STALIN

ON THE

New Soviet Constitution

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THE NEW SOVIET CONSTITUTION

BY JOSEPH STALIN

THE Constitution Commission was to introduce changes into the Constitution operating at present, which was adopted in 1924, taking into account the changes in the life of the U.S.S.R. in the direction of socialism brought about in the period from 1924 to our days.

What changes have occurred in the life of the U.S.S.R. during

the period 1924-1936?

That was the first period of the New Economic Policy, when Soviet power permitted a certain revival of capitalism, along with the general development of socialism, when it calculated that, in the process of competition between the two economic systems—the capitalist and the socialist—it would organize the superiority of the socialist system over the capitalist system.

The task was, in the process of this competition, to consolidate the position of socialism, to attain the liquidation of the capitalist elements and consummate the victory of the socialist system as

the basic system of national economy.

CONDITIONS IN 1924

At that time our industry presented an unenviable picture, especially heavy industry. True, it was recovering little by little, but it had not yet raised its output to anywhere near the pre-war level.

It was based on the old, backward, scanty technique. It was developing, of course, in the direction of socialism. At that time the share of the socialist sector formed about 80 per cent of our industry. But still the sector of capitalism held at least 20 per cent of industry in its hands.

Our agriculture presented a still more unenviable picture. It is true that the landlord class had already been done away with, but as compared to that class, the agricultural capitalist kulak class still formed a rather important force.

Agriculture as a whole at that time resembled a boundless ocean of small individual peasant farms with their backward medieval technique. There were in formation isolated points and little islands in this ocean, collective farms and state farms which, strictly speaking, were not yet of any really serious importance in our national economy.

The collective farms and state farms were weak, while the kulaks were still in their strength. At that time we did not talk about the liquidation of kulaks, but of restricting them.

The same thing can be said of the goods turnover of the country. The socialist sector of goods turnover amounted to some 50-60 per cent, no more, while all the rest was occupied by merchants, speculators and other private traders.

Such was the picture of our economy in 1924.

CONDITIONS IN 1936

What have we in 1936?

While previously we had the first period of the New Economic Policy, the beginning of the New Economic Policy, a certain revival of capitalism, today we have the end of the New Economic Policy, the period of the complete liquidation of capitalism in all spheres of national economy.

Let us start from the fact that our industry during this period has grown into a gigantic force. Now it is no longer possible to call it weak and badly equipped technically. On the contrary, it is now based on new, rich and modern technique, with a strongly developed heavy industry and still more strongly developed machine-building industry.

Most important is the fact that capitalism has been completely

expelled from the sphere of our industry, and the socialist form of production is now the system which alone dominates the sphere of our industry.

The fact that in volume of production our present socialist industry exceeds pre-war industry more than seven-fold cannot

be regarded as a trifle.

SOCIALIZED AGRICULTURE

In the sphere of agriculture, instead of an ocean of small individual peasant farms with weak technique and a preponderance of kulaks, we now have mechanized production conducted on the largest scale anywhere in the world, equipped with modern technique in the form of an all-embracing system of collective and state farms.

Everyone knows the kulaks in agriculture have been liquidated and that the small individual peasant farm sector with its backward medieval technique now occupies an insignificant place. The share of individual farms in agriculture, as far as sown area is concerned, now comprises no more than two to three per cent.

One cannot but note the fact that the collective farms now have at their disposal 316,000 tractors with a total of 5,700,000 horsepower, and, together with the state farms, they possess over

400,000 tractors with 7.580,000 horsepower.

As for distribution throughout the country, the merchants and speculators are now completely expelled from this sphere. The whole field of distribution is now in the hands of the state, the cooperative societies and the collective farms.

A new Soviet trade has come into being and it is a trade

without speculators, a trade without capitalists.

The New Society

THUS the complete victory of the socialist system in all spheres of the national economy is now a fact. This means that ex-

ploitation of man by man is abolished—liquidated—while the socialist ownership of the implements and means of production is established as the unshakable basis of our Soviet society. (Loud applause.)

As a result of all these changes in the national economy of the U.S.S.R., we have now a new socialist economy, knowing neither crises nor unemployment, neither poverty nor ruin, and giving to the citizens every possibility to live prosperous and cul-

tured lives.

Such, in the main, are the changes which took place in our economy during the period from 1924 to 1936. Corresponding to these changes in the sphere of the economy of the U.S.S.R., the class structure of our society has also changed. As is known, the landlord class had already been liquidated as a result of the victorious conclusion of the Civil War.

As for the other exploiting classes, they share the fate of the landlord class. The capitalist class has ceased to exist in the sphere of industry. The kulak class has ceased to exist in the sphere of agriculture. The merchants and speculators have ceased to exist in the sphere of distribution. In this way, all exploiting classes are proved to have been liquidated.

The working class has remained. The peasant class has remained. The intellectuals have remained. But it would be mistaken to think these social groups have undergone no changes during this period, that they remained what they were, say, in the period

of capitalism.

Take, for example, the working class of the U.S.S.R. It is often called "the proletariat" through old habit. But what is the proletariat? The proletariat is a class exploited by the capitalists.

But as is well known, the capitalist class is already liquidated in our country, the implements and means of production have been taken from the capitalists and transferred to the leading power of the state, which is the working class.

Consequently, there no longer exists a capitalist class which

could exploit the working class.

NO MORE PROLETARIAT

Consequently our working class is not only not bereft of the implements and means of production, but, on the contrary, possesses them in conjunction with the whole people. And since it possesses these and the capitalist class is liquidated, all possibility of emploiting the working class is precluded. Is it possible after this to call our working class a "proletariat"?

It is clearly impossible. Marx said:

"In order that the proletariat may emancipate itself, it must smash the capitalist class, take the implements and means of production from the capitalists and abolish the conditions of production which create the proletariat."

Can it be said that the working class of the U.S.S.R. has already achieved these conditions for its emancipation?

Undoubtedly it can and should be said.

What does this mean? It means that the proletariat of the U.S.S.R. has become transformed into an entirely new class, into the working class of the U.S.S.R., which has abolished the capitalist system of economy and has established the socialist ownership of implements and means of production and is directing Soviet society along the path to communism. As you see, the working class of the U.S.S.R. is an entirely new working class, freed from exploitation and having no counterpart in the history of mankind.

A NEW PEASANTRY

Now, let us pass to the question of the peasantry. It is customary to say that the peasantry is a class of small producers, with atomized members, scattered over the face of the whole country, plowing their lonely furrows on their small famms with backward technique, slaves of private property, exploited with impunity by landlords, kulaks, merchants, speculators, usurers, etc. Indeed, the peasantry in capitalist countries, bearing in mind the main mass, is such a class.

Can it be said that our present-day peasantry, the Soviet peasantry, in the mass, resembles such a peasantry?

No, this cannot be said. We no longer have such a peasantry in our country. Our Soviet peasantry is an entirely new peasantry. We no longer have landlords and kulaks, merchants and usurers to exploit peasants. Consequently our peasantry is a peasantry freed from exploitation. Further, the overwhelming majority of our peasantry is collective farm peasantry, i.e., it bases its work and its possessions not on individual labor and backward technique but on collective labor and modern technique.

Finally, the economy of our peasantry is not based on private property but on collective property, which grew up on the basis of collective labor. As you see, the Soviet peasantry is an entirely new peasantry, having no counterpart in the history of mankind.

NEW KIND OF INTELLECTUALS

Finally, let us pass to the question of the intellectual, the question of engineering and technical workers, the workers on the cultural front, office employes generally, etc. They too have undergone great changes during the past period. There is no longer the old conservative intelligentsia which tried to place itself above classes, but, in fact, as a mass, served the landlords and capitalists. Our Soviet intelligentsia is bound by all its roots to the working class and the peasantry.

First, the composition of the intelligentsia has changed. The offsprings of the nobility and of the bourgeoisie comprise a small percentage of our Soviet intelligentsia. Eighty to ninety per cent of the Soviet intelligentsia come from the working class, the

peasantry and other strata of the toiling population.

Finally, the very nature of the activities of the intelligentsia changes. Formerly it had to serve the rich classes, for it could do nothing else. Now it must serve the people, for the exploiting classes have ceased to exist. And precisely for that reason it is now an equal member of Soviet society, in which, pulling together jointly with the workers and peasants, it is building the new classless socialist society.

As you see, this is an entirely new working class intelligentsia,

for which you will not find a counterpart in any country on the globe.

Such are the changes which have taken place in the recent period in the class structure of Soviet society.

CLASS LINES VANISH

What do these changes signify?

They signify, first, that the dividing line between the working class and the peasantry, as well as that between these classes and the intelligentsia, is becoming obliterated and that the old class exclusiveness is disappearing. This means that the distance between these social groups is more and more diminishing.

They signify, secondly, that the economic contradictions between these social groups is subsiding, is becoming obliterated.

They signify, finally, that the political contradictions between them are also subsiding, becoming obliterated.

Such is the position concerning the changes in the sphere of class structure in the U.S.S.R.

The picture of the changes in social fife in the U.S.S.R. would be incomplete without a few words regarding the changes in another sphere. I have in mind the sphere of national interrelations within the U.S.S.R. As is well known, the Soviet Union comprises about sixty nations, national groups and nationalities. The Soviet state is a multi-national state. Clearly the question of the interrelations among peoples of the U.S.S.R. cannot but be of first rate importance to us.

NATIONAL FRICTION IS GONE

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was formed, as is well known, in 1922 at the First Congress of Soviets of the U.S.S.R. It was formed on the principles of equality and free will of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. The Constitution now in force, adopted in 1924, is the first Constitution of the U.S.S.R.

That was a period when the relations among the peoples had not yet been settled, as they should have been, when the survivals of mistrust towards the Russians had not yet disappeared, when the centrifugal forces still continued to operate. Under these conditions it was necessary to establish fraternal cooperation of peoples on the basis of economic, political and military mutual aid, uniting them in one union, a multi-national state.

HOW THE VICTORY WAS WON

The Soviet power could not but see the difficulties of this. It had before it the unsuccessful experiments and unfortunate experience of multi-national states in bourgeois countries. It had before it the abortive experience of old Austria-Hungary. Nevertheless it decided to make the experiment of creating a multi-national state, for it knew that a multi-national state which came into being on the basis of socialism is bound to pass every possible test. Fourteen years have passed since then, a period sufficiently long to verify the experiment. What is the result?

The period that has passed undoubtedly shows that the experiment in forming a multi-national state created on the basis of socialism has been entirely successful. This is an undoubted victory of Lenin's national policy. (Prolonged applause.)

How is this victory to be explained?

The very absence of the exploiting classes which are the principal organizers of strife among the nationalities, the absence of exploitation, breeding mutual distrust and fanning nationalist passions, the fact that the power is held by the working class, which is the enemy of all enslavement and the faithful bearer of ideas of internationalism, the materialization in reality of mutual aid of the peoples in all fields of economic and social life, and finally the high development of the national culture of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., culture that is national in form and socialist in content—as a result of all these and similar factors, the peoples of the U.S.S.R. have radically changed their characteristics. Their feeling of mutual distrust has disappeared. The feeling of mutual friendship has developed, and thus fraternal cooperation of the peoples has been established in the system of a single union state.

As a result, we now have a fully formed multi-national social-

ist state, which has passed all tests and which has a stability which any national state in any part of the world may well envy. (Loud

applause.)

Such are the changes that have taken place during the past period in the sphere of relationships among the nationalities of the U.S.S.R. Such is the sum total of the changes in the sphere of economic and social-political life in the U.S.S.R. which have taken place in the period from 1924 to 1936.

The New Constitution

HOW are these changes in the life of the U.S.S.R. reflected in the draft of the new Constitution?

In other words, what are the main specific features of the draft Constitution submitted for consideration at the present

congress?

The Constitution Commission was instructed to introduce changes in the text of the 1924 Constitution. The work of the Constitution Commission resulted in a new text of a Constitution, in a draft of a new Constitution for the U.S.S.R.

In drafting the new Constitution, the Constitution Commission took as a point of departure that the Constitution must not be confused with a program. That means, there is an essential difference between a program and a constitution. Whereas a program speaks of what does not yet exist, and of what should still be achieved and won in the future, a constitution deals with the present.

Two examples for illustration:

Our Soviet society succeeded in achieving socialism, in the main, and has created a socialist order, i.e., has achieved what is otherwise called among Marxists the first or lower phase of communism, that is, socialism. (Prolonged applause.)

It is known that the fundamental principle of this phase of communism is the formula: "From each according to his abili-

ties; to each according to his deeds."

Should our Constitution reflect this fact, the winning of socialism?

Should it be based on this victory?

Undoubtedly it should. It should because for the U.S.S.R.

socialism is something already achieved, already won.

But Seviet society has not yet succeeded in bringing about the highest phase of communism where the ruling principle will be the formula: "From each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs", although it sets itself the aim of achieving the materialization of this higher phase, full communism, in the future.

Can our Constitution be based on the higher phase? On communism which does not yet exist and which has still to be won?

No, it cannot, unless it wants to become a program or a declaration about future conquests.

Such is the framework our Constitution presents at this historical moment.

Thus the draft of the new Constitution sums up the path already traversed, sums up the gains already achieved. Consequently it is the record and legislative enactment of what has been achieved and won in fact. (Loud applause.)

This constitutes the first specific feature of the draft of the

new Constitution of the U.S.S.R.

To continue:

CAPITALISM VS. SOCIALISM

The constitutions of bourgeois countries are usually taken as a point of departure for the conviction that the capitalist system is unshakable. The main bases of these constitutions form the principles of capitalism, and are its principal mainstays, namely: private ownership of land, forests, factories, shops and other implements and means of production; exploitation of man by man and the existence of exploiters and exploited; insecurity for the toiling majority at one pole of society and luxury for the non-toiling but well-secured minority at the other pole, etc.

They rest on these and similar mainstays of capitalism. They

reflect them, they fix them by legislation.

Unlike these, the draft of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. proceeds from the fact of the abolition of the capitalist system, from the fact of the victory of the socialist system in the U.S.S.R.

The main foundation of the draft of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. is formed of the principles of socialism and its chief mainstays, already won and put into practice, namely, the socialist ownership of land, forests, factories, shops and other implements and means of production; abolition of exploitation and exploiting classes; abolition of poverty for the majority and luxury for the minority; abolition of unemployment; work as an obligation and duty and the honor of every able-bodied citizen according to the formula: "He who does not work, neither shall he eat", i.e., the right of every citizen to receive guaranteed work; the right to rest and leisure; the right to education, etc.

The draft of the new Constitution rests on these.

NO CLASS ANTAGONISMS

To continue: Bourgeois constitutions tacitly proceed from the premise that society consists of antagonistic classes, of classes which own wealth and classes which do not own wealth; that whatever party comes to power in the state guidance of society (dictatorship) must belong to the bourgeoisie; that the constitution is needed to consolidate the social order desired by and

for the advantage of the propertied classes.

Unlike the bourgeois constitutions, the draft of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. proceeds from the fact that antagonistic classes no longer exist in our society, that our society consists of two friendly classes: the workers and peasants, that precisely these toiling classes are in power, that the state guidance of society (dictatorship) belongs to the working class as the advanced class of society, that the Constitution is needed to consolidate the social order desired by and of advantage to the toilers.

Such is the third specific feature of the draft of the new Constitution.

EQUALITY OF PEOPLES

To continue: Bourgeois constitutions tacitly proceed from the premise that nations and races cannot be equal, that there are nations with full rights and nations not possessing full rights; that in addition there is a third category of nations or races, for example, in colonies, which have still fewer rights than those which do not possess full rights. This means that at bottom all these constitutions are nationalistic, *i.e.*, constitutions of ruling nations.

As distinct from these constitutions the draft of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. is, on the contrary, profoundly international. It proceeds from the premise that all nations and races have equal rights. It proceeds from the premise that color or language differences, differences in cultural level or the level of state development as well as any other difference among nations and races, cannot serve as grounds for justifying national inequality of rights.

ONLY COMPLETE DEMOCRACY

It proceeds from the premise that all nations and races irrespective of their past or present position, irrespective of their strength or weakness, must enjoy equal rights in all spheres, economic, social, state and the cultural life of society.

Such is the fourth feature of the draft of the new Constitution. The fifth specific feature of the draft of the new Constitution is its consistent and fully sustained democracy.

From the viewpoint of democracy, the bourgeois constitutions may be divided into two groups. One group of constitutions openly denies or virtually negates equality of the rights of citizens and democratic liberties. The other group of constitutions willingly accepts and even advertises democratic principles, but in doing so makes such reservations and restrictions that democratic rights and liberties prove to be utterly mutilated.

They talk about equal suffrage for all citizens but immediately limit it by residential, educational and even by property qualifications. They talk about equal rights of citizens, but immediately make the reservation that this does not apply to women, or only partly applies to them, etc.

A specific feature of the draft of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. is that it is free from such reservations and restrictions.

Active and passive citizens do not exist for it; for it all citizens are active. It recognizes no difference in the rights of men and women, "of fixed abode" and "without fixed abode", with property or without property, educated or uneducated.

For it all citizens are equal in their rights. Neither property status nor national origin, nor sex, nor official standing, but only the personal capabilities and personal labor of every citizen determine his position in society.

GUARANTEES OF DEMOCRACY

Finally, there is one other specific feature in the draft of the new Constitution.

Bourgeois constitutions usually limit themselves to recording the formal rights of citizens without concerning themselves about the conditions for exercising these rights, about the possibility of exercising them, the means of exercising them. They speak about equality of citizens but forget that real equality between master and workman, between landlord and peasants, is impossible if the former enjoy wealth and political weight in society, while the latter are deprived of both; if the former are exploiters and the latter are exploited.

Or again: they speak of free speech, freedom of assemblage and of the press, but forget that all these liberties may become empty sound for the working class if the latter is deprived of the possibility of having at its command suitable premises for meetings, good printshops, sufficient quantity of paper, etc.

A specific feature of the draft of the new Constitution is that it does not limit itself to recording formal rights of citizens, but transfers the center of gravity to questions of the guarantee of these rights, to the question of the means of exercising them.

It does not merely proclaim the equality of the rights of citizens but ensures them by legislative enactment of the fact of liquidation of the regime of exploitation, by the fact of liberation of citizens from any exploitation.

SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

It not only proclaims the right to work, but ensures it by legislative enactment of the fact of non-existence of crises in Soviet society, and the fact of abolition of unemployment. It not merely proclaims democratic liberties but guarantees them in legislative enactments by providing definite material facilities.

It is clear, therefore, that the democracy of the new Constitution is not the "usual" and "generally recognized" democracy in

general, but socialist democracy.

Such are the principal specific reatures of the draft of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. Such is the reflection in the draft of the new Constitution of the mutations and changes in economic and social-political life in the U.S.S.R. which were brought about in the period from 1924 to 1936.

Bourgeois Critics of the Constitution

A FEW words about bourgeois criticism of the draft Constitution.

The question of the attitude of the foreign bourgeois press towards the draft Constitution undoubtedly presents a certain interest.

Insofar as the foreign press reflects the public opinion of the various strata of population in the bourgeois countries, we cannot disregard the criticism of this press leveled against the draft Constitution.

The first sign of reaction by the foreign press to the draft Constitution expressed a definite tendency to hush it up. In this case I have in mind the most reactionary fascist press. This group of critics considered that the best tactic was simply to be mum about the draft Constitution and present the matter as if the draft did not exist, does not exist at all.

It may be said that silence is not criticism. But that is not true. The method of hushing up as a special form of ignoring things is also a form of criticism. It is true it is a silly and ridiculous form, but it is a form of criticism nevertheless. (General laughter, applause.)

But the hushing-up method didn't work out well. They were ultimately compelled to open the valve and tell the world that, deplorable though it may be, the draft Constitution of the U.S. S.R. does exist and not only exists but is beginning to exert a

pernicious influence on people's minds.

Nor could it be otherwise for, after all, some kind of public opinion does exist in the world. Readers, living people, exist, who want to know the truth about facts and who cannot possibly be kept in the clutches of deception for long. You cannot get very far with deception.

NOT AN EMPTY PROMISE

The second group of critics admit that a draft of the Constitution is really in existence but consider the present draft of no great interest because it is really not a draft but blank sheets of paper, empty promises intended as a maneuver to deceive people.

They add that the U.S.S.R. is unable to produce a better draft because the U.S.S.R. is not a state, and is nothing more than a geographical concept (laughter). And since it is not a state its

Constitution cannot be a real constitution.

Strange as it may appear, a typical representative of this group of critics is the German semi-official Deutsche Diplomatische Politische Korrespondenz. This journal says outright that the draft of the Soviet Constitution is an empty promise, a deception, a "Potemkin village". Without hesitation, it declares that the U.S.S.R. is not a state and that the Soviet Union, precisely defined, is nothing else but a geographical concept (general laughter), that the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. cannot, therefore, be recognized as a genuine constitution.

What can be said about such critics (if they can be so styled)? In one of his tales, the great Russian writer Schedrin presents the type of an obstinate fool and bureaucrat, very narrow-minded and thick-headed, but extremely self-assured and zealous.

After this bureaucrat had restored "peace and order" in a region "entrusted" to him by exterminating thousands of its inhabitants and burning scores of towns, he looked around on the horizon and caught sight of America, then a little-known land, where it appeared there were certain liberties which bewilder people and where the state is administered by different methods. Catching sight of America, the bureaucrat flew into a rage: "What country was that? Where did it come from? What right had it to be there?"

THE BUREAUCRAT'S ORDER

Of course, it had been accidentally discovered several centuries ago and it could not be closed up again so that not a smell of it remained. And desiring that end, the bureaucrat wrote an order: "Close up America!" (Laughter.)

It seems to me that the gentlemen of the Deutsche Diplomatische Korrespondenz and Schedrin's bureaucrat are as like as two peas in a pod. The U.S.S.R. has long been the eyesore of these gentlemen. For nineteen years the U.S.S.R. has been standing like a beacon inspiring the working class of the whole world with the spirit of emancipation and rousing the fury of the enemies of the working class. And it turns out that this U.S.S.R. not only exists and is not only growing but is even flourishing; and it is not only flourishing but is even composing a new constitution, the draft of which excites the minds of the oppressed classes and imbues them with new hope. (Applause.)

How, after this, can this German semi-official organ keep its temper? What country is that? they howl. What right has it to be there? And even if it was discovered in October, 1917, why can't it be shut up again so that not a smell of it remains? And having shouted that from the housetops, they decided: that as a state the U.S.S.R. does not exist, that the U.S.S.R. is nothing but a geographical concept. (Laughter.)

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Stupid though Schedrin's bureaucrat was when he wrote his order: "Shut up America!" he nevertheless revealed some elements of understanding reality, for immediately afterwards he said to himself: "But methinks this does not depend on me." (Roars of laughter and applause.)

I do not know whether the gentlemen of the German semiofficial organ will have sense enough to understand that they can talk, of course, of shutting up this or that state on paper but that, speaking seriously, it does not depend on them. (Laughter

and loud applause.)

As for the allegation that the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. is an empty promise, a Potemkin village, I would like to refer to a number of established facts which speak for themselves.

FACTS, NOT PROMISES

In 1917 the peoples of the U.S.S.R. overthrew the bourgeoisie and established a dictatorship of the proletariat, Soviet power.

This is a fact and not a promise.

Then the Soviet power liquidated the landlord class and transferred to the peasants more than 370,000,000 acres of land formerly owned by the landlords, the government and the monasteries, in addition to lands which were already in the possession of the peasants.

This is a fact and not a promise.

Then the Soviet power expropriated the capitalist class, took from them the banks, factories, railways and other implements and means of production, and declared these socialist property, and put the best members of the working class at the head of these enterprises.

This is a fact and not a promise. (Prolonged applause.)

And then after organizing industry and agriculture on new, socialist lines, with a new technical basis, Soviet power brought about such a state of affairs that now agriculture in the U.S.S.R. produces one and a half times more than in pre-war times, industry produces seven times more than pre-war, and the national income has increased fourfold compared to pre-war.

All of these are facts and not promises. (Prolonged applause.)

The Soviet power abolished unemployment, carried into life the right to work, the right to rest and leisure, and the right to education, ensured better material and cultural conditions for workers, peasants and intellectuals, ensured the introduction of universal, direct and equal suffrage with secret ballot for citizens:

All of these are facts and not promises. (Prolonged applause.)

Finally, the U.S.S.R. produced a draft of the new Constitution which is not a promise but is a record and legislative enactment of these universally known facts, a record and legislative enactment of what has already been achieved and won.

The question arises: What does all the chatter of the gentlemen of the German semi-official organ about "Potemkin villages" amount to, if not that they set themselves the aim to conceal from people the truth about the U.S.S.R., to mislead the people, to deceive them?

SKEPTICAL CRITICS

Such are the facts. And facts, they say, are stubborn things.

Gentlemen of the German semi-official organ may say: "All the worse for facts." (Laughter.) But then we can answer in the words of the well-known Russian proverb: "Laws aren't written for fools." (Laughter.)

A third group of critics are not averse to admitting that the draft Constitution has certain merits. They consider it a good thing. But, you see, they doubt very much whether some of its postulates could be put into practice, for they are convinced these postulates are altogether impracticable and must remain on paper.

These critics are skeptics, to put it mildly. These skeptical

people are to be found in all countries.

It must be said that this is not the first time we meet them. When the Bolsheviks took power in 1917, the skeptics said: "Bolsheviks aren't bad fellows, perhaps, but they won't succeed with power. They will fail." It turned out, however, that the skeptics failed and not the Bolsheviks.

During the civil war and foreign intervention, this skeptical group said: "Soviet power isn't bad, of course, but Denikin and Kolchak plus foreigners will no doubt overcome them." In reality, it turned out, however, that here too the skeptics miscalculated.

When the Soviet power published the First Five-Year Plan skeptics again came on the scene, saying: "The Five-Year plan is a good thing, of course, but hardly feasible. It must be expected that the Bolsheviks will fail with the Five-Year Plan."

Facts, however, proved that the skeptics were unlucky once

again; the Five-Year Plan was carried out in four years.

The same thing must be said about the draft of the new Constitution and the criticism of it by the skeptics. It was enough to publish the draft for this group of critics to appear on the scene with their gloomy skepticism and their doubts whether certain postulates of the Constitution were practicable. There is no reason to doubt that on this occasion also the skeptics will fail, will fail today as they failed more than once in the past.

WORKING CLASS DICTATORSHIP

A fourth group of critics attacking the draft of the new Constitution describe it as "a swing to the Right," as a renunciation of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", a "liquidation of the Bolshevik regime".

"The Bolsheviks have swung to the Right, it is a fact", say the

various voices.

Certain Polish and some American newspapers display par-

ticular zeal in this respect.

What can be said about these critics, if they can be so styled? If they interpret the expansion of the base of the dictatorship of the working class and the transformation of the dictatorship into a more flexible and consequently more powerful system of state guidance of society, not as a strengthening of the dictatorship of the working class, but as its weakening, or even its renunciation, then it is permissible to ask: "Do these gentlemen know at all what the dictatorship of the working class is?"

If they describe the legislative enactment of the victory of socialism, the legislative enactment of the success of industrialization, collectivization and democratization as "a swing to the Right", then it is permissible to ask: "Do these gentlemen know at all the difference between Left and Right?" (Laughter and applause.)

There can be no doubt that these gentlemen have become completely muddled by their criticism of the draft Constitution, and, being muddled, they confused the Right with the Left.

ABOUT POLITICAL PARTIES

Finally, there is one more group of critics. Whereas the preceding group charges that the draft Constitution renounced the dictatorship of the working class, this group, on the contrary, charges that the draft makes no change in the existing position of the U.S.S.R.; that it leaves the dictatorship of the working class intact, does not provide for freedom of political parties, and preserves the present leading position of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. And, at the same time, this group of critics believes that the absence of freedom for parties in the U.S.S.R. is an indication of the violation of the fundamental principles of democracy.

I must admit the draft of the new Constitution really does leave in force the regime of the dictatorship of the working class, and also leaves unchanged the present leading position of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. (Loud applause.)

PARTY AND CLASS

If our venerable critics regard this as a shortcoming of the draft Constitution, this can only be regretted. We Bolsheviks, however, consider this as a merit of the draft Constitution. (Loud applause.) As for freedom for various political parties, we here adhere to somewhat different views.

The party is part of the class, its vanguard section. Several parties and consequently freedom of parties can only exist in a society where antagonistic classes exist whose interests are hostile and irreconcilable, where there are capitalists and workers, landlords and peasants, kulaks and poor peasants.

But in the U.S.S.R. there are no longer such classes as capitalists, landlords, kulaks, etc. In the U.S.S.R. there are only two classes, workers and peasants, whose interests not only are not antagonistic but, on the contrary, amicable. Consequently there are no grounds for the existence of several parties, and therefore for the existence of freedom of such parties in the U.S.S.R. There are grounds for only one party, the Communist Party, in the U.S.S.R. Only one party can exist, the Communist Party, which boldly defends the interests of the workers and peasants to the very end. And there can hardly be any doubt about the fact that it defends the interests of these classes. (Loud applause.)

They talk about democracy. But what is democracy? Democracy in capitalist countries where there are antagonistic classes is in the last analysis the democracy for the strong, democracy for the propertied minority. Democracy in the U.S.S.R., on the contrary, is democracy for all. But from this it follows that the principles of democracy are violated not by the draft of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. but by the bourgeois constitutions.

That is why I think that the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. is the only thoroughly democratic constitution in the world.

And that is how matters stand with regard to the bourgeois criticism of the draft of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R.

Amendments to the Constitution

LET us pass now to the question of amendments and addenda to the draft Constitution proposed by citizens during the nationwide discussion.

As is well known, the nationwide discussion of the draft Constitution produced a considerable number of amendments and addenda.

They were all published in the Soviet press. In view of the great variety of the amendments and their varying value they should, in my opinion, be divided into three categories:

The distinguishing feature of the amendments in the first category is that they do not deal with the questions of the Constitution but with questions affecting current legislative work of the future legislative bodies.

But the Constitution is not a code of laws. The Constitution is fundamental law and only fundamental law. Therefore, amendments and addenda of this type have no direct relation to the Constitution, and should, in my opinion, be presented to the

future legislative bodies of the country.

The second category belongs to amendments and addenda, the object of which is to introduce into the Constitution elements of historical references or elements of declarations concerning what Soviet power has not yet achieved and what it should achieve in the future.

I think that such amendments and addenda should be put aside as having no direct relation to the Constitution.

The Constitution is a record and legislative enactment of those gains which have already been achieved and secured.

Finally, the third category includes amendments and addenda which have direct relation to the draft Constitution.

ON THE RIGHT OF SECESSION

A considerable number of the amendments in this category apply to wording. They can, therefore, be transferred to the editorial commission of this Congress which, I think, the Congress will set up and instruct to determine the final text of the new Constitution. As for other amendments of the third category they have more material importance, and I think a few words must be said here concerning them.

An amendment to Article 17 of the draft proposes entirely to delete from the draft Constitution Article 17 which speaks of retaining the right for Union Republics freely to secede from the U.S.S.R.

I think this proposal is wrong and therefore should not be adopted by the Congress. The U.S.S.R. is a voluntary union of Union Republics enjoying equal rights. To delete from the Constitution the article stipulating the right freely to secede from the U.S.S.R. would mean violating the voluntary character of this union. Can we agree to this? I think we cannot, and should not agree to this.

It is said there is not a single republic of the U.S.S.R. that would want to secede from it, and therefore Article 17 has no practical significance. It is true, of course, that not a single republic would want to secede from the U.S.S.R. But this does not prove that we should not record in the Constitution the right of the Union Republics freely to secede from the U.S.S.R.

ON AUTONOMOUS REPUBLICS

There is also the proposal to supplement Chapter Two of the draft Constitution with a new article to the effect that autonomous Soviet Republics on reaching the necessary level of economic and cultural development may be transformed into Union Soviet Socialist Republics. I think this proposal should not be adopted.

What are the indications which justify the transfer of autonomous republics to the category of Union republics? There are three such indications. In the first place, a republic must be a border republic which is not surrounded on all sides by other territories of the U.S.S.R.; for if a Union republic has the right to secede from the U.S.S.R., it is necessary that the republic which becomes a Union republic be able logically and realistically to raise the question of its secession from the U.S.S.R. But such a question can only be raised by a republic which borders on some foreign state and consequently is not surrounded on all sides by U.S.S.R. territory.

Secondly, it is necessary that the nationality which gives a Soviet republic its name must represent a more or less compact majority of that republic. Take, for example, the Crimean Autonomous Republic. This is a border republic, but the Crimean Tartars are not the majority of that republic; on the contrary, they are a minority. Hence, it would be wrong and illogical to transfer the Crimean republic to the category of a Union republic.

In the third place, such a republic must not be very small in

population; it ought to have a population of, say, not less but rather more than one million at least. Why? Because it would be wrong to assume that a small Soviet republic, with a small population and a small army, could count on maintaining its independent state existence. There can hardly be any doubt that the imperialist beasts of prey would quickly lay hands on it.

I think that unless these three objective indications were in evidence, it would be wrong at the present historical moment to raise the question of transferring one autonomous republic or another to the category of Union republics.

ON THE COUNCIL OF NATIONALITIES

[In regard to the proposal to abolish the Council of Nationakities, Stalin said:]

I think this amendment is also wrong. A single chamber system would be better than a dual chamber system if the U.S.S.R. were a single national state. But the U.S.S.R., as is well known, is a multi-national state. In addition to their common interests, the nationalities of the U.S.S.R. have their special and specific interests connected with their specific national features.

Can these specific interests be ignored? No, they cannot. Is it necessary to have a special supreme body that would reflect precisely-these specific interests? Undoubtedly, it is necessary. There cannot be any doubt that without such a body it would be impossible to administer such a multi-national state as the U.S.S.R. The second chamber, the Council of Nationalities, is such a body.

Further amendments to the draft Constitution are proposed calling for an equal number of members in both chambers. I think this proposal could be accepted. In my opinion it offers obvious political advantages, for it emphasizes the equality of the chambers.

Then there are addenda which propose that the members of the Council of Nationalities be elected by direct elections as in the case of the Council of the Union. I think that this proposal could also be accepted. It is true that it might give rise to certain technical inconveniences during elections, but, on the other hand, it will result in a great political gain as it will raise the prestige of the Council of Nationalities.

SINGLE LEGISLATIVE POWER

Then follows an amendment to Article 40, proposing that the Presidium of the Supreme Council be invested with the right to issue provisional legislative acts.

I think this amendment is wrong and should not be adopted by the Congress. We must at last put an end to the situation in which not one body, but a number of bodies legislate. Such a situation contradicts the principle of stability of laws now more than ever. The legislative power of the U.S.S.R. must be exercised by one single body, the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R.

An amendment is further proposed to Article 48 of the draft Constitution, demanding that the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. be elected not by the Supreme Council, but by the whole population of the country.

I think this amendment is wrong because it is not in conformity with the spirit of our Constitution. According to the system of our Constitution, the U.S.S.R. should not have an individual President elected by the whole population equally with the Supreme Council, who might stand out against the Supreme Council. The Presidency in the U.S.S.R. is vested in a group—the Presidium of the Supreme Council, including the chairman of the Presidium, elected not by the whole population, but by the Supreme Council and accountable to the Supreme Council. The experience of history shows that such a structure of supreme bodies is most democratic and ensures the country against undesirable contingencies.

Then follows an amendment to the same Article 48, which requires that the number of vice-presidents of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. be increased to eleven in order that there may be one vice-president from each Union Republic. I think that this amendment could be adopted because it

is an improvement and can only enhance the prestige of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R.

Then follows an amendment to Article 77. It calls for the organization of a new All-Union People's Commissariat, the People's Commissariat of Industry Working for Defense. I think this amendment should also be adopted (applause), for the time is ripe to single out our defense industry and give it a proper Commissariat. I think this could only serve to improve the defense of our country.

Then follows an amendment to Article 124 of the draft Constitution, calling for prohibition of the performance of religious rites. I think this amendment should be rejected as not being in conformity with the spirit of our Constitution.

Finally, there is one more amendment—to Article 135 of the draft Constitution. It proposes that ministers of religion, former White Guards, and all persons of pre-revolutionary times who are not engaged in socially useful labor should be deprived of suffrage, or, at all events, that suffrage for this category of persons be restricted to the right to vote but no hold office.

I think this amendment should also be rejected. The Soviet power did not deprive the non-working and exploiting elements of suffrage for all time, but only temporarily, up to a certain time. There was a time when these elements waged open war against the people and resisted Soviet laws. The Soviet law depriving them of suffrage represented the reply of the Soviet power to this resistance.

Not a little time has passed since then. During the past period we have brought about a state of affairs in which the exploiting classes have been annihilated and the Soviet power has become an invincible force. Hasn't the time arrived to revise this law? I think the time has arrived.

A WEAPON AGAINST FASCISM

It is said that this is dangerous because elements hostile to the Soviet power, former White Guards, kulaks, priests, etc., may succeed in creeping into the supreme organs of the country. But properly speaking, what is there to be afraid of? If you are afraid of wolves, don't go into the woods. (Laughter, loud applause.)

In the first place, not all the former kulaks, White Guards or priests are hostile to the Soviet power. Secondly, if people here and there do elect hostile persons, it will show that our propaganda work was organized very badly indeed and that we fully deserve such a disgrace.

If, however, our propaganda work proceeds in a Bolshevik manner, the people won't allow hostile persons to enter their supreme organs. That means that we must work and not snivel. (Loud applause.) We must work and not wait until everything is presented ready-made by administrative orders. As far back as 1919 Lenin said that the time is not far distant when the Soviet power would consider it useful to introduce universal suffrage without any limitations.

Judging by the results of the nationwide discussion which lasted nearly five months, we can assume that the draft Constitution will be approved by the present Congress. (Loud applause rising to an ovation. All the people in the hall rise to their feet.)

Within a few days the Soviet Union will have a new socialist Constitution based on the principles of extensive socialist democracy. This will be a historical document describing simply and concisely, almost in the style of minutes, the facts of the victory of socialism in the U.S.S.R. together with the facts of the emancipation of the toilers of the U.S.S.R. from capitalist slavery, and the facts of the victory in the U.S.S.R. of extended democracy which is consistent to the utmost.

It will be a document testifying to the fact that what millions of honest people in capitalist countries have dreamed and continue to dream of has already been achieved in the U.S.S.R. (Loud applause.) It will be a document proving that what has been achieved in the U.S.S.R. can be achieved in other countries. (Loud applause.) But from this it follows that the international

significance of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. can hardly be overestimated.

At the present time, when the foul wave of fascism is besmirching the Socialist movement of the working class and trampling in the mud the democratic strivings of the best people of the civilized world, the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. will be an indictment of fascism, testifying that socialism and democracy are invincible. (Applause.) The new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. will be a moral aid and real assistance to all those who today are fighting fascist barbarism. (Stormy applause.)

Of still greater significance is the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. for the peoples of the U.S.S.R. While for the peoples of the capitalist countries the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. will have the significance of a program of action, for the peoples of the U.S.S.R. it has the significance of being a summary of their struggle, a summary of their victories on the front of the eman-

cipation of mankind.

As a result of the path of struggle and privation which has been traversed, it is a pleasure and a joy to have our Constitution that describes the fruits of our victories. It is a pleasure and a joy to know what our people fought for and how they achieved this world historic victory. It is a pleasure and a joy to know that the blood which our people shed so profusely was not shed in vain and that it has produced results. (*Prolonged applause*.)

It arms our working class, our peasantry and our working intelligentsia spiritually. It calls forth and raises higher the sense of legitimate pride. It strengthens our confidence in our own power and mobilizes us for fresh struggles in order to win new

victories for communism.

[Stormy ovation. Everyone in the hall rises with loud cheers and cries of "Hurrah, long live Comrade Stalin!" The Congress stands and sings the "Internationale". After the singing, the cheering is resumed with cries of "Long live our leader, Comrade Stalin!"]

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