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(Fundamental Law)
of the Union
of Soviet
Socialist Republics
and the Results
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Discussion of the Draft

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Report and Closing Speech at the
Seventh (Special) Session of the
Supreme Soviet of the USSR,
Ninth Convocation, October 4-7, 1977

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**ON THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION (FUNDAMENTAL LAW)
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OF THE DRAFT**

*Report to the Session of the Supreme Soviet
of the USSR*

October 4, 1977

Esteemed comrade deputies,

The present session of the Supreme Soviet has before it a task that is historic in the full sense of the word: the adoption of a new Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

We are about to adopt the new Constitution on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. This is not a mere coincidence in time of two major events in the life of our country. The connection between them goes much deeper. The new Constitution, one might say, epitomises the whole sixty years' development of the Soviet state. It is striking evidence of the fact that the ideas proclaimed by the October Revolution and Lenin's precepts are being successfully put into practice.

The Draft Constitution, placed before the Supreme Soviet for its consideration, is the result of many years of intensive work by a large group of people. The Constitution Commission, set up by the USSR Supreme Soviet, includes experienced Party and government workers, and representatives of the working class, the collective farmers and the people's intelligentsia—representatives of our country's numerous peoples. Eminent scientists, specialists, and men and women working in state

agencies and public organisations have been involved in the preparation of the Draft. It has been twice considered by Plenary Meetings of the CPSU Central Committee.

I think that we have every right to say that the important tasks with which we have been faced in connection with the preparation, discussion and adoption of the Constitution have been fulfilled in the most conscientious way and with the most consistent observance of all the principles of socialist democracy.

I.

The discussion of the Draft Constitution by the whole people has been the crucial test of the quality of all the preparatory work. The discussion took place over a period of nearly four months and was nationwide in the true sense of the word. Altogether it involved *more than 140,000,000 men and women, that is, over eighty per cent of the adult population of the country. Never before has our country known active participation by the public on such a scale.*

The main political result of the nationwide discussion consists in the fact that the Soviet people have said: yes, this is the Fundamental Law we looked forward to. It truly reflects our gains and our aspirations and hopes, and correctly defines our rights and duties. While formalising what has been achieved, it opens up prospects for further advance in the building of communism.

The Draft was discussed at some one and a half million meetings of working people at enterprises and collective farms, in military units and in residential areas. It was discussed at plenary meetings, at meetings of activists, and at general meetings of trade unions and the Komsomol organisation, and by co-operative associations and artists', writers', musicians' and other unions. The whole Party was involved in its discussion. Some 450,000 open Party meetings were held for this purpose, and these were addressed by more than three million men and women. The Draft was considered by all the Soviets, from the rural Soviets to the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics, that is by more than two million deputies, representing the whole of our people. Each of these forums approved the Draft Constitution.

Finally, an unending flow of letters was received from the Soviet people.

The vast majority of these letters are marked by patriotism, wholehearted approval of the policy of our Party and the Soviet government, breadth of vision and maturity of judgement, and by the high and exacting standards set by the authors for themselves and their comrades. The writers, like those who took part in the discussion at meetings, are men and women from all walks of life and different age groups, representing all our nations and nationalities, Party members and not, and all of them, as masters of the country, have thoroughly examined the Draft Constitution, making proposals for improving the text and expressing other considerations bearing on various aspects of life in our society.

Pondering such statements and letters one comes to the conclusion that they are a reflection of that tremendous achievement of socialism—the emergence of the new man, who does not separate himself from the state but who regards the interests of the state and of the whole people as his own vital concern.

Let us recall that soon after the victory of the October Revolution Lenin said that the exploitative system had left us a legacy of deep distrust on the part of the masses for anything that had to do with the state. "It is very difficult to overcome this, and only a Soviet government can do it," he said. "Even a Soviet government, however, will require plenty of time and enormous perseverance to accomplish it." *

The Soviet government has coped with this task. The most striking confirmation of this is the tremendous extent of the active participation of the working people in discussing the Draft of the new Constitution. We can say with confidence and pride that *it is the whole Soviet people who have in fact become the true creators of the Fundamental Law of their state.*

Allow me, comrades, on behalf of the USSR Supreme Soviet, wholeheartedly to thank all the participants in the nationwide discussion of the Draft Constitution and to wish them new successes in their labour for the benefit of our great Motherland, and further and ever more active participation in the affairs of our socialist state.

The Constitution Commission reports that *the nationwide discussion has made it possible to improve the Draft Constitution*

* V. I. Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 27, p. 253.

significantly and to write into it a number of useful additions, clarifications and amendments.

Altogether some 400,000 proposals for amendments to individual articles have been made for the purpose of clarifying, improving and supplementing the wording of the Draft. Having made a careful study of these proposals—many of which, of course, recur—the Constitution Commission recommends that 110 articles of the Draft should be amended and one new article added. The Commission's recommendations have been circulated among all deputies. My task is to substantiate the Commission's proposals on the most essential matters.

Let me start by saying that the greatest number of proposals that have come in bear on the vital question of *the role of labour under socialism*. The comrades suggest that the character of our society as a society of working people should be described in much more explicit terms in the Constitution.

I believe that this proposal has deep significance. Soviet society consists only of working classes and social groups. In view of this it is proposed that Article 1 of the Constitution should state that the Soviet state of the whole people shall express the will and interests of the workers, peasants and intelligentsia, of the *working people* of all the nations and nationalities of the country. At the same time, we should presumably also accept this proposal: to define in the Constitution not only the political foundation of the USSR, not only the foundation of our economic system, but also the *social foundation of our state*. We now have as such a foundation the unbreakable alliance of the working class, collective farm peasantry and people's intelligentsia, and this needs to be clearly stated.

The comrades have also proposed more precise wording of the article dealing with the foundation of the economic system of the USSR, in order to make clearer the fact that *this foundation consists of both state property and collective farm-and-co-operative property*. That is quite correct. After all, it is these two forms of socialist ownership of the means of production that determine the character of our national economy and the division of Soviet society into the two friendly classes of workers and peasants. Such clarification has been provided for.

Several thousand proposals deal with the article on *the role and importance of work collectives*. Their authors have expressed the desire to have the Constitution reflect more broadly the functions and rights of work collectives, especially in such spheres as the planning of production and social development, the training and appointment of personnel, the improving

of working and living conditions for the working people, the raising of their skills and qualifications and the fostering of the communist attitude to work. This should be accepted.

The work collective, and the work of its Party, trade union, and Komsomol organisations reflect the whole life of our society—economic, political and spiritual. Indeed, this is the primary cell of the whole of our organism, both economic and political. That is why we regard as correct the suggestions of those who feel that the article on the work collective would be better written into Chapter I of the Constitution, which describes our political system.

Thousands of proposals have been received suggesting that the Constitution state that *any evasion of socially useful labour is incompatible with the principles of socialist society*. People want stricter penalties for absenteeism and for those who seek unearned income. One cannot but support these just observations.

Very many comrades have written to say that the Constitution should lay special emphasis on the duty of citizens *to take a proper care of the people's wealth*, of our socialist property, which is the product of the people's collective labour and the foundation for the development of our society as a whole. The Constitution Commission shares the working people's view on this matter and proposes that an addition should be made to the relevant article of the Fundamental Law.

Bearing in mind the remarks received, it is proposed to clarify the wording of some other articles in the section entitled The State and the Individual. Thus, in response to the wishes of many people the article on the right to housing states that *it shall be the duty of citizens to take proper care of the housing allocated to them*. The article dealing with the citizen's duty to show concern for the upbringing of children now states that *children are also obliged to care for their parents and help them*. I should like to note that the proposals for such an addition have come not only from older people but also from many young people, and this is especially gratifying.

The nationwide discussion has made it possible to improve a number of provisions in the Draft aimed *at the further development of socialist democracy*.

Many comrades, including deputies to local Soviets, have proposed the inclusion in the Constitution of an article covering *electors' mandates*. These mandates are an expression of the most diverse requirements of the population, reflecting the specific interests of individual groups of working people and

of society as a whole. Fulfilment of these mandates is therefore an important part of the work of the Soviets and of their deputies. Suffice it to say that in the past two years alone more than 700,000 electors' mandates have been fulfilled. That is one of the real expressions of socialist democracy. It is important that not only deputies but also the heads of enterprises, collective farms, construction projects and offices should give due attention to the carrying out of mandates.

Account should be taken also of a number of other reasonable and appropriate proposals made by the working people on the further development of the democratic principles underlying the life in our state. Thus, it would presumably be in place to stipulate, as many have suggested, that, as a rule, *no citizen may be concurrently elected to more than two Soviets*. This will facilitate the influx of fresh forces into state bodies and help to increase the number of people taking part in the administration of the affairs of state.

As you are aware from press reports, a lively debate developed during the nationwide discussion as regards *the age at which citizens should become eligible for election to the Soviets*. There has been broad support for the article of the Draft which states that citizens who have reached the age of 18 should have the right to be elected to all the Soviets. But there have been proposals to set the age at 21, 23, and even 30.

The Constitution Commission, in considering this matter, acted on the assumption that work collectives and public organisations when nominating candidates for election as deputies, thoroughly discuss their qualities and make high demands on them. This is a reliable guarantee that only the most worthy comrades capable of fulfilling the difficult duties of a deputy effectively will be elected to the Soviets. There are, of course, many such men and women among our young people. Hence the minimum age for election to all the Soviets, with the exception of the USSR Supreme Soviet, can be set at 18. Considering that the USSR Supreme Soviet has to take the most responsible decisions bearing on the interests of the whole state, the right to be elected to it can be granted to citizens at the age of 21.

A great many speeches and letters voice the opinion that *the principle of responsibility and accountability of government agencies and officials to the Soviets and to the people should be enforced more strictly*. This can fully be taken care of in the relevant articles by recording the duty of executive committees, deputies and other elected officers to report syste-

matically to *their respective Soviets and to work collectives and meetings of citizens in their neighbourhoods.*

Lastly, many believe that the articles on the procedures governing the consideration of deputies' inquiries and citizens' proposals, and on the responsibility of officials for any breach of the law and for taking an incorrect attitude to criticisms voiced by the working people should be formulated even more specifically. The Commission feels that this can be taken care of in the relevant articles of the Constitution.

Now, concerning some amendments relating to *the organisation and activity of state bodies.*

Some comrades would like to have made more explicit the provision dealing with *the powers of the Union and Autonomous Republics and local Soviets to ensure comprehensive economic and social development on their territory.* This can be accepted. The Constitution defines in sufficiently clear terms the responsibility of ministries and departments for the state of their respective sectors. It would presumably be appropriate to define as clearly the functions of those local bodies which ensure the smooth coordination of the work and comprehensive development of enterprises and social and cultural institutions in a given territory, no matter whose jurisdiction they are under.

Citizens' wishes are also being taken into account in making some other articles more specific, notably those on the competence of ministries and state committees and local bodies of state power, and those on the courts, arbitration bodies and the Procurator's Office.

The participants in the discussion have unanimously welcomed the inclusion in the Draft Constitution of a special chapter on the aims and principles of the Leninist foreign policy of the USSR. In the context of this chapter, it has been proposed to add that the Soviet Union is striving for *general and complete disarmament.* This is, of course, quite right.

On the whole, the Constitution Commission recommends the Supreme Soviet to adopt, apart from the purely editorial changes, *some 150 amendments and clarifications to the text of the Constitution.* These actually reflect the views of a far greater number of citizens. Suffice it to say that tens of thousands of proposals, similar in content, were made for one amendment to the article dealing with citizens' duty to work.

On the other hand, comrades, among the submitted proposals there are some which *the Commission was unable to accept.*

For instance, very many citizens have proposed the inclusion in the Fundamental Law of various provisions which are

already to be found in our legislation, thereby raising them to a constitutional level. Among these are proposals for setting definite dates for sessions of local Soviets and reporting schedules for deputies, for defining powers of certain administrative bodies, and for specifying penalties for various offences.

Many believe that their sector of work should be reflected in the new Constitution in greater detail. Hence, the mass of proposals for including in the text specific measures, for example, for improving legislation governing economic life and environmental protection, for improving the operation of the railways, for developing the material and technical facilities in the public health and education systems, and so on.

All these proposals, comrades, are understandable and most of them are doubtless correct in themselves. But the Constitution is the Fundamental Law of the state. It is a record only of the basic, fundamental provisions which, while having direct force, are expressed and spelled out in other legislative acts. On the basis and in pursuance of these provisions various laws and prescriptions, i.e., current legislation, will be drafted and improved as necessary. In the course of this work the numerous concrete suggestions made during the discussion of the Draft Constitution should be thoroughly considered and taken into account. Incidentally, regarding the question of public health, a draft decree is now being considered in the Central Committee on a comprehensive programme of measures to improve the protection of the people's health.

Let me also tell you about *the proposals which the Constitution Commission has found to be incorrect in substance.*

Some proposals have clearly run ahead of our time, failing to take account of the fact that the new Constitution is the Fundamental Law of a state of developed socialism and not of communism. We live according to the socialist principle "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his work". To bypass this principle at the present level of economic development and the people's consciousness is impossible. That is why it is not possible, for instance, to accept proposals for the introduction of equal wages and pensions for everyone, or for determining their size solely on the basis of one's seniority at work, without taking account of standards of skill and the quality of workmanship.

There have also been proposals either to abolish or sharply limit subsidiary small-holdings. However, it is well known that the form of labour involved here, in which there is no exploitation, has a useful role to play in our economy at the pres-

ent stage. That is why, in our opinion, the comrades are right who propose that the Constitution should emphasise that the state and the collective farms shall assist citizens in running their subsidiary small-holdings. Besides, those who oppose subsidiary small-holdings are clearly worried not so much by their existence as by their abuse for the purpose of profiteering, instances of which, regrettably, still occur. It is here that the state agencies concerned should firmly exercise the right of control given them by the Constitution, and see to it that the plots of land made available to citizens are used rationally, for the benefit of society, and that the incomes from subsidiary small-holdings and personal labour conform to the principles of socialism.

A new historical community—the Soviet people—has, as we know, taken shape in the USSR. Some comrades—it is true that they are not many—have drawn incorrect conclusions from this. They propose introducing in the Constitution the concept of an integral Soviet *nation*, eliminating the Union and Autonomous Republics or drastically curtailing the sovereignty of the Union Republics, depriving them of the right to secede from the USSR and of the right to maintain external relations. The proposals to do away with the Soviet of Nationalities and to set up a unicameral Supreme Soviet are along the same lines. I think that the erroneousness of these proposals is quite clear. The Soviet people's social and political unity does not at all imply the disappearance of national distinctions. Thanks to the consistent pursuance of the Leninist nationalities policy we have, simultaneously with the building of socialism, successfully solved the nationalities question, for the first time in history. The friendship of the Soviet peoples is indissoluble, and in the process of building communism they are steadily drawing ever closer together and their spiritual life is being mutually enriched. But we would be taking a dangerous path if we were artificially to step up this objective process of national integration. That is something Lenin persistently warned against, and we shall not depart from his precepts.

There has been a lively discussion of the article stipulating that the local Soviets are elected for a term of two and a half years. Many proposals would have it extended to five years, to enable deputies to acquire greater proficiency in the performance of their duties. But this would markedly reduce the number of working people going through the school of government in the Soviets. If a deputy elected for two and a half years has

worked well, what is there to prevent his nomination for a second term? This, incidentally, is what is being done: more than fifty per cent of deputies are elected for a second term, and this helps to maintain continuity in the work of the Soviets. We feel, therefore, that this article should not be altered.

The Constitution Commission has also received letters proposing that state functions should be vested directly in Party bodies, that the Political Bureau of the CPSU Central Committee should be vested with legislative power, and so on. These proposals are profoundly erroneous because they introduce confusion into the understanding of the Party's role in our society and tend to obscure the importance and functions of the bodies of Soviet power.

When our Party became the ruling party, it firmly declared at its Eighth Congress, which was directed by Lenin, that it implemented its decisions "through the Soviet bodies, *within the framework of the Soviet Constitution*" * and that, while guiding the Soviets, it did not supersede them, that it drew a line between the functions of Party and state bodies. This Leninist principle is recorded in the CPSU Rules, and was re-emphasised in the decisions of the latest Party congresses. We also propose to have it reflected in the new Constitution.

The Party conducts its policy on state matters primarily through the Communists elected by the people to the Soviets and those working in state bodies. It believes that one of its most important tasks is to do its utmost to consolidate and perfect the power of the Soviets and to further develop socialist democracy. This is a policy of principle to which we have adhered and to which we shall always adhere.

Comrades, *the discussion of the Draft Constitution has in many respects gone well beyond the framework of an analysis of the text itself. It has developed into a frank commentary, truly by the whole people, on the key aspects of our life which are of immediate concern to all Soviet people.* Collectives of working people and individual citizens have made just and—not infrequently—sharply critical remarks on various aspects of the activity of state bodies and public organisations, proposing measures for improving their work and eliminating existing shortcomings.

Many letters call for a stronger drive against parasitism, habitual breaches of labour discipline, drunkenness and other

* *The CPSU in Resolutions and Decisions of Its Congresses, Conferences and Plenary Meetings of the Central Committee*, Vol. 2, 8th ed., p. 77, in Russian.

anti-social phenomena which cut across the very substance of our socialist way of life. From this persistent demand voiced by the working people, definite conclusions should be drawn by all state organisations and public organisations.

Some letters report disgraceful instances of abuse by some persons in office of their position, instances of defrauding the state by means of falsifying records and cheating, of bribetaking, of indifference and a formal approach to the requirements of working people, instances of persecution for criticism.

I should like to stress, comrades, that all reports of this kind are being thoroughly investigated for the purpose of taking the necessary measures, including punishment of the guilty persons with the full severity of the law. In general, I must say that the establishment of due order wherever it is violated in this country—in production, government or social life—would constitute a big step forward in the development of our society. By putting an end to such things as sloppy work, waste of socialist property, red-tape and bureaucratic attitudes to one's work and to people, we shall considerably accelerate the country's advance and improve the life of the whole people.

Many letters and speeches suggest the further strengthening and improvement of the people's control. That is right. And it will be promoted, in particular, by the Law on People's Control in the USSR, whose adoption is provided for by the new Constitution.

A number of letters recommend the introduction of a system of incentives in the form of longer holidays for those who have long worked honestly and efficiently for the benefit of society, for the front-rankers in production. And conversely, shorter holidays for those who wilfully take time out from their working hours, that is, to put it plainly, who loaf about and absent themselves from their work. The Committee on Labour and Social Questions, other departments, and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions should take account of these considerations when formulating measures to improve the system of holidays, drawing also on the relevant experience of the fraternal countries.

We believe that attention should be given to proposals on measures for further improving living conditions for Great Patriotic War veterans who saw active service, including those who are now retired on pension. The Party and the Soviet state, displaying constant concern for those who fought in the Great Patriotic War, have already done much in this area. Can additional funds be found to provide further benefits to those who

secured the freedom and independence of our Motherland in the most arduous of wars? I believe they can.

Some suggest additional benefits to mothers, and suggestions have been made to improve the system of medical care, to introduce stricter procedures for the allocation of housing, and some others. I think that the USSR Council of Ministers together with the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions should make a thorough examination of our present resources and potentialities for meeting these wishes and report on the results to the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

Such, comrades, are the main points which the Constitution Commission deemed it necessary to report in connection with the nationwide discussion of the Draft Constitution of the USSR.

II.

Comrade deputies,

The Draft of our new Constitution and its nationwide discussion have long been in the focus of world attention. We might even say that the discussion has virtually assumed an international scale. We regard this as fresh evidence of the immense role of socialism in the world today.

Our friends in the fraternal socialist countries have widely discussed and enthusiastically supported the Draft of the new Soviet Constitution. They have studied it closely and carefully, in a comradely and business-like spirit. They have analysed it in detail and shared their experience with us. For this we are sincerely grateful to them.

The press in the socialist countries has given the Draft wide coverage. It has assessed it as a document telling the world "the truth about socialism and mankind's future", as "a manifesto of the epoch of building communism". Our comrades-in-arms—the leaders of the socialist community countries—have emphasised the great importance of the Draft in outlining the development prospects for their countries.

It is acknowledged with satisfaction in socialist countries that the Draft of the new Constitution of the USSR reflects in various forms elements characteristic of the constitutions of the fraternal countries just as the latter have drawn on the previous experience of Soviet legislation. In this way collective experience is gained in the building of the socialist state.

The new Soviet Draft Constitution has been studied with keen interest in *the young states newly liberated from colonial bondage* and now choosing the path of their further development. Prominent leaders of these states have told Soviet representatives that they hope to benefit substantially by this Draft, which sums up the 60-year experience of the world's first socialist country in developing its statehood. The press in many African, Asian, and Latin American countries has widely commented on the Draft and underscored in particular that the Soviet Union's accomplishments which it reflects are an inspiring example to all the peoples taking the socialist road.

The working people in the capitalist countries and above all their vanguard—the Communist and Workers' Parties—have shown an exceptional interest in the Draft Constitution. The communist press has published detailed accounts of the Draft, analysed it and highly assessed its significance. The fraternal parties have emphasised that it is a document of great importance showing what contemporary developed socialism is and what objectives it sets itself. The Soviet Union has made a giant step forward in its democratic development; the Soviet people have proved in practice the truth of the great ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin; the Draft Constitution contains extensive material for study, reflection and debate—such are the comments of Communists in the capitalist world for whom the new Constitution of the land of the October Revolution means assistance in their just struggle for the working people's cause.

On the whole, comrades, the lively comments, the great and sincere interest and warm approval of the Draft of our Constitution by the working masses of the world fill our hearts with pride in the Soviet people's achievements and illustrate even more strikingly their great international significance.

Nor has the Draft Constitution been ignored by *the bourgeois press and other mass media in the capitalist world*. Some of them have given more or less objective coverage of its content.

A number of Western newspapers have pointed out that the new Fundamental Law of the USSR signifies further development of democracy in the Soviet Union, broader rights for citizens and public organisations, and an increase in their influence on state policy. The American *Baltimore Sun* has frankly acknowledged that the Draft guarantees Soviet citizens broader rights as compared with any Western Constitution: the right to work, rest, choice of occupation, social secu-

erty, housing, education, free medical aid. State and political leaders and the press in the capitalist countries have admitted the importance of the fact that in the foreign-policy chapter of the Constitution, the Soviet Union has reaffirmed by statutory law its dedication to the cause of peace and international cooperation. The British *Financial Times* has described the Draft Constitution as a "historic document". The West German *Süddeutsche Zeitung* has acknowledged the "tremendous importance" of the Draft.

The masterminds of imperialist propaganda, however, obviously became worried when the discussion of our Constitution had assumed a broad international scale. On June 13, the West German *General-Anzeiger* frankly expressed its dissatisfaction over the fact that "the West is now paying too much attention to the new Soviet Draft Constitution".

This is a repetition of what we have seen time and time again in the history of the Soviet state: a striking picture of the methods of imperialist propaganda. It is blind to the achievements of our great country, with its heroic history, vivid and many-sided culture, one of the world's highest educational standards, the vigorous joint creative activity of its numerous nations and peoples. All this has very little interest for "psychological warfare" experts. Their sole object is to obstruct the growth of the influence of socialism on people's minds, to sow distrust and hostility towards it by whatever means. Hence the stereotyped inventions, shameless fabrications and blatant lies about the Soviet Union intended for ill-informed audiences, gullible readers, listeners and spectators. Hence the tendency not so much to give information about the new Soviet Constitution as to distort its content, minimise its importance and, whenever possible, ignore its major provisions altogether.

The clauses on the rights, freedoms and duties of Soviet citizens have been attacked with especial vehemence.

This has, of course, its own logic: indeed, it is precisely the idea of "concern" for human rights that prominent leaders of the capitalist world have lately chosen as the main thrust of their ideological crusade against the socialist countries. The critics of the Soviet Constitution, however, have found themselves in an unenviable position. They cannot escape the fact that our Draft Constitution defines the social, economic and political rights and freedoms of citizens and the specific guarantees of these rights more widely, clearly and fully than ever before and anywhere else.

What, indeed, can the apologists of the capitalist system oppose to these real achievements of developed socialism? What real rights and freedoms are guaranteed to the masses in present-day imperialist society?

The "right" of tens of millions to unemployment? Or the "right" of sick people to do without medical aid, the cost of which is enormous? Or the "right" of ethnic minorities to humiliating discrimination in employment and education, in political and everyday life? Or is it the "right" to live in perpetual fear of the omnipotent underworld of organised crime and to see how the press, cinema, TV and radio services are going out of their way to educate the younger generation in a spirit of selfishness, cruelty and violence?

Propagandists and ideologists of capitalism cannot deny that socialism has long since cured these social sores. They have resorted, therefore, to another manoeuvre. They have concentrated their attacks on those provisions of the Draft of our Constitution which say that the exercise by citizens of their rights and freedoms must not injure the interests of society and the state, or the rights of other citizens, and that the exercise of one's rights and freedoms is inseparable from the performance of one's duties and obligations.

According to the Draft Constitution, the rights of citizens may not be used to the detriment of socialist society and the state, which means, according to the Austrian newspaper *Salzburger Volksblatt*, that "Soviet citizens have no rights at all". That is logic for you!

The Italian *Corriere della Sera* does not like the fact that the Draft speaks of the duty of Soviet citizens to observe the USSR Constitution, Soviet laws, and comply with the code of socialist conduct. "All these restrictions," this mouthpiece of the Italian monopolies declares, "practically nullify civil rights, at any rate as we understand them." It follows that the exercise of civil rights in the USSR must consist in violations of the law!

Speaking in general, it seems that from the standpoint of our class adversaries Soviet citizens should evidently be granted one and only "right"—to fight against the Soviet state, against the socialist system so as to gladden the hearts of the imperialists. However, we must disappoint such "critics" of our Constitution: the Soviet people will never comply with their wishes.

Our "critics" pretend to be unaware of the fact that the provisions in the Draft Constitution which evoke their dissatisfaction fully conform to fundamental international documents. Let us remind them of this fact: the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states that "everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible", and that the exercise of rights and freedoms by citizens requires "due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and . . . meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society".

This is the principle of life in a democratic society recognized throughout the world. It is precisely this principle that is contained in the provisions of the new Constitution of the USSR, which have aroused the hypocritical indignation of our "critics".

Most bourgeois analysts have also criticised the provisions defining the role of the CPSU in the life of Soviet society. They have made much of the alleged "proclamation of the dictatorship of the Communist Party", "the primacy of the Party over the state", "a dangerous intertwining of the Party and government institutions", "the obliteration of the boundaries between the Party and the state".

What can one say on this score? The motives for this attack are clear enough. The Communist Party is the vanguard of the Soviet people, their most conscious and progressive section inseparably united with the people as a whole. The Party has no interests other than the interests of the people. To try to counterpose the Party to the people by talking about the "dictatorship of the Party" is tantamount to trying to separate, say, the heart from the whole of the body.

As I have already said, the Communist Party operates within the framework of the USSR Constitution. Bourgeois critics, however, ignore this fact. They would like to weaken the role of the Party in Soviet society, since in general they hope to weaken our country, our socialist system, and to extinguish our communist ideals. Fortunately, this is beyond their power. As the Soviet people tackle the increasingly complex and responsible tasks of building communism, the Communist Party will have a growing role to play. This leads not to restriction but to the increasingly profound development of socialist democracy in full conformity with our Party's Programme.

Here is another point. Some Western critics of our new Constitution try to attack it "from the left", as it were, advancing theoretical arguments about the authors of the Draft being inconsistent in their adherence to the Marxist doctrine of the withering away of the state under communism. The Italian *Il Messaggero* laments the fact that the Soviet Constitution has "unconditionally discarded" the communist principle of "the withering away of the state", whose role was to be taken over by public organisations. *The New York Times* complains that the Soviet state is unable and unwilling to wither away. It is seconded by the London *Times*, which says that there is no sign of any withering away of the state.

This concern of the ideologists of capitalism for our socialist state's development in accordance with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine is certainly touching. However, their anxiety is groundless. Developments are running the precise course predicted by the classics of Marxism and formulated by our Party in its policy statements.

Our critics from the bourgeois camp (and, frankly speaking, some comrades in the ranks of the international working-class movement along with them) are unable or unwilling to see the main thing—the dialectics of the development of our state and society, namely that with the development and advancement of the socialist state millions of citizens are increasingly involved in the activities of government and people's control bodies, in the management of production and distribution, in social and cultural policies and in the administration of justice. In short, along with the development of socialist democracy our statehood is gradually being transformed into communist social self-government. This is, of course, a long process, but it is proceeding steadily. We are convinced that the new Soviet Constitution will contribute effectively to the attainment of this important goal of communist construction.

III.

Comrades,

The new Constitution is justly called the Law of life of developed socialist society. This is the society that has been built in the Soviet Union. Such a developed, mature socialist

society is also being built successfully in a number of other countries of the socialist community. And it is very important to have a clear idea of its characteristic features and its place in the historical process of the establishment of the communist system.

It will be recalled that in the early Soviet years Lenin, looking into the future, spoke and wrote of "complete", "full", "developed" socialism as a prospect, a goal of socialist construction.

This goal has now been attained. The experience of the Soviet Union and of the fraternal countries has demonstrated that laying the foundations of socialism, that is, abolishing the exploiter classes and establishing public ownership in all sectors of the national economy, does not yet allow of direct transition to communism. Victorious socialism has to pass through definite stages in the process of maturing, and only developed socialist society makes it possible to embark on communist construction. What is more, as we know today, the development, the advancement of socialism is a task no less complicated, no less responsible, than the laying of its foundations.

A few eloquent figures give an idea of the distance separating the present and the initial stages in the development of socialism in our country.

In this year of 1977 it takes less than a month to produce the gross social product turned out during the whole of 1936. Since then the assets-to-man ratio in material production has grown 14-fold, the power-to-man ratio in industry, almost 8-fold, and in agriculture, more than 15-fold.

Not only technology but also the people who operate it have changed beyond recognition. Today, 73.2 per cent of the workers have a higher or secondary (complete or incomplete) education, whereas the respective figure forty years ago was less than 8 per cent. Over this period the number of specialists with a higher or specialised secondary education has grown 34 times in industry and 47 times in agriculture.

The living standards of the Soviet people have improved spectacularly. Here are just two examples. In 1936 we built 14.9 million square metres of housing, whereas the figure for 1977 will be over 110 million. In 1936, payments and benefits from the social consumption funds per capita were 21 roubles, while the respective figure for this year is 382 roubles.

As you see, the distance covered is tremendous. However, not everything can be expressed in figures. Material and cultural progress on this scale has led to a considerable evening up of the conditions of work and life in town and country, in the spheres of mental and physical labour. New generations of Soviet people have grown up under socialism, have been educated, and have formed a socialist consciousness.

These are the processes the results of which entitle us to say that developed socialism has been built in the USSR—that stage of maturity of the new society at which the restructuring of the entire system of social relations on the collectivist principles intrinsic to socialism is being completed. Hence the full scope for the operation of the laws of socialism, for bringing to the fore its advantages in all spheres of the life of society. Hence the organic integrity and dynamic force of the social system, its political stability, its indestructible inner unity. Hence the drawing ever closer together of all the classes and social groups, all the nations and nationalities, and the formation of a historically new social and international community, the Soviet people. Hence the emergence of a new, socialist culture, the establishment of a new, socialist way of life.

Of course, only that socialist society can be described as developed which is based on a powerful, advanced industry and a large-scale, highly mechanised agriculture, for this in practice makes it possible for the ever fuller satisfaction of the multifarious requirements of citizens to become the central and direct goal of social development. In the conditions of our country the task of building such a material and technological base indispensable for mature socialism had to be tackled after the foundations of the new system had been laid. Other countries which have taken the path of socialism with an underdeveloped or moderately developed economy will evidently have to follow the same road.

In countries which already have highly developed productive forces at the time of their victorious socialist revolution the situation will be different. But they too will have to solve such complicated problems in the building of mature socialism as mastering the difficult art of organising the entire life of society along socialist lines, and, in particular, the science of planning and managing the national economy, and developing a socialist consciousness in their citizens.

In short, whatever specific conditions may prevail in the countries building socialism, the stage of its advancement on

its own basis, the stage of mature, developed socialist society is an indispensable link in the chain of social transformations, a relatively long stage of development on the path from capitalism to communism. Moreover, to discern and make use of all the potentialities of developed socialism means at the same time a transition to building communism. The future does not lie beyond the limits of the present. The future has its roots in the present. And by fulfilling the tasks of the present day, of the socialist present, we are gradually approaching the morrow, the communist future.

As our experience has shown, the gradual development of the state of proletarian dictatorship into a state of the whole people is one of the results of the complete triumph of socialist social relations. The Soviet Union today is a natural, inevitable stage in the development of the state born of the October Revolution—a stage characteristic of mature socialism. Consequently, the tasks of the state institutions, their structure, functions, and work procedure should conform to the stage attained in the development of society.

The new Constitution of the USSR guarantees such conformity. By adopting it we shall have every right to say that another important step has been taken to bring our country nearer to the great goals of our Party and our people.

Comrades, exactly twenty years ago, on October 4, mankind took its first step into outer space. This was heralded by the artificial earth satellite created by the genius and hands of Soviet people. The whole world could see what an "alliance of the scientists, the proletariat and the technologists" about which Lenin dreamed at the dawn of the Soviet period was capable of. This alliance has found its embodiment in the practice of socialist construction in our country and has become a mainspring of the spectacular accomplishments of developed socialism.

The discussion of the Draft Constitution has once again demonstrated the strength and vitality of the unity of all classes and social groups, of all nations and nationalities, all generations of Soviet society rallied around the Communist Party.

Millions upon millions of working people in town and country have supported the new Fundamental Law by word and by deed. They checked every line in the Draft against their own practical work, against the work of their work collectives. They made further socialist pledges, amended production plans, searched for new reserves for raising production efficiency and

improving work performance, and welcomed their new Constitution with signal labour accomplishments. In short, our people have again shown themselves to be the full masters of their socialist homeland. Honour and glory to the heroic Soviet people, the builders of communism!

Comrade deputies, permit me to express my confidence that the Supreme Soviet, after having discussed the Draft Constitution of the USSR, will approve it, thereby equipping the Soviet people with a new powerful instrument for building communism.

CLOSING SPEECH

October 7, 1977

Comrade deputies,

Expressing the will of the Soviet people, and in fulfilment of its mandate, the USSR Supreme Soviet has adopted the new Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Fundamental Law of the world's first socialist state of the whole people has been approved. A new historical frontier in our advance towards communism—the construction of a developed socialist society—has been constitutionally established.

Years and decades will pass, but this day in October will always remain in the people's memory as vivid evidence of the genuine triumph of the Leninist principles of the exercise of power by the people. The further our society advances along the path towards communism, the more fully will the tremendous creative potentialities of socialist democracy, power in the hands of the people, and power exercised in the interests of the people, as reflected in the new Constitution, be revealed.

The Central Committee of the CPSU and the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet believe that there is good reason to mark the day of the adoption of the Soviet Union's new Constitution as one of the major events in the life of the Soviet people. Accordingly, a Draft Law declaring October 7 to be a holiday of the whole people—USSR Constitution Day—is being submitted for your consideration.

Now that the Constitution has been approved, it is necessary to define clearly in a special Law the procedure for putting it into effect. A Draft Law has been put before you for your consideration. It provides that all legislative acts adopted

before the entry into force of the Constitution shall remain in effect, in so far as they do not conflict with the new Constitution of the USSR.

In addition, subject to the provisions of the adopted Constitution, it is proposed to extend the powers of the USSR Supreme Soviet of the 9th convocation, and accordingly alter the terms of office of Republic and local bodies of state power elected before the adoption of the new Constitution.

Further, it is intended to authorise the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet and the USSR Council of Ministers to draft the necessary legislative acts pursuant to the text of the Constitution, and also to authorise Soviets of People's Deputies, ministries and departments, and the heads of other state and public bodies to consider the proposals and remarks submitted by citizens in the course of the nationwide discussion of the Draft Constitution of the USSR on matters relating to the activity of these bodies, and to take action to implement them.

With the adoption of this Law, that is, from today, the Constitution takes effect, and begins to live and to work.

What does this mean?

It means that its every article and provision must enter fully into the living, practical day-to-day activity of all state bodies, all persons in office, and all Soviet citizens everywhere. We have not created the Constitution as a stage prop. It has to be fulfilled, and will be fulfilled in all its parts. It has to become and will become a powerful instrument in the further development and deepening of socialist democracy.

All of us, comrades, have witnessed the great upsurge of creative initiative and labour and political activity generated by the discussion of the new Constitution. We must not let this activity subside, but must see to it that it is developed further, assuming the concrete forms of ever broader participation by citizens in the affairs of the state of the whole people. Our Party has displayed and will continue to display constant concern to ensure that the working people not merely possess the opportunities afforded by the Constitution for taking part in the administration of society, but are actually able to take part in it.

The great Lenin taught Communists to give the working people the assistance necessary for them to exercise their very broad socialist rights and freedoms. And the Party, mind-

ful of this precept of Lenin's as well, has been consistently working to implement it.

We want the citizens of the USSR to know well their rights and freedoms, and the ways and methods of exercising them; we want them to be able to apply these rights and freedoms in the interests of the building of communism, and to have a clear understanding of their close connection with honest fulfilment of their civic duties. It is an important task of the Party and state bodies and public organisations responsible for the communist education of the working people to promote this and to help every citizen achieve a high level of political awareness.

Furthermore, the entry into force of the Constitution entails fulfilment of an extensive programme of legislative work. This includes, as I have already mentioned, the preparation of a number of new legislative acts, whose adoption is directly provided for in the Constitution or follows from it. These are key acts such as the Rules and Regulations of the Supreme Soviet, the election law, the laws on citizenship, and on the procedures governing the conclusion, execution and denunciation of international treaties, and also a number of other acts which are to be drafted in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and in the Standing Commissions of the Chambers.

Much work will have to be done in developing the legislation governing administrative bodies. One important act of this nature to be formulated is the Law on the USSR Council of Ministers. There is need to give general thought as to how best to reflect in legislation the measures mapped out by the 25th Congress of the CPSU for perfecting the methods employed in the administration of the economy, and comprehensive solution of large-scale nationwide, intersectoral and territorial problems, and for setting up systems for administering groups of homogeneous sectors of the economy.

The adoption of the Constitution makes it necessary to introduce a number of amendments and additions to current legislation. This work will take time, but it should not be delayed. And here, comrades, use can and should be made of the many concrete remarks and wishes expressed by the working people in the course of the discussion of the Draft Constitution.

Attention should be given, in particular, to the proposals for adopting Union fundamentals on housing legislation and Republic housing codes, and for establishing in normative

acts the rights of work collectives, the duties of parents in bringing up and educating their children, and so on.

Of course, improvement of the legislation will involve not only Union but also Republic legislation. This work will be based on the new Constitutions of the Union and Autonomous Republics, which are already in the drafting stage.

The increasing social, political and labour activity of Soviet citizens and further development and renovation of our legislation make new and higher demands on all bodies of power. From this stems the need for a considerable improvement of the style and methods of work of all our state bodies, both central and local, of all ministries and departments, offices and organisations.

Here special attention should be given to enhancing the responsibility and initiative of every link and of every person working in the state apparatus, to the most scrupulous observance of discipline in planning and finance and state affairs in general, and to displaying greater attention to the creative initiatives of the working people, and to their needs and problems.

The whole sense of our Constitution, every letter, aim at ensuring that the history-making activity of the masses of the people is supported in every way and that it will steadily grow. The greater creative activity of the masses is inseparably connected with the development of socialist democracy. A sure sign of this are the many reports received by this session of the Supreme Soviet in recent days about the new victories on the labour front in factories, building projects, and collective farms. Nothing could be more convincing as an expression of the support of the working people for their new Constitution. Honour and glory to the foremost workers of this five-year plan period!

Finally, comrades, the entry into force of the new Constitution imposes an even greater responsibility on our Leninist Party, the leading and guiding force of Soviet society. The constitutional consolidation of this role of the Party does not impart any privileges to its members. On the contrary, it imposes even greater duties upon them. Allow me, on behalf of the CPSU Central Committee and of our whole Party to assure you, comrade deputies, that the Soviet Communists will always bear this in mind, wherever they may work.

The whole experience of the sixty years of our development along the path of the October Revolution confirms that our

strength lies in the unbreakable unity of the Party and the people. This is the source of the further flourishing of socialist democracy and of all our victories. This is the guarantee of the full triumph of communism. Let us, therefore, do our utmost to strengthen and consolidate this great unity!

(L. I. Brezhnev's Report and Closing Speech were heard with great attention and punctuated with prolonged stormy applause.)

Л. И. БРЕЖНЕВ

О ПРОЕКТЕ КОНСТИТУЦИИ (ОСНОВНОГО ЗАКОНА)
СОЮЗА СОВЕТСКИХ СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКИХ РЕСПУБЛИК
И ИТОГАХ ЕГО ВСЕНАРОДНОГО ОБСУЖДЕНИЯ

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