreme Soviet take due account of the special economic interests of the various national state divisions.

Each House also sets up a temporary Credentials Committee (21 members) which checks up on election materials and the credentials of members.

In the course of its work, the Supreme Soviet may also, of course, set up any number of special committees to investigate or draft reports on any question.

In 1962, for instance, a special committee was set up to prepare a draft for a new Soviet Constitution. This is a big job, and the committee is still meeting.

The technical staff of all these committees work in the building of the Supreme Soviet, the Moscow Kremlin.

### **THE PRESIDIUM**

In intervals between sessions of the Supreme Soviet, its presidium acts for it.

This permanently functioning organ has 33 members, elected by the Supreme Soviet at a joint sitting of both Houses.

It consists of the Chairman; 15 Vice-Chairmen, one for each Union republic; a Secretary; and 16 members.

The presidium is accountable to the Supreme Soviet for all its activities.

It is its job to convene sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, to dissolve it and appoint new elections.

It issues decrees on major current problems concerning the USSR's internal and external affairs. These are subsequently submitted to the Supreme Soviet for ratification.

It may also conduct referendums—on its own initiative or at demand of a union republic.

The presidium removes and appoints Ministers of the USSR and other heads of central departments.

Such matters, too, must subsequently be approved by the Supreme Soviet.

It awards orders and medals; confers titles of honour; and exercises the right of pardon.

In the intervals between Supreme Soviet sessions the presidium can declare war, in the event of a military attack on the USSR or if it is necessary to fulfil international treaty obligations concerning mutual defence against aggression.

It is a collective president, appointing and recalling the USSR's diplomats and receiving the letters of credence and recall from foreign diplomats accredited to the Soviet Union.

### **THE GOVERNMENT**

The Soviet government—the Council of Ministers of the USSR—is set up at a session of the Supreme Soviet.

It consists of a Chairman (the Prime Minister), three First Vice-Chairmen and eight Vice-Chairmen—these latter being at the same time heads of the most important organs of state administration—and a number of ministers, and the chiefs of other central organs of state administration and economic management.

In accordance with the Soviet Constitution, the heads of the governments of the 15 union republics are *ex-officio* members of the USSR Council of Ministers.

At present the Council of Ministers has over 70 members.

It is the USSR's highest executive and administrative organ of state power.

The Council of Ministers is responsible and accountable to the Supreme Soviet or, in the intervals between sessions, to its presidium.

It issues decisions and orders on the basis and in pursuance of the laws in operation and checks up on their execution.

Its decisions and orders are binding throughout the territory of the USSR.

The Council of Ministers co-ordinates and directs the work of the Supreme Council of the National Economy, the State Planning Committee, the Economic Council, the State Building Committee, the all-Union and Union republican ministries, the State Committees and other central institutions directly subordinate to it.

It adopts measures to carry out the economic plan and state budget, and to strengthen the credit and the monetary system.

It adopts measures for the maintenance of law and order, for the protection of the interests of the state, and for the safeguarding of citizens' rights.

It also exercises general guidance in the sphere of foreign relations, and directs the general organisation of the armed forces.

It has the right to suspend decisions and orders of the governments of the union republics in matters which come within its jurisdiction. And it can annul orders and instructions of its Ministers.

### **THE MINISTRIES**

In mid-1963 there were eleven USSR ministries.

The Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Ministry of the Merchant Marine and the Ministry of Railways are all-union ministries, which direct the branch of administration entrusted to them throughout Soviet territory, either directly or through bodies they have set up.

The other eight are "union-republican ministries", which usually carry out their work through corresponding ministries in the union republics.

These are the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Communications and the Ministries of Higher and Secondary Special Education, Culture, Health, Defence and Foreign Affairs.

### **STATE COMMITTEES**

State committees hold an important place in the system.

Some of them—for example, the State Planning Committee of the USSR and the State Building Committee of the USSR—cover several fields, while the State Committee for Inventions and Dis-

coveries and the State Geology Committee deal with specific, limited fields.

There is also a large group of state committees dealing with branches of industry, and state committees—such as those for the film industry, for touring, for TV or for the press—which deal with cultural fields.

Some of these committees come immediately under the Council of Ministers, while others form part of the system of the Supreme Council of the National Economy of the USSR, the State Building Committee, the State Planning Committee or the USSR Economic Council.

## UNION REPUBLICS

Each republic has its own Supreme Soviet, with its presidium, its Council of Ministers and Supreme Court.

These republican Supreme Soviets are also elected for four years, from numerically equal constituencies.

The Russian Federation has one Supreme Soviet member for each 150,000; the Ukraine 100,000; Latvia 10,000; Turkmenia 5,000.

Union republics which contain autonomous republics and autonomous regions include representatives of these republics and regions as vice-presidents of their Supreme Soviet presidiums.

The highest organs of power in the autonomous republics are the same in principle as in the union republics.

## LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local Soviets are elected for a term of two years. The basis of representation varies slightly in the different union republics.

The minimum number of members is 100 for a territorial or regional Soviet, 75 for a district Soviet, 50 for a city Soviet and 25 for a village Soviet.

The local Soviet ensures maintenance of law and order, the observance of laws and the protection of the rights of citizens, directs local economic and cultural affairs and prepares the local budget.

It has an elected executive committee, accountable both to the Soviet that elected it and to the executive of the next higher Soviet.

An active part in the work of a city or urban district Soviet is played by standing committees consisting of members of the Soviet and voluntary workers, who make a study of various problems and prepare them for consideration at Soviet sessions.

These committees, include, for example, groups dealing with budget and financial problems, culture and general education, schools, health and social security, housing, public amenities and services, trade, communal catering and so on.

Probably the smallest unit of Soviet local government is the village Soviet.

As a rule it controls one big village and several small ones nearby—a population of 3,000 to 5,000.

Within its territory a village Soviet ensures the maintenance of law and order, the observance of laws and the protection of citizens' rights.

It gives active assistance to the local state or collective farms.

## THE PUBLIC'S ROLE

In the Russian Federation 1,200,000 volunteers take part in the work of 120,000 standing committees of the Soviets.

In the executive committees of the Soviets of Byelorussia, there are 700 departments, in which all work is conducted, not by full-time staff but by volunteers, who work without pay in their spare time.

In the Ukraine 2,600,000 people are engaged in volunteer work in bodies under the local Soviets.

In the USSR as a whole, there are ten such volunteers for every actual Soviet member helping with the work of the local authorities.

Public committees and councils operate in literally all spheres of life, ranging from production to institutions of culture and art.

Volunteer organisations have had transferred to them certain functions of even such state organs as the militia and the courts.

The enhanced role of the public in the running of the state reflects the basic tendency in the development of Soviet society—the gradual growing of the state into self-government of the people.

## PARTY-STATE CONTROL

This is a system of control bodies common to the party and the state, headed by the Committee of Party and State Control in Moscow, a joint organ set up by the central committee of the party and the government.

These committees at all levels contain representatives of party organisations, of the local Soviets, the trade unions, the YCL, the press, the workers, peasants and intellectuals.

The basic force of these bodies is made up of departments and committees staffed by volunteers from all sections of the population.

At factories, building sites, collective and state farms, everywhere volunteer groups help the control committees. And these volunteers are themselves elected at meetings of working people.

Each group contains from 15 to 35 members and sub-groups are formed in the shops of large factories.

The main job of the control system is to check on the way party and government decisions are carried out.

The control teams help to improve all branches of the economy, and to prevent the violation of law and other abuses.

In their work they are given every opportunity to use such media as the press, radio, films and TV.

And they report on their work to general meetings of the people, who appoint them.



## CIVIL RIGHTS

If we compare the Soviet Constitution with UNO's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is clear that Soviet citizens have been granted the principal democratic rights and liberties laid down in the Declaration.

More than that—many of the rights and liberties secured by the Constitution go far beyond those laid down in the UNO Declaration.

But the chief thing, of course, is that these rights are not merely proclaimed, but they are in fact guaranteed by the social conditions which exist in the USSR today.

First, of course, the vote. Every citizen who has reached the age of 18 has the vote, irrespective of race or nationality, sex, religion, education, domicile, social origin, property status or past activity.

The vote is denied only to people who have been legally certified insane.

And the right to stand for election is equally open to everyone—though the age qualification is somewhat different.

For the USSR Supreme Soviet—the Soviet parliament—you must be 23, and for any other Supreme Soviet 21. You may stand for election for local Soviets at the age of 18.

There is nothing academic about the right to work. It is a vitally important one.

Nowadays, practically everyone's well-being, all the more important aspects of life in whatever country he may live, depends on whether he has a job with decent pay, a job he is sure of today and tomorrow.

Soviet society can be justly proud of what it has accomplished in this respect.

The "right to guaranteed employment and payment for their work in accordance with its quantity", laid down in the constitution, is backed in practice by the whole system of socialist planned economy.

There can be no economic crises, in such an economy. Terms like "overproduction" are utterly meaningless in a society where increased output merely means there is more for everybody. Such conditions preclude unemployment.

## REST AND LEISURE

No factory management or any other authority may violate this constitutional right of every citizen to rest and leisure.

Powerful trade unions watch closely to make sure that the labour legislation is observed. Overtime is rigidly limited, only being permitted in a serious emergency—and then only if the trade union approves.

Regulations stringently limit working hours, with shorter days and working weeks in heavy jobs and reduced hours for 16-18-year-olds.

Ensuring that the worker gets the appropriate leisure, the unions also act to help him to make good use of it.

To this end they are extending the network of holiday and health homes and clubs; they are building more stadiums and sports fields, tourist centres and other facilities.

The USSR has a very generous pension system and, with the inclusion of collective farmers it becomes the most comprehensive pension system in the world.

Old age, disability and widows' pensions are all non-contributory and are substantial, being based on previous average earnings and seldom less than half those earnings.

The USSR's free and non-contributory health service is also the most comprehensive in the world. It is backed by an enormous network of doctors, clinics, health centres, hospitals and sanatoria.

Apart from the compulsory education for all, up to the age of 15 at present, but rapidly being extended, further education is available to all who want it, completely free.

Every form of education, including evening schools and correspondence courses, are entirely free, and students are by law granted generous time off from work with pay, to take exams and attend colleges.

Freedom of speech and the press is more than an empty formality.

The pages of all papers and magazines are always open to letters, articles and other material from readers, and the newspapers must by law take account of all criticisms and complaints received.

This is a very powerful weapon indeed in the hands of the people.

"But are you allowed to criticise a Minister?" foreign friends sometimes ask. The Ministers themselves are only too well aware that the people can!

No one in the USSR is above criticism, and Ministers and responsible officials are criticised not only at Soviet sessions but in the press and at public meetings.

It is a rule that a Minister who comes under serious criticism must report, through the press, what measures he has taken to eliminate the shortcomings.

There are, of course, no hereditary titles or hereditary offices in the Soviet Union. Every citizen starts out in life under more or less the same conditions as every other citizen, and opportunities are certainly equal.

Position in society is determined by work, knowledge and abilities, and for this reason anyone who has the ability may advance to a high post. This applies as much to a factory manager as to the head of the government.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Women in the USSR enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, government, cultural, political and other public activity.

They take part in governing the state, receive equal pay for

equal work, have equal opportunities with men to get jobs where equally qualified and so on.

A lot has been and is being done in the Soviet Union to make sure that these "equal rights" do not remain a mere declaration on paper.

A good indication of the fruits of this work was Valentina Tereshkova's space flight!

The state allots vast sums for the building of nurseries and kindergartens, boarding schools, laundries, self-service canteens, service shops of all kinds, all of which help to relieve women of household chores.

Many factory canteens, for instance, provide take-away semi-prepared or full prepared meals at prices below those which would be charged for a similar meal in the canteen itself.

Services like this are really giving women a chance to study, to learn a trade or profession and choose an occupation to their liking and suited to their ability.

No enterprise may dismiss a woman because of pregnancy. Her job is guaranteed and she receives substantial paid leave before and after the confinement.

Nursing mothers must also be given time off with pay—to look after their babies.

Women today make up half the executive and professional workers employed in the USSR. And 42 in every 100 students are girls. There are 150,000 women engaged in scientific work of whom 30,000 have a Doctor's or Master's degree.

Twenty-five women are Members or Corresponding-Members of the USSR Academy of Sciences. And, as we have already pointed out, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the country's highest legislative body, includes 390 women MPs.

The position of a tenant illustrates the reality of the protection of human rights in the USSR.

Most Soviet workers live in state-owned housing—and they know that the only possible grounds which could get them evicted would be non-payment of rent over a long period without a valid excuse or persistently damaging the premises! Even then, a court order would be needed.

If you remember that rents are extremely low in the USSR and may not exceed a fixed proportion of income it is no wonder that practically no eviction cases ever come before the courts.

If families have to be "evicted" because the houses in which they live are being demolished, they are usually delighted. In such cases the state must always give the family a new flat.

## THE PARTY

Perhaps a word should be added about the role of the Soviet Communist Party in Soviet life.

Building communist society is no easy task. It can be accomplished only by planned, purposeful leadership at all levels, based upon a theoretical understanding of life and its laws.

This leadership is provided by the Communist Party, which unites in its ranks the advanced and most socially conscious factory workers, farmers and others.

A vast expansion of Soviet production all the time makes this task more and more complicated. But the Communist Party does not seek to perpetuate its function as the leading force. On the contrary, indeed, one of its cardinal aims is to raise the entire people to the level of self-government and thus pave the way for the withering away of all political organisation.

If you find that hard to accept, just take a closer look at Soviet society today and the way in which 20 million ordinary people are already being involved in state affairs at all levels.

Remember, for instance, the fact we gave at the beginning of this booklet—that 1,007 of the 1,443 MPs in the present USSR Supreme Soviet are serving for the first time.

This is all part of a carefully planned conscious campaign to increase the political and civic awareness and interest of men and women everywhere.

The Soviet Communist Party has a membership of more than eleven million men and women, which reflects in the main the pattern of Soviet society.

Party members get no special privileges in work or private life. They live in the same way as other citizens.

Factory workers and collective farmers make up around two-thirds of the membership, and there are many engineers, doctors, teachers and agronomists among party members.

Party members are of more than a hundred different Soviet nationalities.

The party is not financed by the state—nearly three-fifths of its income comes from membership dues, while the balance is largely the proceeds from its publications. All its bodies are elected—and there is a deliberately high "turnover" in leading membership here, just as in the Supreme Soviet.

The party rules, for instance, lay down that at least a quarter of the central committee and its presidium must be changed at each election—and that, in general, presidium members should not serve for more than three consecutive terms.

In the few special cases where it is considered desirable that a particular official should continue longer, he must get three-quarters of the votes to be re-elected, instead of merely a majority.

