

The Rise in Living Standards in Bulgaria: Some Problems

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Introduction

EVER SINCE THE DAY man first used the simplest tool, innumerable changes have been brought about in the functions and purposes of labour. This evolution in the means of creating material and spiritual wealth has been dictated by man's inherent desire to satisfy ever-growing needs.

The process could be described as a continuous "intellectualisation" of labour. This is revealed in a variety of forms and, in the first place, by the setting of increasingly ambitious targets: the proportion of working time devoted to the satisfaction of physical needs is in constant diminution, while that devoted to the satisfaction of spiritual needs is steadily expanding. A second change is the lightening and reduction of the physical effort involved in labour, and the corresponding increase in the importance of intellectual activity. A third change is the constant improvement of occupational skills. Whether these changes are brought about by evolution or revolution, they are possible only where extensive changes take place in the skill content of work as well. And by improving the methods, the inputs and the goals of his work, man also improves himself, both as an element in the over-all production system and as a member of society.

The degree of intellectualisation of work, under these various forms, represents for any given period only one aspect of the standard of living, the other being determined by the extent and structure of public consumption. That is why, in our opinion, the concept of "living standards" must include not only a whole range of material goods but also all those spiritual assets benefiting either society as a whole or its individual members. The extent to which these various advantages are accessible and available is itself dependent on the public production of goods and services, the organisation of the production process (production relations) and the distribution of income.

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Sources of income

In Bulgaria, where production and production relations are organised on socialist lines, the population derives its income from two principal sources: work and public consumption funds.¹ These two sources are used to encourage production and demographic growth, to regulate social relations, to raise the standard of education, the level of skill, culture, etc.

The major part of incomes deriving from the contribution to production is accounted for by remuneration for work done, which can be expressed in terms either of money wages or of real wages: both depend on the level of productivity and its rate of growth. Between 1952 and 1971, money wages in Bulgaria rose by 235 per cent and real wages by 282.9 per cent. Over the same period, and taking into account changes in the cost of living, the per capita share of public consumption funds increased by 781.2 per cent, so that the money incomes of the population rose by 299.2 per cent and real incomes by 312.8 per cent. In calculating the latter, earned income (which in 1971 constituted 77.6 per cent of total income), pre-distribution of public consumption funds (making up the remaining 22.4 per cent) and price indices are all taken into consideration. It must also be noted that this rise in incomes is occurring in conditions where approximately 83 per cent of the active population² are employed, a figure which corresponds to about half the total population.

Consumption

The other aspect of the standard of living is consumption, i.e. the satisfaction of various requirements such as housing, food, material needs other than food, durable consumers' goods, education, culture, leisure, etc. The continuing rise in money incomes and policy measures aimed at lowering prices, ensure a steady increase in consumption. Between 1952 and 1971, the living space available per person increased by 11.3 per cent. Consumption of basic foodstuffs also registered a marked increase: 333.3 per cent for meat, 530.0 per cent for meat-based products, 614.7 per cent for milk, 333.0 per cent for dairy produce, 187.4 per cent for fresh

¹ Public consumption funds, which are financed by general state funds and by contributions from undertakings and co-operatives, are used to provide benefits and services to the public free of charge or on advantageous terms. They cover expenditure on the maintenance and education of the population below working age, vocational training, maintenance of persons unfit for work, health protection and other social services, leisure and cultural amenities, etc.

² This refers to working-age population, which in Bulgarian legislation means men aged 16 to 60 and women aged 16 to 55. The 17 per cent who are not employed are mainly schoolchildren, students, young people doing their military service, housewives, etc.

CONSUMPTION: SELECTED DATA

| Product | Con- sumption in 1970 | Target for | | |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|------|------|
| | | 1975 | 1980 | 1990 |
| <i>Food products (kilograms per person)</i> | | | | |
| Meat and meat-based products | 41.4 | 55.0 | 75 | 80 |
| Milk and dairy produce | 152.1 | 196.0 | 250 | 260 |
| Vegetables | 88.9 | 136.0 | 160 | 180 |
| <i>Non-food products (metres per person)</i> | | | | |
| Cotton textiles | 22.2 | 24.7 | 33 | 36 |
| Woollen textiles | 3.8 | 4.7 | 6 | 7 |
| Cotton knitwear | 7.1 | 8.5 | 12 | 14 |
| Woollen knitwear | 1.4 | 1.8 | 3 | 5 |
| Shoes (pairs per person) | 1.7 | 2.1 | 3 | 4 |
| <i>Durable goods (per 100 families)</i> | | | | |
| Radio receivers | 100.8 | 104.0 | 110 | 130 |
| Television sets | 42.0 | 53.0 | 53 | 105 |
| Refrigerators | 29.0 | 59.0 | 90 | 100 |
| Washing machines | 50.0 | 50.0 | 60 | 70 |
| Automobiles | 6.0 | 13.5 | 30 | 40 |

Source: Report submitted to the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party in December 1972 by T. Zhivkov.

vegetables, 222.5 per cent for fresh fruit, etc. The same changes have occurred in the consumption of non-food products: an increase of 200 per cent in sales of cotton textiles, 375.0 per cent in woollen textiles, 566.7 per cent in shoes, and 355.0 per cent in cotton knitwear, etc. There has also been a marked rise in the consumption of durable goods produced to meet domestic and cultural requirements. For example, between 1956 and 1971, sales of radio receivers increased by 106.3 per cent, television sets by 615.8 per cent, refrigerators by 385.4 per cent and automobiles by 440.0 per cent.

The above table contains data on the consumption of various products in 1970, as well as consumption targets—worked out by several scientific institutes—which should be achieved between now and 1990.

Particular attention is devoted to health and the education of young people. Between 1952 and 1971, the number of children attending kindergartens increased by 358.5 per cent. Compulsory education now lasts eight years and in the school year 1971/72 there were 4,807 educational establishments with 82,635 teachers and 1,545,483 pupils. These included 27 higher educational establishments, with 7,622 teachers and 93,711

students, or 312.6 per cent more students than in 1952. As regards public health and medical care, Bulgaria has also achieved remarkable results: in 1971 there were twice as many hospital beds (65,463 beds in 201 hospitals) as in 1952, while the medical staff working in them had increased by 254.6 per cent. The number of doctors and dentists per 10,000 population had also doubled.¹ The sums allocated from the public consumption funds for public health services, social insurance and physical education were ten times greater in 1971 than in 1952; those allocated for culture and the arts had more than trebled. A few figures will suffice to illustrate the results achieved: in 1971 there were 3,158 cinemas giving approximately 1 million performances, with an average attendance of 113 persons; there were 23,100 theatre seats and 5,800,000 attendances were recorded; finally, 10,791 libraries offered the public a total of almost 50 million volumes, equivalent to 57,757 books per 10,000 people.

National economic trends

Thus, within a short space of time, the Bulgarian people have witnessed a very perceptible rise in their standard of living. Their living conditions have improved and they eat and dress better. We consider, however, that there is still a great deal to be done. But if, as a number of indicators show, we are still lagging behind the most advanced countries, there are of course objective reasons for this: only a short time ago Bulgaria was a backward agricultural country, and the destruction caused by the Second World War did nothing to help its economic development. That is why since 1944 our people have concentrated their efforts on building a modern and highly efficient economic system, which has enabled Bulgaria to transform itself into a developed country combining agriculture with industry. In 1971 industry accounted for 56 per cent of the national income. Whereas in 1948, out of every 100 persons in the economically active population, 82 were engaged in agriculture, 8 in industry and 10 in other sectors, the corresponding figures today are 31, 36 and 33.

Since 1948 the total national income (10,411.1 million leva in 1971) has increased by 626 per cent and the national income per head by 522 per cent. These rates of growth are among the fastest in the world and are to be explained by the high rate of accumulation. Thus, the proportion of national income devoted to accumulation over the period 1956-71 varies between 13 and 31 per cent, with an annual average of 29.3 per cent.

¹ At the end of 1971, Bulgaria had a population of rather more than 8½ million and in that year there were 16,181 doctors, 3,131 dentists, 2,463 pharmacists, 26,381 nurses, 5,012 medical assistants and 6,016 midwives. These figures do not include staff employed by the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior, the engineer corps, retired persons with private practices or those not holding public posts, nor do they include persons working abroad.

Fixing of targets

As long as the material and technological foundations of the national economy still had to be laid, it was perfectly natural to set modest and limited targets for raising the standard of living of the population. Policy in this field can be based only on the real capacity of the economy and this depends on the existing material and technological groundwork and on labour productivity. The moment the problem of living standards could be tackled, it was attacked on all fronts at once, in an attempt to satisfy material, intellectual, cultural and other needs simultaneously. This method yielded positive results but it is no longer sufficient for today's requirements. Given the present economic potential of Bulgaria, the question should be looked at from a different angle. First of all we have altered the method of measuring the standard of living. Until recently we gauged results by comparing them with the distant or more recent past. Nowadays we use scientific, rational guidelines covering food, housing, clothing, household equipment, cultural and spiritual needs. As these targets are attained the gap between the standard of living in Bulgaria and that of the most developed countries will diminish. It goes without saying that we have no illusions about achieving this overnight, but the necessary plans have already been drawn up and we have the means to carry them out.

Without abandoning the simultaneous approach, we have now begun systematic application of the method known as "target programming". With our foundations solidly laid we are harnessing production to serve our policy of continuous and rapid improvements in the standard of living. The allocation of resources is calculated according to the selected consumption targets for different years (see table), and their use in the production of goods and services planned. The elaboration of an optimal consumption-production model is, in our opinion, the prerequisite for any effective action to satisfy the needs of the population at a given stage of socio-economic development, and to attain a particular standard of living. In this model, consumption determines the production targets but is itself dependent on the level of production achieved by the economy. That is why we are endeavouring to establish a highly efficient and well-balanced production system that will enable the ever-growing material and spiritual needs of the population, as measured by scientifically established standards, to be met both quantitatively and qualitatively.

According to our long-term forecasts and production plans for the period up to 1990, the national income will grow by an average of between 9 and 10 per cent a year, which will mean that in 1990 it will be five times higher than in 1971. According to the same forecasts, about 68 per cent of the national income in 1990 will come from industry, 8 per cent from agriculture, 6.4 per cent from construction, 6.7 per cent from transport and communications and 10.7 per cent from trade.

Labour productivity

The largest proportion of this increase will be accounted for by the continuous and rapid improvement of labour productivity. An average annual growth rate of around 10.2 per cent is forecast for persons engaged in the production of material goods, which will make productivity in 1990 five times higher than in 1970. The growth rate should average about 10.7 per cent in industry, 7.4 per cent in agriculture, 7.2 per cent in construction, 7.8 per cent in transport and communications and 10.7 per cent in trade.

Principal production factors

To ensure economic expansion at the rate planned, it has been necessary to provide for corresponding increases in the principal factors of production. Thus, the proportion of total investments that is earmarked for reconstruction and modernisation will rise by about 50-52 per cent, its absolute value doubling compared with past levels. Capital outlay per worker employed in goods production will increase each year by an average of 8 per cent. Meanwhile, it is intended to push much further ahead with mechanisation and automation, as well as with the improvement of techniques, thanks to greater use of electronics and cybernetics. Great importance is also attached to all aspects of manpower training. Thus, the average length of schooling for production workers will be between 11 and 14 years in 1990, as against seven years in 1971. For manual workers alone, the level of skills measured in terms of remuneration (the wage grids being based on skills) will rise by approximately 14 per cent.

Better organisation of production, labour and management will also play an important part in increasing national income and productivity, by enabling a more rational use to be made of work time. Whereas in 1971 the productive work time of manual workers was about 60 per cent per shift, it should rise to about 78 per cent in 1990. Material incentives will also have a vital contribution to make to economic growth. The average annual wage will increase each year by 5.7 per cent.

As regards management, national economic policy and the development and effective use of the key production factors, we shall draw on our own experience but also on that of countries which are further advanced in this field, irrespective of their social and economic system. The study of foreign practice, the adoption of those elements which suit our country, and the development of international specialisation, division of labour and co-operation, are all of overriding importance if we are to make our economy more efficient and substantially increase the reserves that will make further improvements in living standards possible.

Income problems

In addition to questions relating to the expansion and improvement of production, a whole series of problems concerning income (both remuneration for work done and the distribution of public consumption funds) have to be resolved.

Two factors of considerable importance in the equitable regulation of wages are the amount of the minimum wage and the methods used to fix it. In Bulgaria it is determined according to a scientifically calculated "vital minimum", comprising a number of specified goods and services.¹ As the population's demands increase and the conditions for satisfying them are achieved, the minimum wage also increases: during 1973 alone it rose from 65 to 80 leva.

The methods and forms of remuneration are constantly being perfected. We are doing our utmost to establish the fairest possible ratio between basic rates and total earnings, between minimum wages and average wages, and between the wages of different categories of workers (i.e. those in different industries, with different levels of education, skills, etc.). For example, the ratio of the minimum wage to the average wage in 1970 was 1: 1.7 and it is estimated that in 1973 it was 1: 1.75. We consider that a desirable target would be 1: 2 in conditions where the minimum wage suffices for more than the bare essentials. As for the basic wage, it averaged 65 per cent of total earnings in 1971, and it is estimated that this proportion will increase in the near future to between 75 and 80 per cent.

The basic wage of manual workers is established on the basis of wage grids and that of white-collar workers on the basis of remuneration scales. At the moment, there are no fewer than 26 different grids and 41 scales which complicates their application and diminishes their effectiveness in regulating wages fairly. In fact we intend to revise them in the very near future so as to ensure a more uniform approach to the evaluation of different types of work according to their complexity, difficulty and the conditions under which they are performed. We believe that this can be achieved by establishing a single grid and a single scale valid for all industries and all types of work. This would permit an equitable differentiation of workers' remuneration, which would be determined solely on the basis of their personal aptitudes and specific merits. For higher qualifications, greater responsibilities and more difficult tasks the basic wage would still be higher, whatever the industry and regardless of

¹ This is based on the present pattern of consumption, which is as follows: food, 46.8 per cent of expenditure; alcoholic beverages, 3.3 per cent; cigarettes and tobacco, 2.2 per cent; clothing and footwear, 13.9 per cent; housing, 8.8 per cent; furnishings, 3.6 per cent; social and cultural activities, 3.8 per cent; hygiene, 1.3 per cent; postal services and transport, 2.7 per cent; taxes and dues, 4.7 per cent; other, 8.9 per cent.

whether the job in question were on the production or management side. As it is necessary to establish a more rational link between the basic wage and the quantity and quality of work done, a new and more flexible method of job classification will have to be developed and implemented. That is why we have reshaped, in accordance with modern principles appropriate to present needs, the rules for determining rates of pay on the basis of skill, for manual workers, and, for white-collar workers, the job description laying down their duties and the requirements as regards education and skills.

Another important question, which we have not yet resolved, is that of finding a way of linking the minimum wage and the average wage, on the one hand, with the level of labour productivity, on the other. The efficiency of production depends, after all, on the output of labour, whether "live" or "accumulated",¹ i.e. on labour productivity. We therefore believe that productivity should be stimulated by increasing not just the basic wage but total earnings. The determination of the optimal composition of these earnings has a decisive part to play in the search for greater production efficiency. Not so long ago it was thought that the best incentive for this purpose was to increase the proportion of total remuneration paid on top of the rates fixed by the wage grids and scales, but this has not been borne out in practice. The forms of bonuses we were using resulted in a tendency to lower the production targets and economic indicators included in the plans, which enabled workers to obtain higher wage supplements in comparison with the basic wage. This naturally resulted in its turn in an unsatisfactory relationship between productivity increases and total earnings. Nowadays, we are convinced that the basic wage should be given a much more important role to play in stimulating higher and more efficient production, as reflected by the optimisation of the economic indicators used in the plan. This does not mean that the system of bonuses for overfulfilment of targets has to be abandoned. The essential thing is that there should be a stronger link between the size of the bonus and the work performed, whether by individual workers or by whole production units. The basic system of remuneration for Bulgarian workers will be time rates established in accordance with scientific and technical labour standards covering all categories of workers. Piece rates will be retained only where the productive contribution of each worker can be precisely calculated and his efficiency measured.

Pensioners' living standards

In Bulgaria, the ratio of pensioners to employed persons is high; in 1971 the proportion was 35.8 per cent. Where a country's standard of

¹ The expression "live labour" is used to describe the direct action of labour power and "accumulated labour" to describe labour embodied in producers' and consumers' goods.

living is concerned, the total volume of resources allotted for pensions, as well as the amount of each individual pension, assume great importance. We are endeavouring to establish an optimal relationship between the average pension and the average wage, but in practice this is far from easy. Whereas in 1960 the average pension for a person with the number of years' service required for full entitlement was 53.3 per cent of the average wage, in 1971 it was 44.3 per cent. Responsibility for this widening gap lies mainly with the constant rise in the average wage (the average annual rate of increase for the period 1960-71 was 4.9 per cent) whereas the average pension rose rather more slowly (3.9 per cent per annum over the same period). To reduce this disparity, which causes the standard of living of pensioners to stagnate at the level obtaining at the time of their retirement, we shall shortly be providing for the adjustment of pensions already in payment. This will be done through an indexing system which takes into account the increase in the average wage and the price index; in other words changes occurring in the real wage of the working population will be reflected in retirement pensions.

Measures to promote the welfare of families and children

A nation's standard of living depends also to a large extent on the attention devoted to the growth and education of the next generation. It is anticipated that before long society will assume full responsibility for this and that the expenses involved will be covered by public consumption funds.

If an undertaking of this scale is to be successful, it is first and foremost essential to proceed gradually, within the limits imposed by economic growth, and to fix realistic targets for each stage of the operation. We have accordingly drawn up a long-term programme which we are putting into effect in stages. In 1975, the grant for the birth of a first child will be increased from 20 to 100 leva, from 200 to 250 leva for the second and to 500 leva for the third. In 1973 paid maternity leave¹ was increased by six months for the first child, seven months for the second child and eight months for the third. Remuneration during these additional months is at the minimum wage rate, the first part of the leave being paid at the rate the woman was earning in the month before she stopped work.

Starting from the 1973/74 school year, books and other educational materials are being supplied free of charge to all pupils in the first four grades. All secondary school pupils will shortly benefit in the same way. At present, children who attend the lower grade of secondary schools are

¹ Before 1973 this was 120 days for the first child, 150 for the second, 180 for the third and 120 for the fourth and each subsequent child, 45 of these days normally being taken prior to the confinement.

given free hot lunches; these will gradually be made available to all pupils. The value and number of student grants will increase from year to year. In 1971, 31 per cent of students undergoing higher education were in receipt of grants. It should also be recalled that, for many years now, secondary school and higher education has been completely free.

Reduction of working hours

Another question which occupies an important place in Bulgarian policy for raising the standard of living is the reduction of working hours, a process which is both natural and planned and keeps pace with economic development. Obviously it must not operate to the detriment of the national economy or of the workers; only thus will it have positive social and economic effects and help to improve the standard of living. It is therefore essential to proceed methodically and to observe certain principles.

In the first place, the reduction of working hours should not entail a reduction in the volume of goods and services produced or an alteration in their relative availability, variety or quality; in other words, the planned proportions and quantities must be adhered to.

In the second place, it is essential that the reduction of working hours should not be accompanied by an increase in the labour force, that is to say, by the recruitment of more workers than were employed under the previous 46-hour six-day week.¹ This follows from the basic law laid down by Marx on time-saving, which governs social development. If the shortening of the working week were to be offset by the employment of more manpower, goods production alone in 1975, for example, would require an additional 170,000 workers (manual and white-collar workers, engineers, technical staff, etc.). Going by the current reckoning of manpower resources it can be stated categorically that these new requirements could not be met. Consequently, the only secure economic basis which can be relied on to offset this reduction is an increase in productivity.

If in the period 1971-75 national income is to reach its planned level, the hourly productivity of labour will have to increase by an average of approximately 9 per cent per annum. In addition, with a five-day working week of 42½ hours planned for all workers in 1975, except those employed in agriculture, education and public health services, the additional increase needed to offset the reduction of working hours in goods production industries averages some 5 per cent. Oversimplifying, this

¹ This was the normal working week in 1971. However, approximately 10 per cent of workers (not including co-operative farm workers and some other categories) already had a five-day week of 42½ hours.

means that when an enterprise introduces the shorter working week it will have to increase its productivity by some 14 per cent. The precise size of the additional productivity increase needed in each industry and its subdivisions is determined on the basis of the difference between the average length of the working day and shift at present and under the new system.

This additional increase in productivity is important for two socio-economic reasons. Firstly, as already mentioned, the volume of production and the level and pattern of consumption must be maintained. Secondly, the consumption capacity of workers must be guaranteed and this depends on their total earnings. And it is only when "live" labour-saving is secured through increased productivity that it is possible to ensure the same salary for 42½ hours' work as for the former six-day week of 46 hours.

Under the current economic system, when the "live" labour contribution is reduced a saving is also made in "accumulated" labour, resulting in a lowering of production costs and an increase in the profit margin. Because the system of remuneration is a composite of several factors, a share of these savings can be redistributed through wage funds and supplementary material incentive funds, which should make it possible to increase the average wage of all workers. Naturally, if this possibility is to become a reality, nothing should be allowed to obstruct the additional increase in productivity and bring about a rise in production costs. The prerequisite for the transition to shorter working hours and a five-day week is that each economic unit should achieve its planned targets as regards production costs and should fulfil its budgetary obligations.

Results so far obtained in this field confirm what has just been said. At present some 40 per cent of the economically active population (excluding agriculture, education and public health) work a five-day week of 42½ hours. This proportion is expected to rise substantially in 1974, while in 1975, as already mentioned, all Bulgarian workers, except in the three categories noted above, will work this number of hours. Preparatory work for this transition will be carried out in stages: an inventory will be made of the reserves available for planned requirements, programmes drawn up for the use of the reserves, and measures adopted to ensure greater productive efficiency. The transition to a shorter working week will be made only when the economic unit concerned is capable of achieving its targets while at the same time guaranteeing the protection of the workers' interests and those of society as a whole. As the level of productivity rises so will the working time be reduced, and it is anticipated that a 40-hour week will be achieved by around 1980. We do not believe, however, that a working week of less than 35 hours is a desirable target: subsequent improvements in productivity will therefore be used to extend the duration of paid annual leave.

The level of employment

There is no aspect of the standard of living that is not directly dependent on the level of employment of the working population. As has already been noted, the employment rate is extremely high in Bulgaria, and it is thanks to this that the various programmes and measures we have adopted with a view to improving living conditions can be implemented. Some of the ways in which full employment is achieved in spite of the rate at which labour productivity is increasing will repay closer examination.

Planning

It is precisely the rapid and sustained rate of growth in production which provides the basis for full employment. Using the target programming method, we prepare a comprehensive system of forecasts, outline plans, complex programmes and econometric models and draw up the over-all long-term plan for the social and economic development of the country. Making use of certain indicators and after a thorough analytical evaluation of the level of development already achieved in various production sectors, industries and other subdivisions of the economy, as well as of the planned level of development, and a similar assessment of the volume and structure of investments, capital outlay and use of existing production capacity, and taking into account distribution according to industry, we then proceed to the planning of labour resources using the "manpower accounting" method. Drawing up these plans and ensuring their compatibility are tasks which are not made any easier by the rapid development of the national economy and the substantial changes taking place in its industrial and regional structure. However, we are managing to overcome these problems with the aid of long-term forecasting and planning.

Workers' training

The basic problems which have to be solved if the fullest possible productive employment is to be ensured are those concerning the training, retraining and living conditions of workers.

In recent years, there has been a complete reorganisation of the vocational training system in Bulgaria. The forms of training which have proved most satisfactory are the vocational schools and the secondary technical and secondary vocational schools. The first train narrowly specialised workers; the second, workers with a broader range of skills; and the third, specialists in particular highly skilled fields who will take up posts in middle management as designers, organisation technicians, etc.

Those who have completed secondary education can continue their studies at higher educational establishments.

Training, retraining and further training courses have also been introduced for mainly unskilled workers, in order to supplement their general education. This special programme is aimed at all those who, for various reasons, do not have the standard of education and skills required for their work. It provides also for the retraining of older workers which is of vital importance in view of scientific and technological progress and the changes occurring in the economic structure. Of the two methods in principal use, the first, and the most effective, is for the worker to learn another trade without interrupting his productive employment. Due account is taken of the prospects of various industries, and training and retraining are carried out according to pre-established plans. More than one new trade may be learned; this depends on the needs and capacities of the individual worker, and in choosing the new trade due account is taken of the worker's original occupation, aptitude, personal preferences, sex, age, etc. The second method involves stopping work. The duration of the retraining process in this case varies according to the complexity of the trade being learned and the knowledge and experience required of the worker, but it never exceeds six months. During this time the worker is paid wages at the same rate as in his last job prior to beginning the retraining course.

Implementation machinery

In the preceding pages an attempt has been made to give a broad outline of Bulgarian policy for raising the over-all standard of living, but naturally it has not been possible to detail all the relevant provisions included in our long-term programme.

A whole network of bodies has had to be created to implement this programme, both in the immediate and in the more distant future and as regards both practical organisation and methodology. These complex activities are overseen by the Standard of Living Committee of the Council of Ministers, which consists of senior officials. Apart from its co-ordinating and supervisory functions the Committee is the motive force for implementing the whole programme and everything hinges upon it. The actual implementation of the programme is handled by the sectoral and regional bodies of the administration's economic services, which act in accordance with the plans drawn up for the social development of enterprises. These plans cover all the main factors affecting the standard of living, including the essential conditions for raising it; they form an integral part of the over-all plans for the social and economic development of the country, its economic sectors and its enterprises and should not be dissociated from them. Their fulfilment depends on labour efficiency and the concrete results obtained; the plans benefit everybody

because they are so conceived that the interests of the individual worker merge harmoniously with those of society.

The complex programme aimed at raising the standard of living of the population, taken in conjunction with the community social development plans, provides a significant stimulus to the workers' sense of initiative; this helps to develop a spirit of competition thanks to which the technical and economic level of national activity can be raised to heights that guarantee its complete success.
