Lenin and Social Progress

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DRAWING HIS MATERIAL from the storehouse of history, the writer Stefan Zweig composed an enchanting tale about the " luminous hours " in the story of mankind, when great men were vouchsafed special illumination or inspiration, or took action of decisive importance for the further history of the human race. Judged by the extent and profundity of the influence it has exerted on the fate of mankind, the life of Vladimir Ilitch Ulyanov (Lenin) is one long series of such decisive moments. His name is familiar to countless millions of people. His teachings may be rejected; they cannot be ignored. The arguments to which his name, ideas and work have given rise have gone on unceasingly—as is evident with the approach of the celebrations which will be held to mark the hundredth anniversary of his birth on 22 April 1970.

Lenin continues to live on in his ideas, as put into practice by generations of his disciples. The corpus of theory left by him remains at the centre of the twentieth century's ideological contentions. Lenin, in fact, occupies a unique place among the social thinkers of mankind.

From time immemorial, the world's profoundest minds had been exercised by the search for some way to bring about a happy society. They were able to offer nothing but dreams—however brilliant—utopias or prophecy. The first thinker to offer a scientific forecast of the future, based on an exhaustive scrutiny of the facts, and to accompany it with illuminating theoretical reflections—the first man to provide a convincing account of the laws by which contemporary society is governed—was Karl Marx.

Lenin considered himself a disciple of Marx, and like him devoted his life to the search for ways and means whereby mankind might be freed from poverty, oppression and suffering. He brought the whole force of a powerful intellect to bear on the task of " conceiving the social revolution as a living phenomenon ", as he put it. His intellectual legacy

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is a demonstration—on philosophical, economic and sociological grounds—that mankind can, and indeed must, take the socialist road. Hundreds of millions of people in all parts of the world have found, in his ideas, an answer to the burning questions of the age. A whole revolutionary epoch is bound up with Lenin and his activities. It is distinguished from all others in that socialism became a matter of action instead of a question of theory. It was Lenin, the great thinker and orator, who led the process whereby socialism was translated from the language of ideas into the language of mass action.

We may agree or not with Lenin's conception of socialism. But nobody can deny the close connection between his theories and his policies—policies still being developed by the Party and State he created. The very fact that these ideas are no less active today in changing the lives of millions of people, and constitute a mine which is still being quarried, gives Lenin's ideological legacy a place all its own in the world's treasury of social thinking.

Lenin's vision of social progress is inseparably bound up with an assertion of the need for a socialist reconstruction of society. Recently, for example, there has been a tendency to judge a country's general progress by industrial and technological criteria. The technical level is, of course, an important factor. But a country highly developed technically may not necessarily be equally highly developed in its social institutions. This criterion by itself, therefore, provides no answer to the questions —for what purposes, and in whose interests, are advanced technological procedures being used? To what extent does modern technology ensure the full employment of the labour force available?

Very frequently, too, output is taken as the principal yardstick for measuring social progress. But here again, output alone, and even output per head, does not tell us how the national wealth is apportioned, and what needs—and whose needs—are met.

Finally, it is sometimes argued that social progress is to be assessed by the degree to which people abide by the law. But once again we may legitimately ask: by what procedures and by whom has legislation been enacted, and in whose interest is it that the law should be observed?

Lenin devoted an entire lifetime to promoting the interests of the working class because he considered it the principal actor in history, by reference to which alone social progress can be assessed. What counts above all is the position actually occupied by the working masses within society.

After the successful October Revolution the world was divided into two camps, each with its own system for regulating the relations between its members. For historical reasons the system of private enterprise continued in force for the time being in the countries most highly developed industrially. But in other, relatively less developed countries the masses seized the reins of power, did away with exploitation, and deliberately set

about the task of regulating social relationships by means of planning of production. It may be that to some extent they were less free of the constraints of Nature but, in a social sense, they were infinitely freer—a convincing proof that progress cannot be measured by the criterion of technological advance alone. The need for a more fundamental explanation became apparent. It finally became clear that the degree of technical development attained was no more than a measure of the mastery of natural forces achieved by the society concerned; it could not be used to assess social development. Hence such a criterion can be, at best, an indirect indication of the freedom enjoyed by the individual.

We are entitled to talk of individual freedom only when man is not only free from the thrall of natural law but has achieved mastery over the laws governing the development of society. He is free only when he has tamed the forces which mould society; only when society exists first and foremost to promote the physical, cultural, aesthetic, moral and political development of its individual members.

Lenin's preoccupation with social progress is borne out by the way in which he launched—and having launched, defended—the principle of peaceful co-existence of countries with different social systems. This is no accident. A moment's thought shows that a steady extension of the rights and privileges enjoyed by the workers, and improvement of both labour legislation and social policy can best come about in the favourable atmosphere of peaceful co-existence, when countries develop their relations in practical matters. Lenin stated a number of times that there was no reason why a socialist country should not have unlimited relations on practical matters with the capitalist countries.

Lenin's conception of peaceful co-existence presupposes competition between two very different systems in economic, social, scientific and cultural affairs, and on a struggle between ideas. Lenin attached high value to a policy of peace as an essential prerequisite of all-round progress (and, we might add, of fruitful activity by the ILO)—a very different thing from policies of armaments and war, leading to the uprooting of whole peoples, the destruction of millions of human lives, the collapse of production, economic bankruptcy, and moral and cultural decay.

A country's social policy, its social and labour legislation, provide an excellent pointer to the degree of social progress achieved. In the last resort, social progress is to be measured by the extent to which the workers themselves can profit from the fruits of their labour. But in judging how far they can profit today from the fruits of earlier labour, we cannot leave out of account the general policy of the State. For example, if the government of country A devotes a proportion of the country's wealth to waging war on the people of country B, it will be depriving its own people of some of the fruits of their labour. No matter how wealthy country A may be, its social policy cannot be considered progressive.

Lenin on new possibilities of social progress

From the end of the eighteenth century, it became natural to regard radical social changes in terms of the French Revolution, and the Russian Bolsheviks, beginning with Lenin, were also for a time regarded as Jacobin extremists.

However, the tradition thus established lost its point with the October Revolution of 1917. " I am becoming more and more convinced ", wrote the poet Alexander Bloch, a contemporary of Lenin, in 1920, " that the comparison is inadequate. To judge today's events by this criterion is to show excessive caution, even pusillanimity. It is becoming ever more apparent that the times we are living in represent, not an epoch of transition, but a new era."

This was the judgment of an eye-witness, and history has more than confirmed its justice. The Russian Revolution was incomparably more far-reaching and radical than any of its predecessors.

During the early years of the Soviet régime, the social system introduced by Lenin was looked on by many people (even by many who called themselves socialists) as the bastard child, as it were, of history. The reason usually given was that industrially, socially and culturally, Russia lagged behind Europe and North America, and hence was not yet ripe for socialism. There were at least two flaws in this analysis.

Firstly, it made no allowance for the fact that in the twentieth century, among countries unequally developed, the working class and the working-class movement in any particular country may well be ripe for socialism, even though capitalism in the country concerned may be at a relatively early stage of development.

At the beginning of the century Russia was, economically speaking, infinitely less advanced than England, Germany, or the United States. Nevertheless, as the historian Mikhail Pokrovsky—a party-comrade of Lenin—pointed out, the concentration of the working class (and hence the scope for organisation of the working class in huge enterprises) was three times greater in Russia than in Germany, and was not less than in any country of Europe, and perhaps of the world.

The critics of Lenin's experiment were also seriously at fault in that, although circumstances had radically changed, they were still obsessed with the lessons learnt from other revolutions.

Even today it is sometimes asserted that the materialist interpretation of history has somehow been controverted by the October Revolution, indeed by Lenin himself. It is argued that economics does not determine politics but that politics may have a decisive influence on economics. This mistaken argument is the result of transposing what was characteristic of all previous social systems, including the capitalist one, to a period of transition from capitalism to socialism.

Any pre-socialist social system was of course the product of economic developments within the country concerned. When the feudal system was collapsing, the bourgeoisie's potentialities for revolution, in England, America and France, remained confined to those particular countries.

In today's capitalist society there is a world-wide market, and the position is vastly different. Today, as Lenin put it [1], developed capitalism has entangled countries in a closely woven mesh of trade relations, with the result that the antagonisms between international capital and the international working-class movement are more evident than ever before.

Experience shows that in this day and age the possibilities of revolution must be assessed with an eye not only to the condition of the economy in any particular country but also to the forces of production as they exist throughout the world. Whence Lenin's classic conclusion: " To the extent that large-scale world-wide industry exists, a direct transition to socialism is undoubtedly possible. " [2]

It is obvious that in any country in which this transition to socialism is taking place there must be a certain minimum level of technological development, a certain minimum as regards production of goods, market organisation and communications. But, as the experience acquired by our own and other lands has shown, a country can catch up *after* the revolution.

Thanks to Lenin, a purely local, national approach to such matters is, it is now recognised, much too narrow. The tendency today, in assessing the possibility of revolution, is to consider conditions in the capitalist system as it exists throughout the world. The approach, in other words, is an international one.

Taking the world as a whole, economics determines politics, though in the local conditions of a particular country politics may for a time take precedence and direct and speed up economic development. By showing that this is now the only tenable view, Lenin powerfully contributed to our understanding of the way in which social progress is achieved.

Why should this be so? This question can best be answered by quoting the example of countries which have rid themselves of their dependence on colonialist Powers and moved from pre-capitalism to socialism without any intermediate capitalist phase.

Is it conceivable, for example, that before the October Revolution a country as backward as Mongolia used to be could have set out to organise itself on socialist lines, relying entirely on its own resources? The answer, clearly, is no. Mongolia was one or two stages behind its neighbours, or the equivalent of several hundred years of social development.

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[1] V. I. Lenin: *Polnoe sobranie sochineny* [Complete works] (Moscow), Vol. 25, p. 264.

[2] Ibid., Vol. 11, p. 310.

We now know that this tremendous advance was accomplished thanks to the association of Mongolia (a member of the ILO) with the Soviet Union. It is impossible to calculate the vast savings in human lives, effort, physical and mental resources, compared with what would have been needed for the stormy passage through feudalism and capitalism.

Clearly, the social relations obtaining within the country itself were far less important in the process than international relations of a new kind. The two factors inter-acted and were combined in a unique way to render a direct transition to socialism possible. This had never occurred before. Other peoples have remained arrested at an early stage of their development (or have been held back by colonialism); the gulf separating them from socialism cannot, under capitalism, be closed. It can, however, be bridged by a system of economic, political, ideological and cultural links with the developed socialist countries, and by making use of the experience acquired by them in their own transition to socialism.

Lenin showed in theory, and the October Revolution bore him out, that any country, no matter what degree of economic development it may have attained, can make the change to the new socialist order. In some countries the relationship between the forces of progress and reaction, and the position occupied by the particular country in the clash between the two world-wide ideologies, have turned out to be the decisive factors determining when the transition is to be made, and not the country's own productive forces (the latter's role could temporarily be taken over by more highly developed international productive forces). This was a revolution not only for the contemporary world but also in the normal tempo of social progress.

This was, in a sense, a reorganisation of history. A clearer idea of what it involved can be obtained from Lenin's note *On our Revolution.*

His political adversary Sukhanov held the view that a socialist revolution in Russia was premature, and that it ran counter to the laws of social development. Lenin counters this by denouncing a " slavish imitation of the past ", and the fear " of departing from the example set by Germany ".

" You say ", he writes, " that a certain level of civilisation is needed for the building of socialism. Well and good. But what was there to prevent us from laying the foundations, by expelling the landowners and Russian capitalists, for example, and then beginning the move towards socialism? Where is it laid down that such changes in the normal processes of history are inadmissible or impossible? " [1]

Abandoning the language of polemics for something more orthodox, we get the following picture.

The " normal " process of historical development (this is more or less how Sukhanov's teacher Kautsky saw it) began with the development

[1] *Polnoe sobranie sochineny*, op. cit., Vol. 45, p. 381.

of the forces of production (comprising the labour force, tools and equipment, and techniques). Then there came changes in technology and in the organisation of production, as well as in the division of labour between people. Thereafter, as occurred in the change-over from communal production to a slave-owning society, from this to feudalism, and from feudalism to capitalism, there were changes in the ownership of the means of production. Lastly, these changes were crowned by an ideological and political revolution.

Did the October Revolution indicate any departure from the customary scheme of things? No, if we consider merely the *over-all* development of the forces of production, both national and international. Yes, most emphatically, if we consider the situation in each of the countries beginning to build a socialist society.

In what did the change consist? Firstly, there was a change in the part played by the State. The government of a socialist country did not—as had occurred everywhere else—merely set the seal of approval on changes which had already taken place in the machinery of production; it itself initiated these changes, and helped to carry them through.

Secondly, although there were in Russia industries which technically, and because of the way they were organised, were ripe for reorganisation on socialist lines, there existed at the same time a host of one-man undertakings which had nothing in common with socialism, either technically, or organisationally, or by the nature of their economic relations. As a result of these factors the role of the new form of ownership changed. Thanks to systematic support from a government of peasants and workers, and from the more advanced industries already nationalised, this new form of ownership could emerge in areas where the technical prerequisites for its existence did not, strictly speaking, exist.

This is what happened, for example, during the early years of agricultural collectivisation in the Soviet Union, when the primitive means of production (there were no others) owned by individual peasants were nationalised. Here the form of ownership came first, creating a state of affairs propitious to the emergence of productive forces. Since then, this has also been the experience of many other countries.

According to the normal scheme of things, the phase of public ownership would represent the third stage in development; it thus, in fact, became the first. By its very nature, public ownership, once introduced in the countryside, led to a development of its own technical and organisational foundations.

This foreshortening, as it were, of the processes of development had one immediate consequence: a multiplication of the possible forms which progressive social development might take. In practical, political terms this implied a widening of the sphere in which the revolutionary party and the revolutionary masses were free to take the initiative.

Lenin's solution to the problem of social progress can be understood only if we bear in mind what, in modern jargon, we might call the " optimisation of social systems ". This expression can, of course, be differently interpreted. For example, modern capitalism, based as it is on a mixture of state ownership and monopoly control, is likewise subject to a process of optimisation for the sake of bigger profits. Socialism, on the other hand, claiming as it does to represent an alternative to capitalism, is designed to ensure satisfaction of the scientifically determined interests of the main mass of working people.

Lenin taught that the aim of socialism—its very essence—lay in the transfer of the means of production to national ownership, and in the replacement of capitalism by an economy planned in the national interest. It was incorrect, he felt, to say (as did the Russian social democrat George Plekhanov) that socialism was the planned organisation of society's production process to meet the needs both of society as a whole and of its individual members. Lenin considered this too narrow a definition since trusts might be claimed to provide such an organisation. " It would be better to say: '. . . on behalf of society as a whole ' (since this both covers the idea of planning and indicates the agency responsible for doing it), and not only for the satisfaction of the needs of the members of society but also to ensure the maximum possible welfare, and the free all-round development, of each and every member." [1]

Lenin, and those who were to succeed him, thought of socialism as a social system that seeks deliberately to improve itself with a view to meeting the workers' growing needs, both material and spiritual, in accordance with the laws governing social development, and making use of the resources available to society.

It would be vain to expect the passage from capitalism to this form of social organisation to be automatic, or to imagine that it can be brought about by a lengthy process of reform. The barest acquaintance with socialism will suffice to show that it presupposes a *qualitative* change in the aims of production, a different organisation of the economy and of all other aspects of the life of society. Most important of all, it presupposes a society organised to serve the interests of another class of person; no longer the private owner, whose interests must necessarily clash with those of the persons he employs, but the worker, who has acceded to co-ownership of the property of society. To bring about such a state of affairs demands nothing less than a *revolution*. It betokens a change in the protagonists involved.

The masses, and no longer a privileged caste, now occupy the forefront of the stage. It will be for each country to choose its own road (and the road may be hard) to this consummation.

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[1] *Polnoe sobranie sochineny*, op. cit., Vol. 6, p. 232.

Lenin, in fact, found a way of enlisting the scattered energies of many millions of individuals, hitherto condemned by capitalism to a dreary, unsatisfying round of mindless toil, in the cause of social progress. His concept of *socialist competition* is the natural fruit of a state of affairs, brought about by socialism, in which use can be made of the energies, freely made available for political, social and other purposes, by free workers, themselves imbued with a high sense of their obligation to work, individually and collectively, for the welfare of society at large.

" The workers and peasants ", wrote Lenin in the early months of the Revolution, " are still ' timid '; they have not yet become accustomed to the idea that *they* are now *the ruling class*; they are not yet resolute enough. The Revolution could not *at one stroke* instil these qualities into millions and millions of people who all their lives had been compelled by want and hunger to work under the threat of the stick. But the Revolution of October 1917 is strong, viable and invincible because it *awakens* these qualities, breaks down the old impediments, removes the worn-out shackles, and leads the working people on to the road of the *independent* creation of a new life. " [1]

Despite every obstacle put in its way by opponents, socialism has been progressing for half a century—a convincing proof of the extraordinary capacity for progress inherent in the working masses. Theirs are the hands which are now guiding the ship of State in the world's second Great Power, and in many other countries besides, resolutely towards the future. And their strength is increasing.

How Lenin's ideas are embodied in Soviet social policies

From Lenin's idea of progress arose an entire policy and programme of social and labour legislation. He himself took the view that the Soviet régime had no more important task than to put this programme into effect.

The October Revolution marked a very clear divide between a state of affairs in which the working class was powerless, and one in which it assumed governmental authority. Before revolution, the working class has to fight for its rights, step by step and inch by inch, wringing concessions from the opposing class forces. Clearly, it will be a very long time before anything is achieved by such methods, and even then, the results will be extraordinarily circumscribed. After revolution, possession of the reins of power at once enables the workers to affirm their rights and to buttress them with all the safeguards which governmental authority can offer.

Lenin derived the basic contents of his party's social policy from the historic mission of socialism: " Let us make all people workers." This

[1] Lenin: *Selected works in three volumes* (in English) (Moscow, 1967), Vol. II, p. 514.

was proclaimed in article 18 of the first Soviet Constitution (1918) in the form: " He who does not work, neither shall he eat." Lenin considered that the most effective way of implementing this principle was to establish control by the workers themselves over the measurement of labour and consumption. He used to say that such a system was more effective than all the laws passed by the French Revolutionary Convention and its guillotine.[1]

By decreeing that work was an obligation for all, the Soviet social legislation created circumstances in which social parasitism and unemployment could be eradicated and the right to work guaranteed.

At the same time, on Lenin's initiative, a series of measures were drafted on the improvement of working conditions, starting on the fifth day of the October Revolution: an eight-hour working day was introduced by decree on 11 November 1917.[2] Ten years later, a manifesto issued by the Central Executive Committee of the USSR announced that a seven-hour day was to be introduced, and this was done between 1928 and 1931.

Simultaneously, the Soviet system of social security was developed. This included a system of unemployment allowances (maintained until the social evil of unemployment was eradicated early in the 1930s), benefits for temporary incapacity, pensions for invalidity, old age, paid holidays, etc. In this fashion, the country of the Soviets became, in the early days of the Revolution, the most progressive country in the world in regard to the principles proclaimed and the changes brought about in social and labour relations. This exerted a powerful influence on the struggle of the working class and on social legislation in many other countries.

These social innovations have to be seen against an international background which between the two world wars was becoming steadily more sombre. With the growing menace of invasion, every hour was precious, and in 1940 the 48-hour week was reintroduced. Plans to develop and improve the social security system had to wait.

It should not be forgotten that out of the half-century during which the Soviet régime has been in existence, some twenty years have been spent either fighting the wars imposed on us, or in ridding ourselves of their disastrous consequences. Nevertheless, the gross social product in 1968 was 36 times larger than it had been in 1913, while the national income was 40 times as great. The indices for 1960 are 7.1 and 7.5 times larger, respectively, than those for 1940.[3] As production and efficiency increase, so can the Soviet Union concentrate its efforts on the improvement of social and labour relations.

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[1] *Polnoe sobranie sochineny*, op. cit., Vol. 34, p. 310.

[2] *Sobranie Uzakoneny RSFSR*, 1917, p. 10.

[3] *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1968 g. Statistichesky ezhegodnik* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 43-44.

With the remarkable growth of the economy and national income, it became possible to improve the economic and social condition of the workers and to carry out a whole programme of social action, which has been especially intensive in the last decade and a half.

Thus, a law was adopted to reduce hours of work to six and seven a day, and the five-day working week was introduced. As a result, the average length of the standard working week for adult workers in industry is 40.7 hours. At present, in fact, the working week of wage earners and salaried employees is 39.4 hours.[1] It may not be amiss to recall in this connection that, of the forty ILO Conventions ratified by the Soviet Government, the first was that on the 40-hour working week. Since 1956 the system of hiring and wages, collective agreements and settlement of labour disputes has been continuously improved. By legislation enacted in 1956 and 1964, the pensions system was overhauled.

The decisions taken by the September 1967 plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR were of special significance, being later developed in a series of laws and ordinances dealing with the improvement of living conditions. An ordinance of the Central Committee of the Party and the Council of Ministers, and decrees issued by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet provide for increased minimum wage and salary rates, reduction of taxes, the introduction of supplementary pay and advantages for those working in certain parts of the country, and an improved pensions system.

In social matters, it is government policy to bring about a general improvement in the standard of living of all working people, with special reference to conditions in the key industries and key areas of the country. The minimum wage has again been raised, with the result that the ratio between the minimum and the average wage improved from 1: 2.9 in 1958 to 1: 1.8 in 1968.[2] Scheduled wage rates for machine operators in the metal and engineering industries were increased by 15 per cent, while wage increases have also been granted in those branches of the textile industry in which work processes have been intensified. Special action has been taken to make geographical mobility of labour more effective and to make life easier for workers moving to new areas (e.g. by increasing the wage differential for persons working in the Far North and Far East).

Lenin considered the health of the nation as an index of the growth of the national wealth. This concern for the health of the nation is still very much alive today, as is eloquently shown by the basic principles for health legislation adopted by the Seventh Session of the Supreme Soviet in December 1969. This new law lays down the following principle in article 1: " Soviet legislation regulates social relations in the field of health protection for the population with a view to ensuring the

[1] *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1968 g.*, op. cit., p. 557.

[2] *Problemy trudovogo prava* (Moscow, 1968), p. 17.

harmonious development of physical and mental powers, good health, a high level of fitness for work and a long active working life for citizens; the prevention of disease and lowering of morbidity, further reduction of invalidity and a lowering of mortality rates; elimination of factors and conditions which harmfully affect the health of the citizens."[1] Provision is made for a comprehensive system of standards regulating the organisation and responsibilities of health bodies, medical and pharmaceutical activities, public health measures, and so forth.

Lenin used to say that the position of women in a society was the clearest indication of its social progress. In this spirit the leaders of the country are taking action to ease working and living conditions for women. The principle of equal pay for equal work is in operation, and heavy jobs on which women must not be employed have been officially listed. Maternity leave with pay has been increased to 112 days (56 before and 56 after childbirth). Part V of the law on basic principles for health legislation is entirely devoted to the protection which the State extends to mothers and children.

A third congress of collective farmers in Moscow towards the end of November 1969 adopted resolutions that represent a new step forward in improving remuneration, working conditions, leisure time and social security for tens of millions of people. The Model Statutes for Collective Farms, adopted by the congress, lay down that the cash proceeds from the sale of produce or from other sources are to be used by the farm " first and foremost, for paying the collective farmers for their work . . . " (article 38).[2]

Part VIII of these Statutes provides for a nation-wide social security system for collective farmers. Article 39 reads: " In accordance with the legislation in force, members of collective farms shall receive old-age, invalidity and survivors' pensions, while women shall in addition be eligible for pregnancy and confinement grants—the cost to be borne by a centralised Union Collective Farmers' Social Security Fund." Article 40 further lays down that this centralised fund, constituted by contributions from all agricultural co-operatives, shall provide allowances for members during temporary incapacity, free passes for sanatoria and rest homes, and other services.[2]

If it be acknowledged that social policy must be designed first and foremost for the benefit of the worker and for the satisfaction of his needs, then a point at which enough will have been done can never be reached, since needs (of all kinds, and not for material things alone), once satisfied, give rise to fresh, more complex and varied requirements. But at any particular time further progress up the ladder will be brought to a stop by the resources available, themselves the fruit of the economic

[1] *Pravda*, 20 Dec. 1969.

[2] Ibid., 30 Nov. 1969.

development the country has managed to achieve. The national income is the only source from which money for the above aims can be derived. Hence the need to speed up the rate of increase of the national income by developing the material and technical resources of society.

The truth of this thesis that increased expenditure on social needs depends on the growth of national income can be seen from the figures of total " personal consumption of the population of the USSR " (i.e. total of personal incomes) and of advantages for the working people provided from the resources available for " social consumption " (free medical care, free education and training for improving qualifications, allowances, pensions, study grants, paid regular leave, free passes or reduced rates for sanatoria and rest homes, and so on).

TOTAL PERSONAL CONSUMPTION AND TOTAL SOCIAL BENEFITS IN THE USSR, 1960 AND 1965-68

(Thousand million roubles)

Item	1960	1965	1966	1967	1968
Personal consumption:					
Total	93.9	124.9	133.2	144.0	155.1
Social payments and services:					
Total	27.3	41.9	45.5	49.4	55.1
Per head of population *(roubles)*	127	182	195	209	232

Source: *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1968 g. Statistichesky ezhegodnik* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 571-572.

The rapid increase that has taken place since 1960 in the amounts for social benefits is striking. The Chairman of the Gosplan observed at the Seventh Session of the Soviet parliament that the total figure had risen to 59,000 million roubles in 1969, and would exceed 63,000 million roubles in 1970.[1]

In Lenin's view the prospects of growth in the national wealth, gross product and national income mainly depend on a steady increase in productivity. The whole subsequent development of the Soviet economy shows how true this is. Soviet economists have calculated that the national income rose from 4,170 million roubles in 1917 to 238,000 million in 1967, of which 227,600 million was attributable to growth in productivity.[2]

[1] *Pravda*, 17 Dec. 1969.

[2] *Voprosy ekonomiki*, 1969, No. 11, p. 71.

All in all, there has been an annual growth in productivity over the last fifty years of at least 6-7 per cent.[1]

But how is this high rate to be maintained or even increased? Lenin considered that the key to this problem was to be found in the application of technical and scientific innovations to the production process and in improving the workers' education and skills. Experience has proved his forecast correct. The well-known Soviet labour economist, Strumilin, has calculated that of the over-all growth of productivity of social labour (227,600 million roubles from 1917 to 1967), 43,400 million roubles came from investments in new techniques, and 184,200 million were attributable to achievements in science and education.

It is thus no accident that the Government spends a large proportion of its resources in the field of education. In so doing, it is acting in accordance with the law discovered by Marx, namely that priority must be given to developing the means of production, a law which (unexpectedly for some Marxists) imperiously demands concentration of effort on those areas of the national economy which form the worker's personality. Here the principal aim of economic policy is at one with the basic aim of social policy: to develop a new kind of wage or salary earner, with a comprehensive grounding in modern scientific knowledge, as a means of stimulating increased productivity, rendering working conditions more humane, and furthering human social and cultural development.

Lenin's social programme can be summed up by saying that the worker is at once the artisan and the criterion of progress.

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[1] *Voprosy ekonomiki*, 1969, No. 11, p. 72.