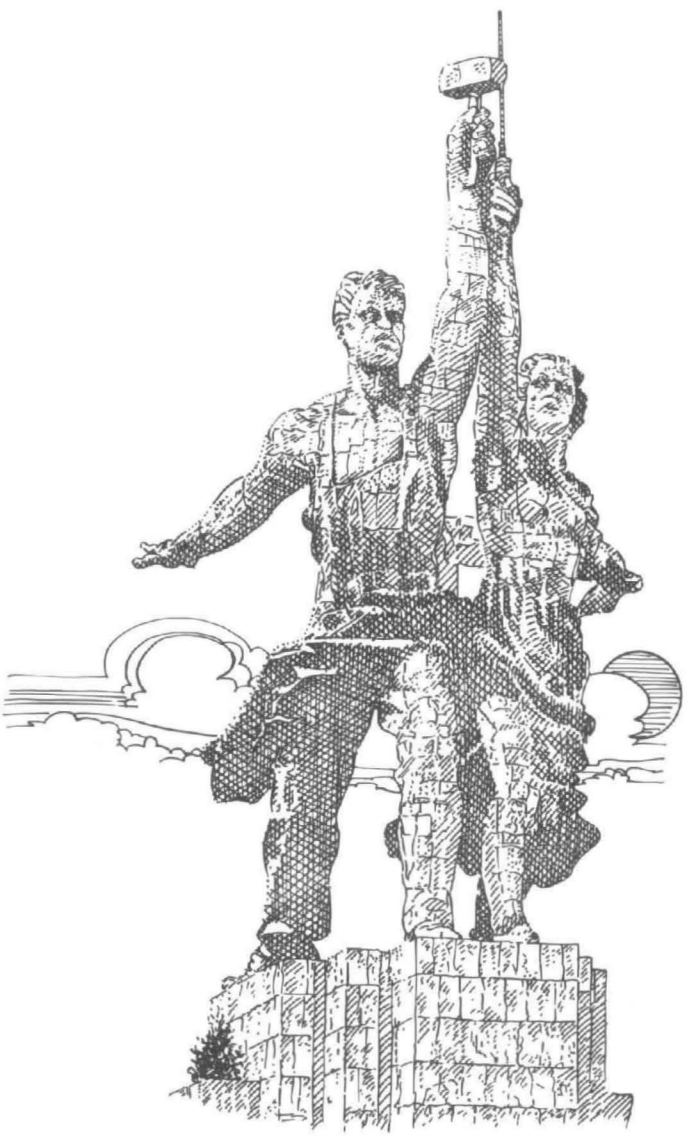
Chapter 5. Social Structure



Statue commemorating an industrial worker and a collective farmer

SINCE 1917 THE SOVIET UNION has transformed itself from a predominantly agricultural, rural, and developing-capitalist society into an industrial, urban, socialist (see Glossary) society. Its social structure developed from the imposition of a centralist, Marxist state on a geographically, ethnically, and culturally diverse population.

Western sociologists generally categorized Soviet society into four major socio-occupational groupings: the political-governmental elite and cultural and scientific intelligentsia; white-collar workers; blue-collar workers; and peasants and other agricultural workers. Soviet ideology held that Soviet society consisted solely of two nonantagonistic classes—workers and peasants. Those engaged in nonmanual labor (from bookkeepers to party functionaries) formed strata in both classes.

Social position was determined not only by occupation but also by education, party membership, place of residence, and even nationality. Membership in the ruling group, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), aided career advancement. Those who worked full time for the party received political power, special privileges, and financial benefits. Social status increased the higher one was promoted in the party, but this power was derived from position and could neither be inherited from nor be bequeathed to relatives.

Unlike in the West, private property played no role in social stratification, and income generally was a consequence of social position, not its determinant. In general, the higher the social position, the greater the pay, benefits, access to scarce goods and services, and prestige. The Soviet regime glorified manual labor and often paid higher wages to certain types of skilled laborers than to many white-collar workers, including physicians, engineers, and teachers. These professionals, however, enjoyed higher social prestige than the better-paid laborers. Considerable differences existed among the country's various social and economic groups. Soviet statistics showed that the income for many occupations was not sufficient to support a family, even if both spouses worked. These statistics on income, however, did not take into account money or benefits derived from the unofficial economy, that is, the black market in goods and services.

The social structure of the Soviet Union has shown some signs of immobility and self-perpetuation. Children of the political elite,

intelligentsia, and white-collar workers had a better chance to receive university educations than those of unskilled laborers and agricultural workers. Most children of agricultural workers began their careers without higher education and remained at the same socio-occupational level as their parents.

The largest official social organizations, such as the trade unions, youth organizations, and sports organizations, were tightly controlled by the state. Unofficial organizations, once banned, were becoming increasingly evident in the late 1980s.

Under the Soviet Constitution, women possessed equal rights with men and were granted special benefits, such as paid maternity leave for child-bearing. At the same time, women as a group were overrepresented in the lower-paid occupations and underrepresented in high positions in the economy, government, and the party. If married, they performed most of the homemaking chores in addition to their work outside the home. This overwork, coupled with crowded housing conditions, contributed to a high rate of divorce and abortion, which was higher in the European part of the country than in the Asian part.

Families in the southern and Islamic parts of the country were larger than those in the northern and non-Islamic sections. The increased size reflected the more traditional Islamic cultural norms and the inclusion of other relatives, particularly grandparents, in families.

Formation of Soviet Society

From 1861 to early 1917, the population of the Russian Empire officially consisted of six social categories: the nobility, clergy, distinguished citizens (professionals), merchants, townspeople (a catch-all term for city artisans, clerks, and workers not included in the other groups), and peasants. The intelligentsia, consisting of those who created and disseminated culture and often served as social critics, was not considered a separate class but rather, as one scholar put it, "a state of mind."

The upper level of the nobility and military officers were further hierarchically ordered according to the Table of Ranks issued by Peter the Great in 1722, which based rank on service to the tsar rather than on birth or seniority. This table continued in use, with some modifications, until abolished in 1917. The tsar was at the apex of this system, from which Jews, Muslims, and many of the smaller non-Russian nationalities were excluded.

The peasants, who were liberated in 1861 from serfdom and obligatory service on private or government lands, were at the bottom of the pre-1917 social pyramid. Before 1905 the government

required peasants to obtain permission from the local peasant community—the mir (see Glossary)—before leaving the land. Although much of the peasant migration before the Bolshevik Revolution was seasonal, some permanent migration into the cities did occur, especially during the 1890s and after 1906, when the peasants were freed from obligations to the mir. The move from village to city was naturally accompanied by the move from farm to factory. Between 1895 and 1917, the factory labor force tripled to more than 3 million as Russia began to industrialize. The urban population of Russia increased from 9 percent in 1860 to 16 percent in 1910. Traditionally, urban life in Russia had been connected with government administration; but at the turn of the century, it began to be tied to industry.

The revolutions of 1917 overturned the old social order. In that year, the new Bolshevik (see Glossary) government nationalized private estates and church lands, and it abolished class distinctions and privileges. Workers' councils (soviets—see Glossary) took over the operation of factories and were given the right to set production goals and remuneration levels. Banking was declared a state monopoly. Thus, the economic foundations of the old social order crumbled. The new ruling elite, the Bolshevik-Marxist intelligentsia, drew its support from what it called the proletariat—workers, landless peasants, and employees—while the formerly privileged—the clergy, nobility, high-ranking civil servants, and merchants—found themselves stripped of their property and even hindered in obtaining housing, education, and jobs. The Bolsheviks lifted some of the restrictions a short while later when they realized that they needed the professional knowledge and skills of some former members of the elite to operate the government and the economy. Yet the children of the formerly privileged were barred from educational and career opportunities for nearly two decades after the Bolshevik Revolution.

Vladimir I. Lenin's nationalization of the land, factories, and financial institutions destroyed the prerevolutionary social system. In turn, Joseph V. Stalin's forced collectivization of agriculture, which began in 1929, annihilated the more prosperous peasantry during the early 1930s, while his industrialization program destroyed the new elite class that had developed as a result of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP—see Glossary). Seeking political scapegoats in the 1930s, the government directed widespread purges against the technical experts operating fledgling industries. In the late 1930s, Stalin's purges also destroyed much of the military and party elite.

During the 1930s, the social system adapted to the industrializing economy. Stalin ended the official leveling of incomes in 1931,

when he announced that needed increases in production could be effected only by paying more to skilled workers and the intelligentsia. The new system provided incentives for workers and partly ended legal discrimination against some of the former privileged classes. Official discrimination against the former "exploiting classes" (nobles, priests, and capitalists) was abolished by the 1936 constitution.

Other events at that time reflected Stalin's move away from the egalitarian ideas that the regime had promoted during its first decade. In 1934 egalitarianism itself was repudiated, in 1935 military ranks were introduced, and in 1939 the Stalin Prize was created to reward favored artists. In 1940 school fees were reestablished for the final year of secondary school and for universities, and in 1943 and 1945 inheritance laws were made more favorable to inheritors.

From Stalin's death in 1953 to the late 1970s, an expanding Soviet economy continued to provide ample opportunity for career and social advancement. The state increased incomes of and benefits for the lowest-paid strata of society while providing more privileges for the elite. Beginning in the 1960s, however, access to higher education became increasingly restricted, thus impeding social advancement by this means. In the early 1980s, a stagnant economy reduced overall social mobility, a situation that highlighted differences among social groups.

In 1989 Marxism-Leninism, the official Soviet ideology, held that social classes have been historically defined by their relationship to the means of production, i.e., land and factories. The official view was that Soviet society represented "a new and distinctly different human community, free from traditional class antagonisms and contradictions." Soviet society supposedly consisted of two classes, workers and peasants, with those who engaged in nonmanual or intellectual labor forming a stratum within both (see table 17, Appendix A). These two classes were considered to be nonantagonistic because neither exploited the other and because they jointly owned the means of production.

Stratification in the Soviet Union, according to Soviet officials, was based only on merit and not on the ownership of private property. Privilege proceeded from one's position in society and not the reverse. Soviet ideology held that this stratification would disappear in the future as Soviet society progressed from socialism to communism. In contrast, capitalist society, according to Soviet ideology, was torn by class conflict between the capitalists, or those who owned the means of production, and the workers. The capitalists ruthlessly exploited the workers, who had only their

Newlyweds at the Lenin Mausoleum, Moscow
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard

labor to sell. This exploitation, Marxist-Leninists believed, created class antagonisms and inevitable conflict.

The official ideology ignored some very profound cleavages in Soviet society, and it created some that, in fact, had not existed. For example, despite overwhelming similarities in income, life-style, education, and other determinants of social position, only those employed in agricultural work on a collective farm (see Glossary) were considered to be peasants, while those employed in agriculture on a state farm (see Glossary) were called workers. Moreover, a bookkeeper on a collective farm, a schoolteacher, and an armed forces general, all of whom performed mental labor, were considered to belong to the nonmanual labor strata, often and imprecisely called the intelligentsia. This classification also failed to take into account the role political power and party membership played in social stratification within a one-party state. If under capitalism power flows from ownership, then under communism power confers the effect of ownership because political power in the Soviet Union determined who controlled collective property.

Stratification of Soviet Society

Western authorities on the Soviet Union divide Soviet society into various groupings or strata based primarily on occupation but

also on education, pay and remuneration, place of residence, nationality, party membership, life-style, and, to a lesser extent, religion. Because the state owned virtually all property, private ownership played no role in social stratification. The influence of private enterprise was negligible because of its small-scale and often tenuous nature. Political decisions, not market forces, determined who had access to resources and therefore played the predominant role in social stratification.

Socio-Occupational Groupings

Western analysts have divided Soviet society into four broad socio-occupational groupings. At the apex of this social pyramid were the elite or intelligentsia, followed by white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, and, last, agricultural workers.

The Elite

The uppermost socio-occupational group, the elite, included leading party and state officials; high-ranking military, Committee for State Security (Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti—KGB), and diplomatic personnel; directors of the largest enterprises (see Glossary) and of the largest educational, research, and medical establishments; and leading members of the cultural intelligentsia, e.g., academics, editors, writers, and artists. These groups received the most income and had access to goods and services that those lower in the social hierarchy found difficult or even impossible to obtain. Unlike Westerners, members of the Soviet elite were not allowed to amass great wealth and bequeath it to their offspring. When a member of the elite died, even luxury items such as a dacha (a country cottage) or an automobile could revert to the state.

White-Collar Workers

Soviet sociologists have grouped many of those who perform nonmanual labor into a category comparable to Western "white-collar workers." The approximately 25 million members of this group ranged from specialists who possessed high educational qualifications to administrators and clerks. The group included the majority of party and government bureaucrats, teachers, scientists, scholars, physicians, military and police officers, artists, writers, actors, and business managers. In the late 1980s, about 30 percent of white-collar workers belonged to the CPSU; the more prestigious occupations within this group had the highest percentage of CPSU members. White-collar workers on the average received higher wages and more privileges than the average Soviet worker,

although physicians and schoolteachers who were just starting out earned less than the national average for all employees.

Blue-Collar Workers and Manual Laborers

The category of blue-collar workers included those who performed manual labor in industrial enterprises as well as those on collective farms and state farms engaged in transport, construction, and other nonfarming activities. In the late 1980s, blue-collar workers and their families made up about two-thirds of the country's population.

The CPSU has always loudly proclaimed blue-collar workers to be the backbone of the state and the most honored segment of society. Although newspaper accounts and photographs glorified their labor accomplishments, blue-collar workers were masters in name only. Only 7 percent belonged to the CPSU, the ruling group, and their pay and benefits were close to the national average and considerably less than those of the elite.

Agricultural Workers

Agricultural workers, on both state farms and collective farms, formed the bottom layer of the social structure in 1989. They were the least well paid and the least educated, and they were severely underrepresented in the CPSU. Most agricultural workers performed unspecialized labor. Where specialization existed, it did so only to the extent that raising poultry or livestock demanded greater skill than growing crops. In general, mechanized agriculture benefited men more than women because men tended to operate the tractors while women continued to perform manual work.

Although all farmers cultivated state-owned farmland, in 1989 farm workers were divided into two categories. State farmers were technically employees of the state. Working with government-owned machinery and seed, they received wages from the state for their labor. In contrast, collective farmers theoretically owned their machinery and seed and shared the proceeds from the produce sold.

Other Determinants of Social Position

Social position in the Soviet Union in 1989 was determined not only by occupation but also by level of education, party membership, place of residence (urban or rural), and nationality. Education level and party affiliation were by far the most important nonoccupational determinants.

Education

Education was the chief prerequisite for social mobility, playing an important role in determining one's occupation and hence

one's position in society. Few opportunities for advancement existed for individuals who lacked formal education. In general, the person who had an incomplete secondary education, that is, left school after eight years, received only a factory apprenticeship or an unskilled job. The person who completed secondary education, that is, finished school through the eleventh year, was placed in a skilled or perhaps a low-level white-collar position, depending on the type of secondary school attended (see Institutions of Learning, ch. 6). Professional and bureaucratic positions required an even higher level of education.

Access to higher education, however, was not equal for all social groups. In general, the higher the parents' status in the social hierarchy, the better were the children's chances of entering a university. This advantage was only partially attributable to the parents' better connections and influence. Children from these families also received better primary and secondary educations, which made it more likely that they would pass difficult university entrance examinations. In addition, their parents could more easily afford tutoring for these examinations if it were needed. They could also better afford the expense of school tuition in the absence of a stipend. Because of their better educational backgrounds, the children of white-collar workers and the elite were more likely to obtain higher positions in the social structure than the offspring of agricultural and blue-collar workers. Since education was the chief means of social advancement in the Soviet Union, this unequal opportunity greatly hindered upward social mobility and tended to perpetuate the intelligentsia and political elite.

Party Membership

Membership in the CPSU for both political and nonpolitical careers was absolutely essential for advancement above a certain level in society. All of the key positions of power in the Soviet Union were subject to the *nomenklatura* (see Glossary), the list of positions over which a given party committee had the right of confirmation. Power and authority increased the higher one rose in the party, as did monetary and nonmonetary benefits. Also, party membership often brought an opportunity denied to most Soviet citizens—the right to travel abroad.

Nationality

In 1989 Russians possessed an inherent social advantage in the Soviet Union. They, and to a lesser extent other Slavs, dominated the central government, party, economy, military, and security hierarchies. Possessing a higher educational level and a higher rate of

party membership than most of the non-Russian nationalities, Russians also were overrepresented in skilled labor, white-collar, and elite positions. The Russian language was the official language of the state and the language of interethnic communication, which gave an advantage to Russians over non-Russians, who needed to master Russian as a second language for socioeconomic advancement. Non-Russians also generally possessed a lower rate of urbanization than Russians, who thus enjoyed better access to higher-paying employment and to education institutions.

Jews, as well, were overrepresented in certain areas of the arts, science, academe, and certain professions; but this predominance did not stem from an inherent advantage, as with the Russians, but rather from achievement. Unlike Russians, Jews were subject to discriminatory quotas for admission to academe and some professions and, according to one Western scholar, were excluded from foreign trade organizations.

Within the non-Russian republics and smaller administrative divisions, local ethnic hierarchies or "mafias" existed, especially in those regions where the clan system was still pervasive, such as the Caucasus and Central Asia. These patronage systems flourished during the era of Leonid I. Brezhnev, but Mikhail S. Gorbachev has attempted to weaken their economic and political power.

Intermarriage among nationalities has produced social mobility, particularly in the case of offspring, who legally must identify themselves by the nationality of either their mother or their father. In this case, upward mobility has occurred if the children have chosen the larger or more dominant nationality in the area, especially if it were Russian.

Benefits of Social Position

In the Soviet Union income and related benefits generally derived from one's social position and not the reverse. Ordinarily, the higher one's social position in the Soviet Union, the higher one's total benefits, which included not only better wages but also increased access to scarce goods and services. Access to goods and services more accurately reflected social status than cash income because social groups did not have equal access to them and because perpetual shortages of goods and services diminished the usefulness of cash earned. Other benefits, such as government subsidies for transportation, food, and housing, were not obtained by virtue of one's social status but were equally enjoyed by all. Occupational prestige appeared to be related to both income and occupation, although some professional positions, despite their higher prestige,

were worth less in wages than certain jobs requiring skilled manual labor.

Monetary Compensation

Within the general pay hierarchy, the order, going from the highest to the lowest level of pay, was as follows: the upper crust of the political and artistic elites; the professional, intellectual, and artistic intelligentsia; the most highly skilled workers; white-collar workers and the more prosperous farmers; the average workers; and, at the bottom, the average agricultural laborers and workers with few skills. The policy of wage differentiation, put into practice in the 1930s, has continued into the late 1980s. Western scholars, however, have disagreed about the exact level of such differentiation. During the 1970s, the salary ratio of the highest 10 percent of all wage earners to the lowest 10 percent has been estimated as ranging from four to one to ten to one. A leading French expert on Soviet society, Basile Kerblay, has stated that within the same enterprise the salaries of senior executives ranged from ten to fifty times that of workers. Most industries had six grades of pay, and most workers had incomes near to but not at the bottom of the pay scale (see table 18, Appendix A).

As a group, leaders in the government, party, and military received the highest pay. In February 1989, the editor of a Soviet journal admitted to a Western reporter that the top marshals and generals in the Ministry of Defense earned the highest salaries, as much as 2,000 rubles (for value of the ruble—see Glossary) per month. Gorbachev, the head of the Soviet state and the CPSU, was said to receive 1,500 rubles a month, while other Politburo members earned 1,200 to 1,500 rubles a month. Another Soviet official has acknowledged that entertainers and other artists with nationwide recognition received about 1,000 rubles a month, as did seasonal construction workers, whose work sent them to various areas of the country. Western sources have estimated that the government leaders at the republic level earned 625 rubles a month. Those receiving high incomes often were awarded extra pay in the form of a "thirteenth month" or "holiday increment."

At the lower end of the pay scale were those workers employed in what one Western sociologist called the "traditionally neglected economic areas," which not only paid lower wages but also awarded smaller bonuses and fringe benefits. In the 1980s, an estimated 7 million people worked in low-paying industrial sectors, such as light industries (textiles, clothing, and footwear) and food processing. Another 30 million workers were employed in low-paying jobs involving retail trade, food service, state farming, education, public

amenities, and health care. Those who performed unskilled supportive functions, the so-called "assistant workers" and "junior service personnel," such as janitors, watchmen, and messengers, also received low wages, as did office personnel in all sectors. And although the income of collective farmers had improved greatly since the 1960s, their average monthly income in 1986 was only 83 percent of the average wage of 195.6 rubles.

Not all individuals in positions requiring higher or specialized education were paid more than those requiring less education, even though they received greater prestige. Low-paid specialists included engineers, veterinarians, agronomists, accountants, legal advisers, translators, schoolteachers, librarians, organizers of clubs and cultural events, musicians, and even physicians. Women dominated these professions (see table 19, Appendix A). In 1988 the average monthly wage of medical personnel who had completed secondary or higher education was 160 rubles, or 82 percent of the average wage.

Lack of official statistics made it difficult to determine the number of Soviet citizens living in poverty. Until Gorbachev assumed power in 1985, Soviet officials claimed that poverty could not exist in their country, although they did admit to the problem of "underprovisioning" (*maloobespechennost'*). In the late 1980s, however, Soviet economists acknowledged that 20 percent of the population lived under the poverty threshold, which was estimated at 254 rubles a month for an urban family of four. Mervyn Matthews, a British expert on Soviet poverty, estimated that 40 percent of blue-collar workers and their dependents lived below the poverty threshold. Matthews calculated that in 1979 the poverty threshold was 95 percent of the average income of a family of four that had two parents working outside the home. Similar figures for the late 1980s were unavailable in the West. Many pensioners likewise appear to fall under the official poverty level. The 56.8 million pensioners in 1986 received an average of only 38 percent of the average wage, while pensioners from collective farms averaged only 25 percent (see Welfare, ch. 6).

The official statistics reflected income obtained from the state-controlled economy. They did not include income that was obtained legally or illegally outside of the official economy (see Nature of the National Economy, ch. 11). Unofficial income included earnings from such varied sources as private agricultural production, goods produced on official time with company resources and then sold privately, and profit realized from illegal currency exchanges. Western specialists had little information on the exact extent of this activity but acknowledged that it was widespread, especially in

Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus. However, the extent to which income derived from unofficial sources raised the per capita income of the average Soviet citizen in 1989 was undetermined.

Noncash Benefits and Access to Goods and Services

Besides wages, citizens received two types of noncash benefits. The first, artificially low prices for food, transportation, and housing, amounted to approximately 42 percent of the average salary in 1986. These subsidies and other types of transfer payments were available to all and were not awarded according to status.

Other types of noncash benefits were allotted according to social position. For example, high-ranking party and government officials received such benefits as chauffeurs, domestic staff, living quarters (size and quality dependent on status), priority tickets for entertainment and travel, special waiting rooms at public places, and passes allowing them to jump lines to make purchases. As a rule, those receiving the least pay received the fewest noncash benefits. This group included unskilled workers, lower level white-collar and service workers, farm workers, many pensioners, and the temporarily unemployed. Farm workers, who generally received the lowest pay, were able to supplement their incomes with the proceeds from their private agricultural plots.

Social position also determined access to goods and services, an important benefit in a country where, as Matthews has written, "Deprivation is a recognized but unpublicized feature of . . . life." Those in the party, military, security, and cultural elites had the right to shop at special restricted stores that required either foreign currency or so-called certificate rubles. In such stores, imported goods or goods not available in the public markets could be purchased. The average citizen, in contrast, was obligated to stand in line for hours at public markets where many goods, including clothing and foodstuffs, were either in short supply or unavailable. Some occupations, however, bestowed privileges that were not officially recognized or that offered opportunities for *blat* (see Glossary). For example, managers of businesses and business activities had higher standards of living than their positions implied because they could demand special favors in exchange for the scarce goods and services they controlled. In turn, shop personnel possessed low occupational prestige but enjoyed high, albeit unofficial and sometimes illegal, fringe benefits. In addition, some blue-collar occupations could be put into this group.

Social position also played a significant role in the allocation of living space. The perennial shortage of urban housing meant that

insufficient individual apartments existed for those who desired them. Income played only a small role in housing distribution because the state owned most of the housing and charged artificially low rents. (A small number of cooperative apartments were sold, but these were beyond the means of most people.) The elite received the most spacious and best quality housing, often as a job benefit. The elite also possessed more influential friends who could help them bypass the usually long waiting periods for apartments. The average family, in contrast, either shared an apartment with other families, using the bathroom and kitchen as common areas, or lived in a very small private apartment. A 1980 article in a prestigious Soviet journal on economics stated that about 20 percent of all urban families (53 percent in Leningrad) lived in shared apartments, although for the country as a whole this percentage was decreasing in the late 1980s. The housing situation for young unmarried, and often unskilled, workers was worse. They often could find living space only in a crowded hostel operated by the enterprise in which they worked or in the corner of a room in a shared apartment. Until they could find their own apartment, young married people often lived with one set of parents. Housing in rural areas was more spacious than that found in urban apartments, but it usually had few amenities.

Other forms of unequal access that favored those of higher social status included better holiday facilities, better medical care, and better education for children. The special schools that taught advanced languages, arts, and sciences were generally attended by the children of the privileged. Official state honors, both civilian and military, also brought benefits in the form of better travel, lodging, and holiday accommodations.

Occupational Prestige

In surveys questioning Soviet citizens about occupational prestige, professional and technical positions, especially those in science, medicine, and the arts, ranked high consistently; unskilled manual labor, agricultural labor, and sales and service jobs consistently ranked low. In general, Soviet citizens viewed the scientific professions as the most prestigious. While manual labor was glorified by the party and the press, it was not pursued and was even looked down upon. Nonmanual labor was considered cleaner, less tiring, and more prestigious. Agricultural jobs were considered less desirable than industrial jobs even in cases where the qualifications required for the job were equivalent. Urban work was considered more desirable than rural work, which was considered backbreaking, dirty, and offering few possibilities for advancement. The city

also offered more amenities than the countryside, where most of the underpaid, unskilled jobs were located.

Earnings and benefits seemed to play a key, although not exclusive, role in this social ranking. Generally, nonmanual workers received higher wages than manual laborers, but pay scales often overlapped, and many exceptions existed. For example, the low-prestige jobs, such as unskilled manual or nonmanual labor, were low paying, but not all of those in the high-prestige positions received high wages. Medical doctors, for instance, were highly esteemed, but their income was not high. Low prestige was attached to mid-level white-collar jobs because of their low pay and reduced benefits; coal miners, in contrast, had greater prestige because of good pay and benefits.

Urban-Rural Cleavage

The difference between urban and rural life in the Soviet Union has been called by Basile Kerblay "the most obvious gulf within Soviet society." This gulf remained despite the rapid urbanization that the society has undergone since the Bolshevik Revolution and the urbanization of rural life itself. Between 1917 and 1987, the urban population increased by 156.9 million; in contrast, the rural population decreased by 38.2 million. By 1968 the Soviet Union had become more urban than rural (see table 20, Appendix A). A Soviet village, officially defined as a community with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, had, on the average, 225 inhabitants.

Differences in Life-Styles

Rural dwellers faced culture shock when moving from the countryside to the city. Until they were assimilated into their new way of life, they were marked by their dress, speech, and behavior. The rural existence they left behind was slower paced and socially and economically more homogeneous than life in the cities. They no longer received essential services, such as housing, medical care, job training, and entertainment, from their village communities but rather from their urban employers. Their new urban neighbors not only saved less of their wages each month but also spent an average of three times as much on leisure and culture.

The difference between urban and rural society was also reflected in housing conditions. Rural inhabitants traditionally lived in detached houses and had access to private garden plots. These rural gardens provided produce either for home consumption or for sale. City dwellers, in contrast, did not usually have this extra source of income. And although rural housing sometimes lacked indoor plumbing and other features of urban housing, it was roomier.

Ukrainian thatched-roof cottage at the Museum of Folk Architecture, Kiev, Ukrainian Republic
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard

One major legal difference between urban and rural dwellers disappeared in 1976, when collective farmers were issued internal passports (see Glossary) required for travel outside of their particular district. Before 1976 collective farmers were obliged to obtain the permission of employers before such travel was allowed.

Structure of Rural Society

Rural society reflected the predominance of agriculture as the major employer and the CPSU as the sole political organization. In 1989 the village community was controlled by an economic institution, the farm (collective or state), and an administrative one, the village soviet (*sel'sovet*). These organizations employed the elite of rural society, at the very top of which were the "heads" (*golovki*), who were either party members or party appointees. *Golovki* included the party secretary for the *raion* (see Glossary), the chairman of the collective farm or state farm (in the 1980s most were university-trained specialists, but a few were those who had learned on the job), the chairman of the *sel'sovet,* and the secretaries of the party cells in the state farm or collective farm. Men occupied most of the top positions on collective farms.

The rural nonpolitical elite consisted of agronomists, veterinary surgeons, engineers, and schoolteachers. Their life-style resembled that of urban dwellers. Among this group, rural society held schoolteachers in high esteem, in part because they played a role in selecting which of their students could continue their studies and thus have increased opportunity for upward social mobility. For rural women, regional teacher-training colleges offered the best chance to rise in the social hierarchy. Despite the relatively high esteem in which they were held, teachers were poorly paid and, in general, were forced to maintain private garden plots to support themselves.

An emerging group in the rural social structure consisted of agricultural machinery specialists. This group included truck drivers or other heavy machinery drivers and mechanics who had completed their secondary education and whose income was higher than many white-collar workers.

Workers who remained in the countryside had fewer avenues for upward mobility than did urban dwellers. Tractor drivers, for example, were more upwardly mobile than most rural laborers. Managers and white-collar workers employed in rural regions were generally brought in from urban areas.

Decreasing Social Differences

In the late 1980s, rural depopulation and modernization were eroding those aspects of rural society that distinguished it from its urban counterpart. Depopulation resulted from the migration of young people to the city to study and acquire a trade. This migration was especially apparent in the European part of the Russian Republic and in the Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian republics, where annually 2 to 3 percent of the rural population moved from the countryside to the city. (In Soviet Central Asia, the reverse was true; the rural population continued to increase because of high birthrates and a reluctance to move out of the countryside.) The loss of young people made rural society older, and because of the loss of males in World War II, the older age-groups were predominantly female (see fig. 8).

Concurrent with the increased flight from rural areas was the urbanization of members of the rural areas themselves. The government, for example, merged many villages to form urban-style centers for rural areas. Farming itself had become more professional, requiring a higher level of education or training obtainable only in cities. Additionally, in the late 1980s farming became more industrialized as rural processing industries were developed, as stock breeding become more industrialized, and as more agro-industrial

organizations were formed. The modernization of rural areas developed unevenly, however; modernization was more evident in the Baltic area and the fertile northwest Caucasus and less evident in the southeast Caucasus and Central Asia. Rural areas also experienced a constant influx of urbanites: people who had moved to the cities but returned to visit, urban residents vacationing in the countryside, and seasonal workers and students mobilized for the harvest. During each harvest, the government organized about 900,000 city dwellers and 400,000 to 600,000 students to assist in gathering crops. All of these factors lessened the decreasing, although still profound, distinction between urban and rural society.

The reverse process—the "ruralization" of urban society—has not occurred in the Soviet Union, despite the rural origin of many unskilled urban laborers. The percentage of rural-born unskilled workers in the urban work force was declining in the 1980s as more urban-born workers reached working age. This process also was occurring in industry, where the percentage of urban workers with peasant backgrounds was greater among older workers. Workers in skilled industrial positions generally had urban backgrounds.

Social Mobility

Social mobility, or an individual's movement upward or downward through the strata of society, has been facilitated in the Soviet Union through changes in occupation, marriage, education, and political or even ethnic affiliation. Nepotism and cronyism have also played a significant role in social advancement. In addition, social mobility has stemmed from geographic mobility, such as the move of an agricultural worker to the city to work in industry. For non-Russians, social mobility has also involved learning the Russian language and culture.

Given the centralized and bureaucratic official structure of the Soviet Union in 1989, citizens could not legally become wealthy or achieve high social status outside official channels. Therefore, the paths for advancement remained fairly fixed, and an individual's upward progress was usually slow. In the past, political purges and an expanding economy had created positions for the ambitious. The faltering of the economy in the mid-1980s, however, restricted upward mobility, and as of 1989 Gorbachev's attempt to restructure the economy had not created new opportunities for social mobility.

In the 1980s, downward mobility was less of a problem than it had been during the Stalin era, when high-level government bureaucrats were demoted to menial jobs. However, even though elite positions had become more secure under Brezhnev, children

of the elite who lacked higher education did not necessarily retain their parents' social position.

In 1989 upward social mobility tended to be "inter-generational" (advancement to a social position higher than the one occupied by parents) rather than "intra-generational" (advancement to a higher social position during one's own adult life). Thus, social mobility had slowed down. Soviet studies from the 1960s to the mid-1980s also showed that children of manual laborers were less likely to obtain high-level educational qualifications than children of non-manual laborers. Nearly four-fifths of the children of unskilled manual laborers began their work careers at the same social level as their parents.

Social Organizations

Social organizations were strictly controlled by the party and government except for a small number of unofficial groups that continued to be tolerated by the authorities in the late 1980s. The largest social organizations in the country were the trade unions and DOSAAF (see Glossary); next in line were the youth and sports organizations.

Trade Unions

The trade union system consisted of thirty unions organized by occupational branch. Including about 732,000 locals and 135 million members in 1984, unions encompassed almost all Soviet employees with the exception of some 4 to 5 million collective farmers. Enterprises employing twenty-five or more people had locals, and membership was compulsory. Dues were about 1 percent of a person's salary. The All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions served as an umbrella organization for the thirty branch unions and was by far the largest public organization in the Soviet Union.

Like the CPSU, the trade unions operated on the principle of democratic centralism (see Glossary), and they consisted of hierarchies of elected bodies from the central governing level down to the factory and local committees. Union membership influenced union operations only at the local level, where an average of 60 percent of a union's central committee members were rank-and-file workers.

Unlike labor unions in the West, Soviet trade unions were, in fact, actually governmental organizations whose chief aim was not to represent workers but to further the goals of management, government, and the CPSU. As such, they were partners of management in attempting to promote labor discipline, worker morale, and productivity. Unions organized "socialist competitions" and

Pool players in Baku, Azerbaydzhan Republic
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard

awarded prizes for fulfilling quotas. They also distributed welfare benefits, operated cultural and sports facilities, issued passes to health and vacation centers, oversaw factory and local housing construction, provided catering services, and awarded bonuses and prepaid vacations.

Although unions in the Soviet Union primarily promoted production interests, they had some input regarding production plans, capital improvements in factories, local housing construction, and remuneration agreements with management. Unions also were empowered to protect workers against bureaucratic and managerial arbitrariness, to ensure that management adhered to collective agreements, and to protest unsafe working conditions. After the Polish labor union movement, Solidarity, had achieved some success in Poland, Soviet labor unions became more vocal in protecting workers' interests.

Youth Organizations

To instill communist values into the younger generation, the CPSU employed a system of nationwide youth organizations: the Young Octobrists, the Pioneers, and the Komsomol (see Glossary). Of the three organizations, the Komsomol was, in the late 1980s, by far the largest and most active organization, with over 40 million

members ranging in age from fourteen to twenty-eight. The Komsomol's structure mirrored the party's structure, from its primary units in schools and workplaces to its first secretary. The congress of the Komsomol met every five years and elected a central committee, which in turn elected a bureau and secretariat to direct the organization's day-to-day affairs between central committee meetings. Komsomol members were encouraged to take part in political activities of the CPSU and to assist in industrial projects and harvesting. Most important, its members received preference for entry into higher education, employment, and the CPSU.

The other two youth groups, the Young Octobrists and the Pioneers, were organizations devoted to the political indoctrination of children through age fifteen. The Young Octobrists prepared children ages six to nine for entry into the Pioneers, which in turn prepared them for entry into the Komsomol beginning at age fourteen.

Sports Organizations

In 1989 the Soviet Union had thirty-six sports societies, consisting of an urban and rural society for each of the fifteen union republics and six all-union (see Glossary) societies. All but two of these organizations were operated by the trade unions. The State Committee for Physical Culture and Sports served as the umbrella organization for these societies. Each society built its own sports facilities, secured equipment for its members, and hired a permanent staff of coaches and other personnel. Each held local and all-union championships for various sports, and each society's teams played against the teams of other societies. Although in theory the Soviet Union had no professional sports, each society supported athletes who played sports full time. Furthermore, the best, or "master sportsmen," received additional pay from the State Committee for Physical Culture and Sports.

Gender and Family Roles

In 1989 the Soviet Union resembled other modernized European societies in terms of divorce rates, roles of men and women in marriage, and family size, structure, and function. The twin pressures of urbanization and industrialization have radically changed gender and family relations in the Soviet Union since 1917. These changes, however, were less evident among the non-Russian populations of Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Role of Women

Article 35 of the Soviet Constitution clearly states that women and men "have equal rights" and possess equal access to education

and training, employment, promotions, and remuneration and to participation in social, political, and cultural activity. Women also receive special medical and workplace protection, including incentives for mothers to work outside the home and legal and material support in their role as mothers; the latter support includes 112 days of maternity leave at full pay. At the conclusion of their maternity leave, women may take up to a year of leave without pay and return to the same job if they desire. Employers may not discriminate against pregnant or nursing women by reducing their pay or dismissing them, and mothers with small children have the right to work part time.

Nevertheless, both within society in general and within the family, the position of women in 1989 was not equal to that of men. Soviet authorities have often pointed to the high percentage of women in certain fields as proof of gender equality in the country. For example, in the 1980s women constituted just over half the country's work force, four-fifths of its health workers, more than two-thirds of its physicians and economists, and three-quarters of those employed in education. The authorities neglected to add, however, that the average pay for most women in these fields was below the country's average pay. Moreover, the higher the level in a profession, the smaller the percentage of women. For instance, in 1984 women constituted 83 percent of elementary school directors but only 42 percent of secondary school directors and 38 percent of middle school directors. In the early 1980s, 46 percent of all collective farm workers were women, but they constituted only 1.9 percent of collective farm chairpersons.

Women were also underrepresented in the CPSU and its leadership. In 1983 women constituted only 27.6 percent of the membership of the party and only 4.2 percent of the Central Committee; in 1986 they were totally absent from the Politburo (see Social Composition of the Party, ch. 7).

Male-Female Relationships

Male-female relationships in the Soviet Union reflected not only the stresses generally present in urban and industrial societies, plus those peculiar to communist societies, but also the influence of different cultural traditions. Predictably, the non-Russian Central Asian and Caucasian nationalities exhibited more traditional attitudes regarding marriage, divorce, and abortion than did the European population of the country.

Marriage

Unless specified otherwise by the laws of the individual republics, Soviet citizens may marry at age eighteen without parental

permission. The Latvian, Estonian, Moldavian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Kazakh, and Kirgiz republics have lowered this age to seventeen years. In 1980 approximately 73 percent of the brides and 62 percent of the grooms were under twenty-five years of age. One-third of all marriages involved persons under twenty years of age, and in 20 percent of the marriages involving persons under that age the bride was pregnant.

In the larger cities, newly married couples often lived with either set of parents; often the honeymoon consisted of a short private stay in the parents' home. About 70 percent of childless young couples lived with parents during the first years of marriage because of low income or a shortage of housing.

Cultural compatibility played a larger role in the selection of a mate than did race, religion, occupation, or income. Soviet surveys also pointed to love, mutual attraction, and common interests as important reasons given for marriage. British sociologist David Lane has observed that "companionship" between spouses has been a more important notion in the West than in the Soviet Union, where couples have often taken separate vacations while the children were sent to camp.

Roles in Marriage

Most married women in the Soviet Union worked outside the home in addition to fulfilling their roles of wife, mother, and homemaker. As in other industrialized countries, women had difficulty reconciling the demands of career and home. At home, Soviet women spent more than twice as much time on housework as men—an average of twenty-eight hours a week as opposed to twelve—and women resented this. Before marriage, the average woman was said to have had forty-two hours a week of free time, but after marriage this number was cut in half. Not surprisingly, Soviet research has shown that marital happiness was directly connected to the extent a husband shared in domestic work. Husbands and wives from the elite tended to share decisions and housework to a greater extent than those from other social strata. In blue-collar and agricultural families, the husband was considered head of the household, although the wife held the purse strings.

Nationality appeared to be less of an influence on marital roles than social status and place of residence. By the mid-1970s, even most Muslim husbands were willing to share in some housework with their wives; the higher the socioeconomic status of the family, the more the husband shared the work. In Muslim families and in other nationality groups where the patriarchal system has remained strong, the husband was regarded as the head of the family

and made most of the major family decisions. Among younger and better educated Muslims, however, and in the European part of the Soviet Union, the husband and wife shared in the decision making, a practice that may have resulted from the wife's increasing contribution to family income.

Divorce

With a rate of 3.4 divorces per 1,000 people, the Soviet Union was second only to the United States (4.8 divorces) among industrialized countries in 1986. David Lane has asserted, however, that the real family disintegration rate between these two countries was comparable because the legal difficulties and expense of a divorce in the Soviet Union encouraged "unofficial" divorces or separations.

The Soviet divorce rate varied according to region and population density. In Soviet Central Asia, it was two to three times lower than in European areas; the rate was also higher in cities and in newly developed regions. Divorce rates in rural areas averaged about 40 percent of those in cities.

Surveys have shown that couples divorced for a variety of reasons. Drunkenness, incompatibility, and infidelity were major causes; jealousy of the spouse, separation, and physical incompatibility were minor causes. In the Muslim areas of the country, conflict between the wife and the husband's parents was a major reason for divorce; however, Muslim women were less likely to initiate divorce than women in other regions of the Soviet Union. Stronger devotion to family life and the nature of marriage itself lowered acceptance of divorce in Muslim areas. Soviet surveys have shown that 87 percent of urban and 84 percent of rural Uzbeks opposed divorce for couples with children, whereas only 54 percent of urban Russians and 51 percent of urban Estonians held this view.

Housing problems and the lack of privacy contributed significantly to the high rate of divorce. One study showed that nearly 20 percent of divorces occurring during the first years of marriage were attributed to housing problems and about 18 percent to conflicts with parents. In 1973 in Leningrad, 31.7 percent of divorcing couples had lived with parents or in a hostel, 62.3 percent in a shared apartment, and only 5.1 percent in a separate apartment.

Divorces cost between 60 and 200 rubles depending on income and were granted more quickly if the couple had no children. In general, divorces were relatively simple to obtain, but the court always attempted to reconcile the couple first. Courts also generally awarded the mother custody of the children.

Sex and Contraception

Soviet society in general did not approve of unmarried couples living together but was somewhat more tolerant of occasional premarital sexual relations. The lack of suitable contraceptive devices, combined with rare public discussion about contraception, led to a large number of unwanted pregnancies. Studies in Leningrad have shown that 38 percent of all babies born in Leningrad in 1978 were conceived before marriage. A Soviet study revealed that the number of children born out of wedlock in the Soviet Union amounted to nearly 10 percent of all births, ranging from 22 percent in the Estonian Republic to 3 percent in the Azerbaydzhan Republic. Courts could order an unmarried father to pay child support if he lived with the child's mother; otherwise, the law was not firm, especially where proof of paternity was insufficient. No social stigma was attached to illegitimate children, and unmarried women received maternity benefits. Sex for sale—prostitution—however, was illegal and punishable by law. The Soviet penal code severely punished individuals running a brothel, pimping, or soliciting.

Although women were officially discouraged from having abortions, they were legal and were the chief form of birth control in the country. An estimated 8 million took place each year. Abortions were free for working women and cost 2 to 5 rubles for other women, depending on where they lived. Despite their availability, an estimated 15 percent of all abortions in the Soviet Union were illegally performed in private facilities. The approximate ratio of abortions to live births was nearly three to one.

In Muslim regions, the rate of abortion was much lower than in the European part of the country, although the higher her status or the more Russified the Muslim woman was, the more likely she was to have an abortion. Ironically, in European areas the situation was reversed; less educated couples were more likely to seek abortions than better educated couples, who were likely to use effective contraception.

The Soviet Family

The Soviet view of the family as the basic social unit in society has evolved from revolutionary to conservative; the government first attempted to weaken the family and then to strengthen it. According to a 1968 law, Principles of Legislation on Marriage and the Family of the USSR and the Union Republics, parents are "to raise their children in the spirit of the moral code of a builder of communism, to attend to their physical development and their instruction in and preparation for socially useful activity."

Evolution of the Soviet Family

The early Soviet state sought to remake the family, believing that although the economic emancipation of workers would deprive families of their economic function, it would not destroy them but rather base them exclusively on mutual affection. Religious marriage was replaced by civil marriage, divorce became easy to obtain, and unwed mothers received special protection. All children, whether legitimate or illegitimate, were given equal rights before the law, women were granted sexual equality under matrimonial law, inheritance of property was abolished, and abortion was legalized.

In the early 1920s, however, the weakening of family ties, combined with the devastation and dislocation caused by the Civil War (1918–21), produced a wave of nearly 7 million homeless children. This situation prompted senior party officials to conclude that a more stable family life was required to rebuild the country's economy and shattered social structure. By 1922 the government allowed some forms of inheritance, and after 1926 full inheritance rights were restored. By the late 1920s, adults had been made more responsible for the care of their children, and common-law marriage had been given equal legal status with civil marriage.

During Stalin's rule, the trend toward strengthening the family continued. In 1936 the government began to award payments to women with large families and made abortions and divorces more difficult to obtain. In 1942 it subjected single persons and childless married persons to additional taxes. In 1944 only registered marriages were recognized to be legal, and divorce became subject to the court's discretion. In the same year, the government began to award medals to women who gave birth to five or more children and took upon itself the support of illegitimate children.

After Stalin's death in 1953, the government rescinded some of its more restrictive social legislation. In 1955 it declared abortions for medical reasons legal, and in 1968 it declared all abortions legal. The state also liberalized divorce procedures in the mid-1960s but in 1968 introduced new limitations.

In 1974 the government began to subsidize poorer families whose average per capita income did not exceed 50 rubles per month (later raised to 75 rubles per month in some northern and eastern regions). The subsidy amounted to 12 rubles per month for each child below eight years of age. It was estimated that in 1974 about 3.5 million families (14 million people, or about 5 percent of the entire population) received this subsidy. With the increase in per capita income, however, the number of children requiring such assistance decreased.

In 1985 the government raised the age limit for assistance to twelve years and under. In 1981 the subsidy to an unwed mother with a child increased to 20 rubles per month; in early 1987 an estimated 1.5 million unwed mothers were receiving such assistance, or twice as many as during the late 1970s.

Family Size

Family size and composition depended mainly on the place of residence—urban or rural—and ethnic group. The size and composition of such families was also influenced by housing and income limitations, pensions, and female employment outside the home. The typical urban family consisted of a married couple, two children, and, in about 20 percent of the cases, one of the grandmothers, whose assistance in raising the children and in housekeeping was important in the large majority of families having two wage earners. Rural families generally had more children than urban families and often supported three generations under one roof. Families in Central Asia and the Caucasus tended to have more children than families elsewhere in the Soviet Union and included grandparents in the family structure. In general, the average family size has followed that of other industrialized countries, with higher income families having both fewer children and a lower rate of infant mortality. From the early 1960s to the late 1980s, the number of families with more than one child decreased by about 50 percent and in 1988 totaled 1.9 million. About 75 percent of the families with more than one child lived in the southern regions of the country, half of them in Central Asia. In the Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Moldavian, Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian republics, families with one and two children constituted more than 90 percent of all families, whereas in Central Asia those with three or more children ranged from 14 percent in the Kirgiz Republic to 31 percent in the Tadzhik Republic. Surveys suggested that most parents would have had more children if they had had more living space.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, the government promoted family planning in order to slow the growth of the Central Asian indigenous populations. Local opposition to this policy surfaced especially in the Uzbek and Tadzhik republics. In general, however, the government continued publicly to honor mothers of large families. Women received the Motherhood Medal, Second Class, for their fifth live birth and the Heroine Mother medal for their tenth. Most of these awards went to women in Central Asia and the Caucasus (see table 21, Appendix A).

Children playing in Orel, Russian Republic
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard

Children playing on an ice slide during winter holidays in Khabarovsk, Soviet Far East
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard

Family and Kinship Structures

The extended family was more prevalent in Central Asia and the Caucasus than in the other sections of the country and, generally, in rural areas more than in urban areas. Deference to parental wishes regarding marriage was particularly strong in these areas, even among the Russians residing there.

Extended families helped perpetuate traditional life-styles. The patriarchal values that accompany this life-style affected such issues as contraception, the distribution of family power, and the roles of individuals in marriage and the family. For example, traditional Uzbeks placed a higher value on their responsibilities as parents than on their own happiness as spouses and individuals. The younger and better educated Uzbeks and working women, however, were more likely to behave and think like their counterparts in the European areas of the Soviet Union, who tended to emphasize individual careers.

Extended families were not prevalent in the cities. Couples lived with parents during the first years of marriage only because of economics or the housing shortage. When children were born, the couple usually acquired a separate apartment.

Function of Family

The government has assumed many functions of the pre-Soviet family. Various public institutions, for example, have taken responsibility for supporting individuals during times of sickness, incapacity, old age, maternity, and industrial injury. State-run nurseries, preschools, schools, clubs, and youth organizations have taken over a great part of the family's role in socializing children. Their role in socialization has been limited, however, because preschools had places for only half of all Soviet children under seven. Despite government assumption of many responsibilities, spouses were still responsible for the material support of each other, minor children, and disabled adult children.

The transformation of the patriarchal, three-generation rural household to a modern, urban family of two adults and two children attests to the great changes that Soviet society has undergone since 1917. That transformation has not produced the originally envisioned egalitarianism, but it has forever changed the nature of what was once the Russian Empire.

* * *

Excellent monographs analyzing Soviet society include *Soviet Economy and Society* by David Lane and *Modern Soviet Society,* originally

published in French, by Basile Kerblay. In *Poverty in the Soviet Union* and other articles and books, Mervyn Matthews discusses the problems of poverty and low wages in certain sectors of the Soviet economy. Providing a general overview of the Soviet Union, Vadim Medish's *The Soviet Union* contains useful insights into Soviet society, as does the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia and the Soviet Union.* In their monograph *Modernization, Value Change, and Fertility in the Soviet Union,* Ellen Jones and Fred W. Grupp provide useful information on the position of women in Soviet society and on male and female roles. Genia K. Browning's *Women and Politics in the USSR* focuses on the position of Soviet women in society in general and Soviet feminism in particular. Gail Warshofsky Lapidus has written several informative books and articles on Soviet women. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 6. Education, Health, and Welfare

Newborn baby and nurse, young children, and pensioner

THE SOVIET CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES to Soviet citizens free, universal, and multilingual education; free, qualified medical care provided by state health institutions; provision for old age, sickness, and disability; and maternity allowances and subsidies to families with many children. In quantitative terms, Soviet regimes have made impressive strides in these areas since 1917. The quality of the education and care, however, often fell below standards achieved in the West.

Before the Bolshevik Revolution (see Glossary), education was available to only an elite minority, consisting largely of the aristocratic upper class; tsarist Russia's literacy rate was barely 25 percent. By the mid-1980s, more than 110 million students—about 40 percent of the population—were enrolled in the Soviet Union's government-controlled coeducational schools, universities, and institutes. The nation's literacy rate reached nearly 100 percent—proclaimed by Soviet officials as the highest in the world. Western authorities stressed, however, that the quality of Soviet education often lagged behind that of the West, in large measure because of the high degree of centralization and standardization of Soviet schools, the emphasis on political indoctrination, and the reliance on learning by rote and memorization.

On the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, medical care was available to only a minority of the population, made up largely of aristocrats and upper-level civil servants. The annual death toll from epidemics and famine was in the millions. By the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union had the world's highest ratio of physicians and hospital beds per inhabitant, and basic medical care was available to the large majority of the Soviet population, although the quality of health care, in general, was considered low by Western standards.

Apart from limited assistance provided by private and church-run charitable organizations, no nationwide welfare programs provided for the needs of the old, disabled, and poor before the Soviet era began. In the 1980s, social security and welfare programs were providing modest support to over 56 million veterans and old-age pensioners, millions of invalids and disabled children and adults, expectant mothers, and multichildren families.

During the regimes of Joseph V. Stalin and Nikita S. Khrushchev, Soviet authorities established the underlying principles and basic organization of education, health care, and welfare programs. The common denominator linking these programs was the country's

concern with establishing a technically skilled, well-indoctrinated, and healthy labor force. A hallmark of Soviet education was its primary political function, originally enunciated by Vladimir I. Lenin, as a tool for remaking society. Political indoctrination—the inculcation of Marxist-Leninist (see Glossary) ideals—thus remained a constant throughout the uneven, decades-long process of educational expansion and reform, and it set the Soviet system of schooling apart from contemporary Western models.

With the coming to power of General Secretary Mikhail S. Gorbachev in 1985 and the introduction of his policy of *glasnost'* (see Glossary), the achievements made in education, health, and welfare since 1917 were being increasingly overshadowed by open criticism and even growing alarm over serious failures in these spheres. By the mid-1980s, the Soviet leadership and public alike finally acknowledged what Western observers had been noting for some time, namely, that the decades-long emphasis on quantitative expansion had come at the expense of quality. Schools were failing to develop the technically skilled work force needed to achieve the goals of *perestroika* (see Glossary) and to create a modern and technologically developed economic system on a par with the advanced economies of the Western world.

The situation in Soviet health care was even more serious. In the 1970s and 1980s, significant increases in infant mortality and considerable declines in life expectancy accompanied an alarming deterioration in the quality of health care. Pension and welfare programs were also failing to provide adequate protection, as evidenced by the large segment of the population living at the poverty threshold. In the mid-1980s, Soviet leaders openly acknowledged these problems and introduced a number of reforms in an effort to rectify them.

Education

From its inception, Soviet education had Marxist-Leninist philosophical underpinnings, including the dual aim of educating youth and shaping their character. These aims were brought together, as well, in the notion of "polytechnical education," defined loosely as integrating education with life—ideally connecting formal schooling with practical training in all kinds of schools and at all levels of education—with the aim of providing a dedicated and skilled work force.

The government operated all schools, except for a handful of officially approved church-run seminaries, which had an enrollment of only several hundred people. Other characteristics were the leading role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

(CPSU) in all aspects of education; the centralized and hierarchically structured administrative organs; and an essentially conservative approach to pedagogy. The contemporary system also reflected some holdovers from tsarist schools, including the five-point grading scale, a formal and regimented classroom environment, and school uniforms—dark dresses with white collars (and white pinafores in the lower grades) for girls and dark pants and white shirts for boys—in the secondary schools.

Educational reforms in the 1980s called for increased funding and changes in curriculum, textbooks, and teaching methods to correct serious shortcomings in the schools and improve the quality of education nationwide. An important aim of the reforms was the creation of a "new school" that could meet fully the economic and social demands of the greatly modernized and technologically advanced nation the Soviet leadership wished to create as it led the country into the twenty-first century.

Philosophy and Aims

The philosophical underpinnings and ultimate goals of Soviet education were closely interwoven and could be expressed through two Russian words: *vospitanie* (upbringing or rearing) and *obrazovanie* (formal education). Marxist-Leninist ideology, the philosophical foundation of Soviet education, stressed the proper upbringing of youth to create the "new Soviet man" (see Glossary). To this end, the school system bore the lion's share of forming character by instilling and reinforcing Marxist-Leninist morals and ethics, beginning with preschool and kindergarten and continuing throughout the entire schooling process. Lenin stressed the moral goal of education, declaring after the Bolshevik Revolution: "The entire purpose of training, educating, and teaching the youth . . . should be to imbue them with communist ethics." The schools taught children key socialist (see Glossary) virtues, such as love of labor, the atheist (scientific-materialist) view of life, Soviet patriotism and devotion to the homeland, and the primacy of the collective, namely, the need to place the interests of society before those of the individual.

The extent to which Soviet education bore the responsibility for the rearing, or socialization, of youth set it apart from contemporary Western education systems and led many Western observers to see a similarity between modern Soviet schools and American parochial schools of the past. Another uniquely Soviet feature was the close integration of the schools with other major areas of society—cultural, political, economic, and mass media—all of which served to reinforce the political indoctrination process.

The role of the family in child-rearing was not ignored, however, and beginning in the 1980s Soviet leaders renewed emphasis on the family's central role in character formation. Parents were encouraged to create a nurturing and loving environment at home and to cooperate actively with the schools, which generally led the way, in fostering in their children the personal qualities considered essential to a socialist morality: "Soviet patriotism, devotion to socially useful labor, and a feeling of being part of a social group."

The task of molding the "builders of communism" was advanced as well through extracurricular activities centered on youth organizations that had close ties to the CPSU. Almost all schoolchildren belonged to these groups: the Young Octobrists, for ages six to nine, and the Pioneers, ages ten to fifteen. Most of the students in the upper classes of secondary school belonged to the Komsomol (see Glossary) for ages fourteen to twenty-eight, which was specifically tasked with providing active assistance to the CPSU in building a communist society. To this end, Komsomol members supervised and guided the two younger groups in a wide range of activities, including labor projects, sports and cultural events, field trips, summer camp programs, and parades and ceremonies commemorating national holidays (for example, May Day and Lenin's birthday), to develop in them proper socialist behavior and values and to attract them, even at these early stages, to "socially beneficial" work.

In addition to molding socialist morality, Soviet schools provided formal academic education, transmitting the knowledge and skills to provide the nation's economy with a qualified and highly skilled labor force needed to sustain the country in a modern technological age. The dual concept of rearing and educating was brought together as well in the notion of "polytechnical education," which stressed the inclusion of practical training at all levels of schooling. The polytechnical approach to education, which had waxed and waned since the era of Khrushchev, was receiving renewed emphasis in the late 1980s under Gorbachev. Polytechnical schooling had three key components: cognitive—gaining knowledge about production sectors and industrial processes and organization, production tools and machinery, and energy and power sources; moral—developing respect for, and dedication to, both intellectual and physical endeavor and eradicating the distinction between mental and manual labor; and practical—acquiring sound work habits through direct involvement in the production or creation of goods and services. A polytechnical approach was important not only to provide the dedicated, highly technically trained, and productive workers needed to realize Gorbachev's program of economic restructuring and modernization but also to adhere to a

central, publicly stated, aim of higher education, namely, the creation of a classless society.

Control and Administration

As was the case in every other major area of Soviet life in the late 1980s, the CPSU exercised ultimate control over the development and functioning of the nation's education system. Designated by the Constitution as "the leading core of all organizations of the working people, both public and state," the Central Committee of the CPSU made major policies and decisions regarding all aspects of education (see Central Committee, ch. 7). The party leadership accepted fully Lenin's dictum about the inseparability of politics and schooling/schools, and it appreciated the far-reaching power of education as a tool for refashioning the country's social fabric, "an instrument for the formation of a Communist society." Specifically, the Central Committee's Science and Education Institutions Department initiated education policies to ensure ideological conformity in all instruction. Together with the committee's Ideological Department, it issued laws and regulations governing all major spheres of education. The Council of Ministers and the Supreme Soviet, in turn, gave pro forma ratification to party directives and executed them (see Central Government, ch. 8). Administration of the school system was carried out by the government's education ministries under the direct authority of the Council of Ministers. In the late 1980s, the two chief administrative organs were the Ministry of Education, which administered primary and general secondary schools, and the Ministry of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education, which oversaw institutions of higher learning and specialized secondary schools. These central, union-republic ministries (see Glossary) operated through similarly named republic ministries, which were further broken down into province, district, and local school committees. The republic ministries and their administrative organs at the province, district, and local levels were responsible for implementing the laws, regulations, and directives concerning school curricula, methods of instruction, and textbooks, and they also supervised the allocation of funds at their respective levels.

Other main administrative organs (with counterpart agencies at lower governmental levels) were the Ministry of Culture, which operated special schools of art, ballet, and music, and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, which oversaw vocational and technical schools. Management of higher education institutions involved administrative agencies from the various party organs and government ministries, such as those involved with health,

agriculture, communications, and civil aviation. Not surprisingly, these numerous entities spawned a huge bureaucracy, one that represented a formidable obstacle to implementation of major school reforms introduced in the mid-1980s.

In the 1980s, overbureaucratization was openly criticized by the official press and by leading educators as a major cause of the serious lack of quality in education. For example, management of technical training, the most critical area for the success of economic reform, was excessive: seventy-four ministries and administrative departments oversaw institutions of higher learning, with thirty of these ministries directing only one or two institutes each. Another 200 administrative departments were in charge of specialized secondary schools.

Traditionally, the party apparatus had exercised control over not only the direction of educational development but also the implementation of policies and directives. The essentially parallel structure between party and government provided the main mechanism for this oversight. Furthermore, most administrators in central, republic, and local education posts were party members, as were the majority of school directors and many teachers, particularly at the higher levels (one-sixth of secondary school teachers belonged to the CPSU). The large body of Komsomol members in the upper grades of secondary schools and in institutions of higher learning also aided party oversight.

Pedagogy and Planning

Under the administrative oversight of the Academy of Sciences (see Glossary) and the Ministry of Education, the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences was responsible for conducting research and development in education. The Academy of Pedagogical Sciences had thirteen institutes, several experimental schools, and other facilities. Each institute focused on a specific area of research, such as curriculum and teaching methods, general and pedagogical psychology, visual teaching aids and school equipment, labor training, and professional orientation. The academy's research efforts also included special education (for the physically and mentally impaired), teacher training, testing methodology, and textbook preparation.

The academy brought together the country's leading researchers in the pedagogical sciences, prominent teachers, and a small number of foreign (mostly East European) education specialists. The efforts of these pedagogues and educators were guided by the academy's dual mission: first, developing a socialist mentality by inculcating a Marxist-Leninist worldview; and, second, providing

highly qualified and committed workers for the nation's economy.

The first component—developing a Marxist-Leninist worldview and communist ethics—was geared to general character training as well, impressing upon youth basic ideas of good and bad, honesty, modesty, kindness, friendship, self-discipline, love of studies and conscientiousness, and "correct social behavior." Although the political content of school subjects had to be ideologically correct, the materials were not necessarily overwhelmingly politicized, as indicated by a Western study of reading topics in secondary schools that found less than one-third of them dealt with clear-cut sociopolitical themes.

The second chief concern of Soviet pedagogy was upgrading vocational education and labor training in the general secondary school. A related central goal was inculcating in youngsters a respect for blue-collar work. This remained a difficult if not insurmountable challenge because of Soviet society's traditional view of manual labor as intrinsically inferior to work that involved purely mental or intellectual effort.

The most important Soviet pedagogue historically was Anton S. Makarenko (1888–1939), whose theories on child-rearing and education, which rejected corporal punishment and stressed persuasion and example, served as the foundation of contemporary education and parenting. His methodology also emphasized development of good work habits, love of work, self-discipline, and collective cooperation. Makarenko's approach to discipline remained the norm in Soviet schools in the 1980s. Physical punishment was forbidden; disciplinary measures included oral reprimands by teachers, collective pressure (peer disapproval), bad marks in record books (demerits), consultations with parents, and, only as a last resort, expulsion from school.

Change in pedagogy's predominantly conservative approach came very slowly. Old-fashioned teaching methods, a regimented and formal classroom environment, and the rote method of learning—holdovers from tsarist Russia that became firmly entrenched in the Stalin era—were still the norm in the Soviet schools of the 1980s. But during the second half of the 1980s, theories and practices of a number of progressive educators were being advanced in conjunction with efforts to reform schooling. One of the important figures in this area was Leonid V. Zankov, an education theorist who had been influenced by the writings and philosophy of American educator John Dewey and who had advocated in the 1960s the elimination of the rote-learning approach. The leading figures in the 1980s among those striving to develop the philosophy

and methodology for a "new school" were sociologist Vladimir N. Shubkin, mathematician Mikhail M. Postnikov, and innovative teacher M. Shchetinin.

The State Planning Committee (Gosudarstvennyi planovyi komitet—Gosplan; see Glossary), part of the Council of Ministers, played a major role in Soviet education by influencing the training and distribution of specialists in institutions of higher learning. Its task was to ensure graduation of sufficient numbers of people trained in certain specialties to meet the work force requirements of the nation's economy. By directing the higher schools to admit only a limited number of students in each specialty, Gosplan in effect established a quota for student admissions.

But despite extensive planning efforts, Gosplan consistently did more to cause than to alleviate the country's manpower problems, primarily because planning was based on immediate rather than long-term needs. The situation was particularly serious in the 1980s, when the push to modernize the economy with high technology and automation was seriously hampered by the lack of skilled engineering and technical workers. Although the schools graduated a large number of engineers, their training was often too theoretical, narrow in scope, and limited in practical experience. Broader training and multiple-skill capability were needed. The shortsightedness of the planning apparatus was exacerbated by a continuing contradiction between student preferences and economic and social demands, as well as by an inability to attract enough young people into lower level technical fields.

Institutions of Learning

To provide free, universal, and multilingual education to all citizens, the government operated a vast network of learning institutions, including preschools, general secondary schools, specialized secondary schools, vocational-technical schools, trade schools, and special education schools, as well as universities and other institutions of higher learning (see fig. 11). Completion of the secondary school program, roughly equivalent to American high school, became compulsory in 1970. By 1987 more than 120 million people, out of a population of nearly 282 million, had completed secondary and higher education; another 43.7 million had finished at least eight years of schooling.

The common threads linking all institutions of learning were the central aims of rearing and educating youth; thus, political indoctrination and the education and training of specialists and skilled workers remained of pivotal concern at all levels of schooling. Curricula, textbooks, and teaching methods were standardized

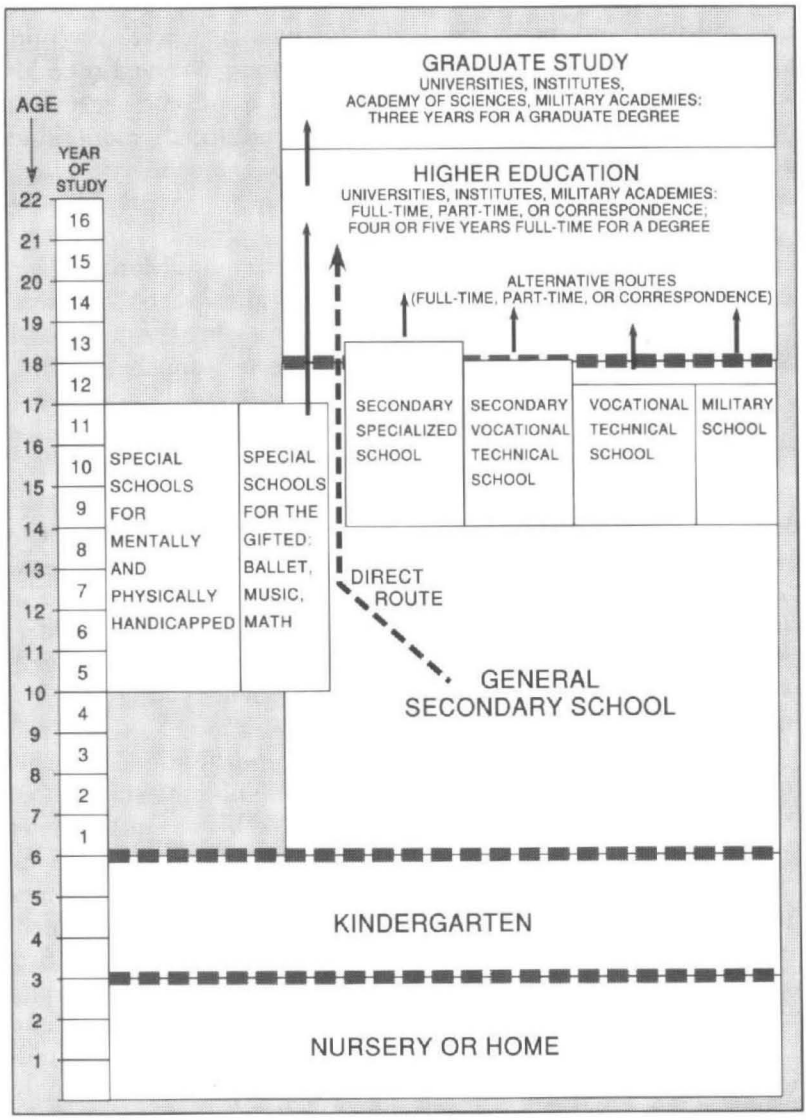
nationwide. Except for a low enrollment fee for preschool, all tuition was free, and the majority of students in specialized secondary schools and institutions of higher learning received monthly stipends. Although the degree of standardization and centralization was very great, the school system was not totally monolithic, and it reflected the multiethnic diversity of the country's fifteen republics as well as considerable differences, particularly in quality, between urban and rural schools.

About 600 schools specialized in teacher training. Many university graduates also joined the ranks of secondary school teachers. In general, although salaries were not always commensurate with status, Soviet society had a great deal of respect for the teaching profession.

Preschool

In 1986 the Soviet Union operated approximately 142,700 preschool institutions on a year-round basis, with an enrollment of over 16.5 million; this represented 57 percent of all preschool-age children and was 1.6 million below demand. To eliminate this shortage, as well as to encourage women with infants or toddlers to return to the work force, the government planned to make available new preschool facilities for another 4.4 million youngsters during the Twelfth Five-Year Plan (1986–90).

Preschool institutions included nurseries (*iasli*) and kindergartens (*detskie sady*), often housed in the same buildings and located in urban and suburban neighborhoods, as well as at factory sites and on collective farms. Nurseries accepted children between the ages of six months and three years, but the percentage of youngsters under two years of age was typically low. Many mothers preferred to stay home with their infant children through the first year (working women were granted a full year of maternity leave), and frequently a grandmother or another family member or friend provided child care to toddlers. (In 1979, for example, 8 to 9 million preschool children were cared for by grandmothers.) The more common practice was to enroll children of about three years of age in preschool. The government subsidized 80 percent of preschool tuition, requiring parents to pay fairly low fees of 12 rubles (for value of the ruble—see Glossary) a month for nursery care and about 9 rubles a month for kindergarten; in certain cases—for example, for children from large families—enrollment was free. By freeing women for the work force, the preschool system was economically beneficial both to the state and to the family, which generally needed two incomes. Kindergarten combined extended day care (as a rule, from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.) with some



Source: Based on information from David Lane, *Soviet Economy and Society,* New York, 1985, 272; and Vadim Medish, *The Soviet Union,* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1987, 197.

Figure 11. Structure of the Education System, 1987

academic preparation for entry into the first grade (the starting age was gradually lowered to six years of age in the mid-1980s).

In addition to providing children with a head start for regular school, preschools began the important process of instilling societal

values and molding socialist character. The children's daily activities, which included story-telling, drawing, music, games, and outdoor play, were highly structured and consistently conducted in groups, fostering a sense of belonging to the collective, the primacy of the needs of the group over those of the individual, and the preference for competition among groups rather than individuals. Political indoctrination at this level consisted of songs and slogans, celebration of national holidays, and stories about Lenin and other heroes of the Bolshevik Revolution. Preschoolers were also taught respect for authority, patriotism, obedience, discipline, and order. Children were provided hot meals and snacks, child-size beds for nap time, and basic health care.

Western visitors to Soviet preschools in the 1970s and early 1980s reported seeing children who were happy, healthy, and well cared for. But this positive image was sharply contradicted in 1988 with the publication in a Soviet newspaper of an article titled "Attention: Children in Trouble!" The article was endorsed by a group of specialists (including R. Bure, doctor of pedagogical sciences and head of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences Preschool Scientific Research Laboratory) who participated in a seminar called "Kindergarten in the Year 2000." According to the newspaper piece, a crisis in preschool education was emerging: the ratio of twenty-five children per teacher was far too high; teachers and other staff were poorly trained; and children's health was suffering because of inadequate medical care. Children were entering first grade unprepared intellectually and physically. More than 50 percent were "neurotic," two-thirds suffered from allergies, 60 percent had poor posture, and 80 percent suffered from upper-respiratory infections. The large majority had not mastered the most basic norms of conduct and social interaction.

Secondary Education

In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union had in place a vast and complex network of secondary schools comprising general secondary schools (grades one through eleven), secondary vocational-technical schools, specialized secondary schools, special education schools, and extramural schools (part-time, evening, and correspondence programs). In 1970 compulsory secondary education was extended to ten years from eight. The 1984 reform of general secondary schools and secondary vocational-technical schools lowered the starting age for first grade from age seven to age six and increased compulsory schooling to eleven years.

In 1987 the Soviet Union operated 138,000 general secondary schools, with a total enrollment of 43.9 million students. There were

roughly three phases to the general secondary program of study, reflecting differences in curriculum and total time in class: the primary grades, one through three; intermediate, four through eight; and upper secondary, nine and ten. The 1984 reform added a year at the beginning level, modifying these grade groupings as follows: one through four, five through nine, and ten and eleven. As a rule, secondary schools in urban areas combined all grades, but rural schools were small, with only four or eight grades in the same building.

The school year ran approximately from September 1 (the official Holiday of Learning) to June 1. Classes were held Monday through Saturday, and total class time ranged from about twenty-four hours a week in the primary grades to thirty-six at the upper levels (following the reform, the range of class time was reduced to twenty to thirty-four hours). At all levels, class periods lasted forty-five minutes, with ten-minute breaks and a half-hour for lunch.

The 1986–87 school year marked the wide-scale entry of six-year-olds into secondary schools; by September 1987, an estimated 42 percent of all six-year-olds were enrolled in first grade. In some republics, e.g., the Georgian, Lithuanian, and Belorussian, the transition was nearly completed; but because of lack of space and school equipment (a chronic problem), many schools had to operate on double and even triple shifts to accommodate the additional new entrants.

The primary curriculum emphasized reading, writing, and arithmetic. Children spent from ten to twelve periods a week learning to read and write in Russian or the native language and six periods a week on mathematics. The curriculum was rounded out with art and music classes, physical education, and vocational training. Children attending non-Russian schools—representing a total of forty-four different Soviet nationalities in 1987—began learning Russian, the lingua franca in the Soviet Union, in the second grade, resulting in an even heavier academic load for them (see Nationalities of the Soviet Union, ch. 4).

Foreign language study, with English the most popular, began in the fifth grade. The curriculum in the intermediate and upper classes included courses in literature, history, social studies, geography, mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, and technical drawing. Consistent with the 1984 school reform's call for achieving computer literacy, the schools introduced computer training in the upper grades in the mid-1980s (see Computers, ch. 9). Vocational counseling was also introduced in the upper grades in an effort to direct more students to pursue training in technical areas

Typical classroom, Moscow
Courtesy Irene Steckler

requiring high-level skills. The new curriculum for grades ten and eleven included courses called "Ethics and Psychology of Family Life" and "Elementary Military Training." From one to four hours per week of "socially beneficial" labor was made compulsory for grades two through eleven.

General secondary schools emphasized mathematics and science; science courses were designed not only to teach the fundamentals but also to develop the official scientific-materialist worldview. Teaching of history and literature was particularly politicized and biased, through selection and interpretation, toward inculcation of communist values and ideology. As an outgrowth of the de-Stalinization effort under Gorbachev, the official Soviet press denounced elementary and secondary school history books as "lies," and, to the students' glee, school authorities canceled final history examinations in the spring of 1987.

On the whole, final examinations were rigorous and comprehensive, and they included both written and oral parts. Performance was graded on a number scale of one (failure) to five (outstanding). The general secondary school diploma was roughly equivalent to a high school diploma in the United States. Completion of this program offered the most direct route to entrance into an institution of higher learning.

After the eighth or ninth grade, students who chose not to finish the final two years of the general secondary school had several options. The most popular in the 1980s was enrollment in secondary vocational-technical schools or specialized secondary schools. In 1987 nearly 25 percent of students chose the former and almost 13 percent the latter route (more than 60 percent continued in the general secondary school).

The secondary vocational-technical school (*srednee professional'no-tekhnicheskoe uchilishche*—SPTU) combined a full secondary education with training for skilled and semiskilled jobs in industry, agriculture, and office work. In 1986 more than 7,000 such schools were in operation; the period of instruction was two or three years. Graduates received diplomas and could apply to institutions of higher education. An incomplete secondary education trade school variant, vocational-technical schools (*professional'no-tekhnicheskie uchilishcha*—PTU), numbering about 1,000 in the mid-1980s, provided training in skilled and semiskilled jobs.

At the beginning of the 1986–87 school year, 4,506 specialized secondary schools (*srednie spetsial'nye zavedeniia*), commonly called technicums (*tekhnikumy*), had an enrollment of nearly 4.5 million students (2.8 million in regular daytime programs and 1.7 million in evening or correspondence schools). The course of study lasted from three to four years and combined completion of the final two grades of general secondary schooling with training at a paraprofessional level. Technicums offered over 450 majors, most of them in engineering and technical areas, as well as paraprofessional-level training in health care, law, teaching, and the arts. Graduates received diplomas and could obtain jobs as preschool and primary school teachers, paramedics, and technicians; they could also apply to higher education institutions. A technicum education corresponded roughly to an associate degree or two years of study in an American junior college or community college.

In 1986 another school reform stressed the specialized secondary school system and higher education. The qualitative improvement of the technicums, which traditionally had served as an important source of technically trained workers, was a key component in providing skilled, technically qualified manpower required for the success of economic restructuring and modernization. To this end, the reform called for revamping both technicums and secondary vocational-technical schools to train specialists with diverse technical skills and hands-on experience with computer technology and automated production processes, as well as a more independent, creative, and responsible approach to their jobs.

Special Education

Special schools included those for physically and mentally handicapped children as well as those for intellectually and artistically gifted youth. They also included military schools for secondary-level cadet training.

In 1987 about 500,000 youngsters with mental and/or physical impairments were enrolled in 2,700 schools designed to meet their special needs. Schools for the mentally retarded strived to help children acquire as much of a general or vocational education as their abilities permitted and also encouraged them to become as self-reliant as possible. The blind and those with partial sight could complete the regular secondary program and/or vocational training in schools with a modified curriculum and special physical accommodations. There were also schools for deaf children, deaf-mutes, and the hearing impaired.

Universities operated a small number of advanced academic programs for exceptionally bright children who demonstrated outstanding abilities in the sciences and mathematics. Schools also specialized in a specific foreign language, for example, English or German. About 50 percent of all subjects were taught in the given language. These highly prestigious schools provided complete secondary schooling, and their graduates were guaranteed entrance into institutions of higher learning.

The Ministry of Culture operated a small network of schools for artistically gifted youngsters, which combined regular secondary education with intensive training in music, ballet, or the arts. These special schools were located primarily in Moscow, Leningrad, and other large Soviet cities.

First established during World War II, military boarding schools continued to provide free care and education to war orphans of military personnel and to train future officers of the armed forces. With enrollments of between 150 to 500 students, the eight Suvorov military schools and the Nakhimov Naval School offered a regular, general school curriculum supplemented by a heavy load of mathematics, political and military training, and physical education. Most graduates of these schools entered higher military institutions (see Officers, ch. 18).

Higher Education

In 1987 the Soviet Union had 896 institutions of higher learning (*vysshie uchebnye zavedeniia*—VUZy), of which only 69 were universities. The remainder included more than 400 pedagogical, medical, and social science institutes and art academies and

conservatories of music; over 360 institutes of specialized engineering and natural sciences; and about 60 polytechnical institutes. VUZy were located in major cities, including the union republic and autonomous republic capitals, with the highest concentrations in Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev. Enrollment was over 5 million students, with nearly 50 percent (2.4 million) attending part time. Women made up 56 percent of the student body. Forty-one percent of the students came from the working (blue-collar) class, 9 percent from the collective farm (see Glossary) sector, and 50 percent from families working in the services (white-collar) sector.

With nearly 587,000 students enrolled, universities offered a broad range of disciplines in the arts and sciences, while concentrating on the theoretical aspects of the given field. Institutes and polytechnics were more specialized and stressed specific applied disciplines, for example, engineering, education, and medicine. The approach to higher education traditionally focused on acquiring knowledge and comprehension rather than on developing skills of analysis and evaluation.

As the country's major scientific and cultural centers, universities produced the leading researchers and teachers in the natural and mathematical sciences, social and political sciences, and humanities, e.g., literature and languages. They also developed textbooks and study guides for disciplines in all institutions of higher learning and for university courses in the natural sciences and humanities.

On the whole, Soviet society considered universities the most prestigious of all institutions of higher learning. Applicants considerably exceeded openings, and competition for entrance was stiff. Officially, acceptance was based on academic merit. In addition to successful completion of secondary schooling, prospective entrants had to pass extremely competitive oral and written examinations, given only once a year, in their area of specialization, as well as in Russian and a foreign language. Students commonly employed private tutors to prepare for university entrance examinations. Beyond this generally accepted practice, other less honest methods were used widely and included drawing on personal connections of parents and even resorting to bribes. Party or Komsomol endorsement strengthened an applicant's chances for admission.

Moscow University, established in 1755, was the Soviet Union's largest, most prestigious, and second oldest institution of higher learning (the Ukrainian Republic's L'vov University was founded in 1661). It comprised seventeen colleges or schools (in Russian, *fakultety*—faculties), divided into 274 departments, each offering

Turkmen University, Ashkhabad, Turkmen Republic
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard

a wide range of related subjects. A major research center, the state university had a library of over 6.5 million volumes. A teaching staff of about 7,000 full-time and part-time professors and instructors taught over 30,000 students (more than half attended on a part-time basis).

Full-time higher education took 4 to 5.5 years of study, depending on the area of specialization, for example, 5.5 years for medicine; 5 years for engineering; 4.5 years for agriculture; and 4 years for law, history, journalism, or art. The programs combined lectures, seminars, practicums, and research. At the final stage, students had to complete an approved thesis and defend their work before the State Examination Committee; they also had to pass extensive examinations in their field of specialization. Graduates were awarded diplomas; depending on the course of study and institution, the diploma fell roughly between a bachelor's degree and master's degree in the United States.

Tuition at all institutions of higher learning was free; in the 1986–87 school year, 78 percent of full-time students received monthly stipends ranging from 40 to 70 rubles. Students paid only minimum room and board because dormitories (albeit crowded and lacking most modern amenities) and cafeterias were subsidized by the government. The universities also provided basic medical care

at no cost, as well as free passes to rest and recreation homes and summer and winter resorts.

Graduates were expected to repay the government's generosity by devoting two or three years to a job assigned by the government. This practice was becoming an increasingly serious problem with respect to labor distribution in the 1980s. Among the major contributing factors were Gosplan's failure to forecast correctly the country's needs for specialized labor cadres (graduates frequently were assigned to jobs totally unrelated to their areas of specialization) and the often outright refusal by graduates to accept jobs in undesirable (remote or rural) parts of the country.

Graduate training could be pursued at all universities and selected institutes and polytechnics. Relative to the number of undergraduates, the number of Soviet graduate students was small, about 100,000 in the mid-1980s. Many pursued their studies on a part-time basis while continuing to work in their field.

Two advanced degrees, the candidate of science and the doctor of science (*kandidat nauk* and *doktor nauk*), were available. To be admitted to a course of study for the candidate degree, applicants had to pass competitive examinations in a foreign language, philosophy (primarily Marxism-Leninism), and the field of specialization. Completion of this degree required three years of course work, training and research, and a dissertation dealing with an original topic and representing a significant contribution to the given field. The thesis had to be defended publicly before an academic panel and was published. In the 1980s, about 500,000 specialists, primarily university and institute faculty staff and members of the scientific and research community, held candidate degrees. These degrees might be equated to the master's and doctor of philosophy degrees in the United States, depending on the specialization and the institution attended.

A much smaller group (fewer than 45,000) of scholars and scientists held a doctor of science degree, also commonly called a *doktorat.* It was conferred on a selective basis to well-established experts whose considerable research and publications represented original major contributions to their specialized areas. Doctoral work was generally part of the individual's professional or teaching activity. A one-year paid leave of absence was granted for the writing and defense of a doctoral thesis. The doctorate was also sometimes conferred for outstanding past achievements. According to Vadim Medish, holders of this advanced degree represented "the elite of the Soviet scientific establishment and academe."

Teacher Training

Soviet society generally held the teaching profession in high esteem, continuing the long prerevolutionary tradition, although

teachers' salaries were not commensurate in this regard. With starting pay as low as 140 to 150 rubles per month (compared with the average worker's salary of 200 rubles), teachers' salaries, especially at the primary and secondary school levels, were on the lower rungs of the pay scale. The most common Western explanation for this disparity was the preponderance of women in the field. In 1987 nearly three-fourths of the more than 2.6 million secondary school teachers and school directors were women. Among secondary school teachers, 77.7 percent had completed higher education, 16.3 percent had completed secondary school teacher training, 3.5 percent had completed a portion of their higher education, and 2.5 percent had completed specialized or general secondary education.

In the 1986–87 school year, more than 2 million students were enrolled in teacher training programs in about 400 specialized secondary-school teachers' schools and more than 200 pedagogical institutes. Teacher training focused on the chosen specialty; a significant amount of time was devoted to the study of Marxism-Leninism, as well as courses in education and applied psychology. Because the university curriculum included courses in teaching methodology, university graduates also often taught upper-level secondary grades.

The salaries and prestige of teachers at universities, institutions of higher learning, and specialized secondary schools were considerably higher than those of general secondary-school teachers. About 750,000 professors and instructors, of whom only about one-third were women, belonged to this elite group of professionals.

Quality, Reform, and Funding

A "report card" for Soviet education in the 1980s based on comments from government leaders, educators, and rank-and-file teachers, as well as from the public at large, indicated the schools were failing in serious ways. The picture that emerged from articles published in the Soviet press revealed inadequate facilities, crowded classrooms, and schools operating on two- and even three-shift schedules. Shortages of school materials and equipment were serious. The quality of teaching was often low. These deficiencies were particularly acute in rural areas and in the Soviet Central Asian republics. Abuses, such as cheating by students and grade inflation by many teachers, were widespread as well. The schools were failing to meet the nation's labor needs: shortages of adequately skilled workers existed in almost every sector of the economy, and, although institutions of higher learning were graduating large numbers of engineers and specialists, their training was theoretical and narrow and lacked practical applicability. These limitations,

together with excessive bureaucracy, led to poor performance (see The Administration of Science and Technology, ch. 16). Industrial accidents, most notably the Chernobyl' nuclear power plant accident, were openly attributed to inappropriate training and technical incompetence.

The schools were failing as well in the task of inculcating youth with Marxist-Leninist ideals and socialist morality. Young people were becoming increasingly cynical about official ideology; they were motivated more and more by the pursuits of material things, personal comforts, societal status, and privilege. Moreover, the school system's emphasis on uniformity and conformity, rote learning, and memorization quashed students' creativity and the development of critical thinking and individual responsibility.

The 1984 reform of the general and vocational schools together with the 1986 reform of higher and specialized secondary education aimed at fundamental *perestroika* (restructuring) and *demokratizatsiia* (democratization) of the education system. The Soviet leadership saw the role of teachers as central to this endeavor; in addition to increased wages, they promised that teachers would have greater autonomy and flexibility and that the "command mentality, formalism, and overbureaucratization" produced by the multilayered administrative bureaucracies would be eradicated. Articles in the official Soviet press called for the "teacher-creator" to take the "path of freedom," with a "freely searching mind . . . tied to no one and to no thing."

Implementation of these reforms would require major increases in funding, which in the mid-1980s was about 12 billion rubles for general secondary schools. The state spent about 1,200 rubles per student for higher education and 780 rubles for secondary specialized study. Calling allocation of less than 8 percent of a nation's income to education a sign of societal degradation, Soviet education specialists expressed alarm that the country was currently allocating only about 4 percent of its national income to its schools. But the greater, and perhaps insurmountable, obstacle to genuine reform of education in the 1980s remained the overriding importance assigned to ideological purity in all aspects of schooling.

Health Care

The Soviet system of socialized medicine, introduced during the Stalin era, emphasized "quantitative" expansion. The system was driven by three basic underlying principles: provision by government health institutions of readily available and free, qualified medical care to all citizens; an emphasis on the prevention of illness; and the related goal of guaranteeing a healthy labor force for the

nation's economy. Indeed, the individual citizen's health was viewed not only as a personal matter "but as part of the national wealth."

In the mid-1980s, the government operated a huge network of neighborhood and work site clinics to provide readily accessible primary care and large hospitals and polyclinic complexes for diagnosis and treatment of more complicated illnesses and for surgery. Health care facilities included numerous women's consultation centers and pediatric clinics, emergency ambulance services, and sanatoriums and rest homes for extended and short-term therapy and relaxation. Psychiatric care remained the most outdated and abuse-ridden area of the country's medical system.

The mid-1980s were marked by growing concern on the part of officials and the public over the serious decline in the country's health and the low quality of medical services available to the general populace. In addition to Gorbachev's war against alcoholism, which was seen as a principal contributing factor in increased male mortality rates, reforms in the 1980s called for eliminating overbureaucratization of medical services, improving medical training and salaries, expanding fee-for-service care, and significantly increasing funding to improve the quality of health care nationwide.

Provision of Medical Care

Having emphasized quantitative expansion of medical services, the Soviet Union, by the 1980s, took first place worldwide with respect to the number of hospital beds and physicians per 10,000 people and had in place a huge network of hospitals, polyclinics, consultation centers, and emergency first-aid stations throughout the country. As in the education system, administration and control of these numerous medical facilities was carried out by a centralized, hierarchically structured government apparatus. In cooperation and consultation with CPSU organs, the Ministry of Health set basic policies and plans for the entire nationwide health care system. These in turn were transmitted through the administrative chain of command, starting with the republic-level health ministries down through the territorial, regional, district, municipal, and local levels.

In coordination with Gosplan, the Ministry of Health developed nationwide annual programs for all aspects of health care services. The ministry's planning effort reflected an overwhelming concern "with numbers and complex formulas," such as setting norms, standards, and quotas with virtually no flexibility, spelling out the number of new 1,000-bed hospitals to be built, the number of

patient visits and medical exams to be performed, and even the number of sutures per given type and size of laceration.

The numerous administrative entities and planning offices spawned a huge bureaucracy, with all the attendant problems of overbureaucratization, red tape, and paper deluge. Most affected and afflicted were physicians, who devoted 50 percent of their time to filling out medical forms and documentation.

A large portion of the Soviet annual health care budget (about 18 billion rubles) was allotted to construction of a vast and complex network of medical facilities, including polyclinics, consultation and dispensary centers, emergency first-aid stations and ambulance services, hospitals, and sanatoriums. In 1986 more than 40,000 polyclinics provided primary medical care on an outpatient basis. They ranged in size from huge urban complexes staffed by hundreds of physicians and responsible for the health care needs of up to 50,000 people, to small rural clinics consisting of several examination rooms and three or four doctors, whose training was often at the physician's assistant or paramedic (*fel'dsher*) level.

Generally, the first place turned to for medical assistance was the polyclinic. Individuals and families were assigned to a specific polyclinic, based on their place of residence, and could not choose their physician within the polyclinic system. Outpatient services stressed prevention and provided only the most basic medical treatment, including preliminary diagnosis and evaluation by a general practitioner or internist (*tevrapet*). If the patient's condition was determined to be a more serious or complicated one (hypertension, heart disease, or cancer, for example), the individual usually was referred to another specialist and/or was hospitalized for more extensive diagnosis and treatment. The polyclinic system was delivering 90 percent of the country's medical care in the 1980s.

An important facet of medical care was the provision of services at the place of work, reflecting the country's focus on maintaining a healthy labor force. Large production enterprises (see Glossary), factories, and plants, as well as many other institutions, such as research facilities and universities, had their own clinics or medical units. The railroad workers' union operated its own autonomous health care system, including rest homes and sanatoriums.

Consonant with the nation's concern with worker productivity and loss of valuable production time, workplace clinics allowed workers to get medical attention without leaving the work site. They also monitored and controlled worker absenteeism through issuance of sick leave certificates. In 1986 approximately 4 million workers (about 3 percent of the total work force) were on sick leave each

Schoolchildren in Vyborg, Russian Republic
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard

day; about 700,000 of them, mostly women, stayed home to care for sick children.

Nationwide, in 1986 there were 23,500 hospitals with more than 3.6 million beds. In an effort to eliminate duplication of medical services by combining general and specialized hospital care, beginning in the mid-1970s the Ministry of Health began building large urban hospital complexes that provided specialized care in the hospital and on an outpatient basis. A 1,600-bed hospital was built in Novosibirsk; Rostov-na-Donu had a 1,700-bed hospital tower; huge multidepartment hospitals appeared in other cities as well.

Although the thrust of hospital care was to provide diagnosis and treatment of more complicated health problems and to provide facilities for surgery, people suffering from such minor illnesses as influenza or gastroenteritis were often hospitalized. This exacerbated the already serious crowding problem in hospitals despite the large number of hospital beds per capita. The situation stemmed in part from official specification of exact periods of hospitalization for each and every type of medical problem, for example, ten days for childbirth, appendectomy, or gallbladder surgery; two weeks for a hysterectomy; and eight weeks for a heart attack. These prescribed "recovery" periods were strictly adhered to, even when

the patient clearly no longer needed further hospital care. In the early 1980s, one-quarter of the population was hospitalized each year. The average hospital stay was 15 days, with a nationwide average of 2.8 hospital days per person per year (the average hospital stay in the United States was 5 days, with 1.2 hospital days per person per year).

The propensity for medically unwarranted, extended hospitalizations reflected old-fashioned practice, the inefficiency of hospitals (for example, delays in diagnostic tests caused by excessive paperwork and shortages in medical equipment), and the difficulty for patients to recover at home because of crowded living conditions. In addition, patients tended to prefer hospitalization to curative treatment in the clinics because hospitals were generally better equipped and better staffed.

A pivotal concern of the public health system was the care and treatment of women and children. More than 28,000 women's consultation centers, children's polyclinics, and pediatric hospital facilities focused on prevention and cure of women's and children's health problems. A number of institutes of pediatrics, obstetrics, and gynecology conducted research to improve diagnosis and treatment of disease and contribute to overall health and well-being, especially of pregnant women, infants, and young children. All maternity services were free, and women were encouraged to obtain regular prenatal care; expectant mothers visited maternity clinics and consultation centers on an average of fourteen to sixteen times. About 5 percent of physicians specialized in obstetrics and gynecology. Women had ready access to free routine examinations, Pap smears, and prenatal care. Abortions were also available on demand but sometimes required a small fee.

The Ministry of Health operated an extensive network of emergency first-aid facilities. This "rapid medical assistance" (*skoraia meditsinskaia pomoshch'*) system consisted of more than 5,000 emergency first-aid stations and included 7,700 specialized ambulance teams. Dialing "03" on any telephone (pay telephones did not require the usual 2 kopek coin) called out an ambulance (*skoraia,* as it was popularly called). Most often ambulances were equipped with only the barest first-aid basics: stretcher, splints and fracture boards, oxygen equipment. But specialized antitrauma ambulances with portable equipment, such as an electrocardiograph, electric heart defibrillator, and anesthesia equipment were available for major emergencies. After administration of first aid, patients with major medical problems or severe trauma were taken to special emergency hospitals because most regular hospitals were not equipped

with emergency rooms. In the early 1980s, the average ambulance arrival time was eight minutes in Moscow and eleven in Leningrad.

Rounding out the nation's health care system, and giving it a uniquely Soviet coloration, was the country's large network of sanatoriums, rest homes, and health resorts, which was both an integral part of Soviet health care and extremely popular among the people. Labor unions controlled about 80 percent of the sanatoriums; generally, a person's place of work granted the highly desirable *putevka* (ticket) to such facilities. Some sanatoriums were specialized, providing therapy for children, diabetics, or hypertensives; many health resorts offered mud baths, mineral springs, and herbal therapies; all of them offered a much-welcomed period of rest and recreation in pleasant natural surroundings along seacoasts and in forests with fresh air. Demand for such facilities, dubbed "functional equivalents of tranquilizers" by one Western observer, far exceeded availability. In 1986 over 15,800 sanatoriums and rest homes served more than 50.3 million people, less than 20 percent of the population.

The most outdated and abuse-ridden area of health protection was the system of psychiatric services. In the mid-1980s, psychiatric care continued to operate primarily on the outdated principles on which it was originally based in the 1950s: Pavlovian (conditioned-response) psychology, a black-and-white approach to diagnosis of mental illness, heavy reliance on psychotropic drug therapies, very little practice of individual or group counseling, and an emphasis on work as the best form of treatment and therapy. The average citizen avoided seeking psychiatric help, convinced it was "better to suffer" than have one's life ruined—an almost certain outcome of Soviet psychiatric clinics and services.

Among the corrupt practices (including bribery and blatant disregard of individual rights), the gravest and most infamous abuses in Soviet psychiatric medicine were political, namely, using mental hospitals as prisons for political dissenters. Along with schizophrenics and violent prisoners, dissenters were institutionalized in special psychiatric hospital-prisons operated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (see The Ministry of Internal Affairs, ch. 19). Anyone who actively disagreed with the official Soviet ideology could be easily and swiftly declared "insane" by a committee of psychiatrists, locked up in a mental institution, and subjected to compulsory treatment with powerful, at times permanently damaging, psychotropic drugs. In the mid-1980s, estimates of the total number of political prisoners in Soviet psychiatric facilities numbered from 1,000 to several thousand.

A harbinger of possible reform of the psychiatric system came in January 1988 with the issuance of a decree by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet transferring the special psychiatric hospitals from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Ministry of Health, which operated a system of regular psychiatric hospitals and polyclinics. A number of government-sponsored private psychiatric clinics offered slightly better levels of therapy and counseling, for a fee.

In 1985 Soviet officials began publishing limited statistics on the incidence of mental illness among the population, reporting 335 cases of schizophrenia per 100,000 people and over 1.3 million children suffering from mental retardation. A total of 335,200 hospital beds were devoted to psychiatric care in 1986, compared with 863,000 for general medicine, 526,900 for surgery, and 411,500 for pediatrics.

Between 1960 and 1986, the number of physicians and dentists increased from 400,000 to 1.2 million, and mid-level personnel increased from 1.4 to 3.2 million. Medical training for physicians (*vrachi*) required six or seven years. The emphasis was on practical training with little exposure to basic research or pure science (of ninety-two medical institutes, only nine were attached to universities). Beginning in the 1970s, specialization began early, in the third year, and became increasingly more narrow, resulting in a serious decline in the number and quality of general or family practitioners. The majority of doctors were women. As was the case in teaching and other social services areas, their salaries were low (in the mid-1980s, physicians earned about 180 to 200 rubles per month compared with 200 rubles per month for industrial workers).

Mid-level medical personnel included physician's assistants, or paramedics, midwives, and nurses. These categories required only two years of practical training and little or no scientific background. These mid-level health practitioners frequently served as physician surrogates in rural areas, where the shortage of trained physicians was serious.

Although the underlying principle of Soviet socialized medicine was equality of care and access, the reality was a multitiered, highly stratified system of care and facilities. The disparity between the services provided to the general populace and to special groups was great. The so-called "fourth department" of the Ministry of Health operated a separate network of clinics, hospitals, and sanatoriums exclusively for top party and government officials as well as for other elite groups, such as writers, musicians, artists, and actors. These special facilities were far superior to those found in ordinary health care networks. They provided the best care, were staffed

by top-ranking physicians, and had the latest equipment, including Western-made modern diagnostic and treatment units. The medical care available in cities, which tended to have the better equipped hospitals and clinics, differed considerably from that available in rural areas, which often lacked specially constructed medical facilities.

Similarly, although in principle health care was free, citizens often paid money or gave bribes to receive better treatment. Moreover, hospital patients routinely paid for basic services, such as changes of bed linen and meals.

Declining Health Care in the 1970s and 1980s

After Evgenii Chazov became the minister of health in February 1987 and Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost'* was extended to the realm of health care, Soviet authorities finally acknowledged what Western observers had suspected for some time, namely, that major health indicators depicted a disturbing picture of the nation's health. Statistics for the 1970s and 1980s showed rising infant mortality rates, falling life expectancy (particularly among the male population), increases in infectious diseases, rises in sexually transmitted illnesses, and a high rate of new cases of tuberculosis among children and adolescents.

Statistics on the major causes of death were not published for the total population but were published for the working-age group (sixteen to fifty-nine for men and sixteen to fifty-four for women). In 1986 the greatest number of deaths among those of working age (the total number of deaths was 401 per 100,000) was caused by cardiovascular disease (120 per 100,000); accidents, poisoning, and traumas (109 per 100,000); cancer (94 per 100,000); and lung disease (20 per 100,000). On a population-wide basis, official Soviet sources ranked the major causes of death somewhat differently: cardiovascular diseases, malignant tumors, and accidents and injuries. Statistics on sex-specific death rates and cause of death by age-group have not been published since the early 1970s.

A key contributing factor in the major causes of death, particularly among the male population, was the high level of alcoholism—a long-standing problem, especially among the Slavic peoples (Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian). Alcoholism was often referred to as the "third disease," after cardiovascular illness and cancer. Soviet health organizations and police records put the total number of alcoholics at over 4.5 million, but Western experts contended that this number applied only to those at the most advanced stage of alcoholism and that in 1987 the real number of alcoholics was at least 20 million.

Soon after coming to power, Gorbachev launched the most massive antialcohol campaign in Soviet history and voiced his concern not only about the health problems stemming from alcohol abuse but also about the losses in labor productivity (up to 15 percent) and the increased divorce rate. The drive appeared to have an almost immediate effect on the incidence of diseases directly related to alcohol: for example, cirrhosis of the liver and alcohol poisoning decreased from 47.3 per 1,000 in 1984 to 23.3 per 1,000 in 1986. The biggest declines were in the Russian and Ukrainian republics, where the problem was the most widespread. Some attributed the modest rise in male life expectancy between 1985 and 1986 to success in the battle against the "green snake," a popular Russian term for vodka. But to counter the major cut in government production of alcohol, people distilled their own alcoholic beverages at home. One-third of illicit alcohol reportedly was produced using government agricultural facilities.

To succeed in the battle against alcoholism, Soviet health care had to expand significantly its alcohol-abuse treatment and education programs. Of particular concern was increased alcohol consumption and another major health problem—smoking—among women and teenagers. The rise in infant mortality, as well as other early childhood disease and abnormalities (8 to 10 percent of children reportedly suffered from congenital or infantile abnormalities), was linked to increased drinking and smoking among females in their childbearing years.

A Soviet statistical study (based on a 1987 survey of 62,000 families) indicated that about 70 million people smoked—nearly 70 percent of men and nearly 5 percent of women more than eighteen years of age. Although an antismoking campaign was also under way in the 1980s, it was on a much smaller scale than the campaign against alcohol, and the government did far less to decrease production of tobacco products. In fact, output reached 441 billion cigarettes in 1987, which was an increase of 23 percent over 1970 production.

In addition to increased infant mortality rates in the 1970s and 1980s, the Caucasian and Central Asian republics experienced a rise in infectious diseases, such as typhoid fever and other gastrointestinal illnesses, and viral hepatitis. Poor sanitation and contaminated water supplies were largely responsible for outbreaks of typhoid fever and other gastrointestinal infections; the lack of disposable syringes was blamed for the upsurge in hepatitis infections.

Deteriorating environmental factors, crowded living conditions, and poor nutrition were seen as principal contributors to negative health trends. But the low quality of health care available to the

general populace was a major culprit and stemmed in large measure from the widespread lack of modern medical equipment, technology, and pharmaceuticals. For example, the low life expectancy, particularly for males, was linked in part to the lack of medical equipment needed to perform bypass surgery and angioplasty procedures in the treatment of heart disease. Indeed, deaths from cardiovascular diseases increased from 88 per 100,000 to 120 per 100,000 between 1970 and 1986.

With *glasnost'* came publication in Soviet newspapers of numerous articles and letters—written by physicians as well as by ordinary citizens—highlighting the crisis in the country's health care system. Frequently attacked was the severe shortage of modern medical equipment in medical facilities; for example, women's consultation centers had no fetal heart monitors, ultrasound units, or equipment for monitoring labor and delivery, resulting in thousands of additional infant deaths. Poor training of physicians was singled out as the cause of 600 to 700 deaths of women each year in childbirth and following abortions in the Russian Republic alone. The poor treatment and care of terminally ill cancer patients was openly decried; mentioned were the serious shortage of beds in cancer wards, lack of painkillers, blatant neglect, and absence of compassion from medical staff. The widespread and long-standing practice of exchanging bribes and gifts for slightly better medical care and attention was specifically attacked, as were overbureaucratization and its major product, "paper fever," and the common practice of falsifying medical statistics to fulfill planned quantitative quotas. People also wrote to newspapers documenting personal tragedies involving the deaths of small children—deaths that need not have happened and that were caused by gross negligence on the part of hospital staff and physicians.

Glasnost' brought into the open other previously taboo subjects, as the press began to publish articles on drug abuse, venereal disease, and even acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Drug abuse and venereal disease were reported to be on the rise in some regions of the country, most notably in the Georgian Republic. The number of drug addicts nationwide varied depending upon the official source: the Ministry of Health claimed 50,000; police records documented 130,000 addicts.

In early 1987, the Soviet press began publishing a number of articles about AIDS, referring to the deadly virus by the Russian acronym SPID (*sindrom priobretennogo immunodefitsita*). Although little concrete advice was being made available to the public regarding prevention and high-risk groups, by the summer of 1987 a number of AIDS testing centers had been opened, and a Moscow center

reportedly was testing about 100 people each day. Claiming the infection was "imported," Soviet medical authorities required mandatory testing of all foreign students in the country; they also required compulsory testing of suspected Soviet carriers, namely, prostitutes and members of other high-risk groups. In August 1987, the Supreme Soviet passed the strictest anti-AIDS law in the world, making the knowing transmittal of an AIDS infection a criminal offense punishable by up to eight years in prison.

By the time the law was passed, 130 AIDS cases were officially registered; only 19 of these were said to be Soviet citizens. But numerous Soviet sources indicated the actual number of cases was in the thousands; this figure still represented a minuscule percentage of the population compared with AIDS incidence in the United States and other Western countries. Nevertheless, Soviet virology specialists foresaw serious spread of the infection, noting that domestic production of AIDS testing equipment had to be significantly increased. They claimed that the 1987 output of 2 million units was 8 million short of the required number and anticipated that 20 million test sets would be needed within two or three years. Public education about AIDS transmission and infection was hampered by general Soviet prudishness about sex, but of greater importance was the fact that the government ranked homosexual activity and prostitution as criminal offenses punishable by imprisonment, which meant that these high-risk groups were unlikely to cooperate in the battle against AIDS. The chronic shortage of condoms (which Soviet medical officials euphemistically called "Article Number 2") further increased the threat of the spread of AIDS among the Soviet population. But the widespread shortage of disposable hypodermic syringes in hospitals and clinics, which often led to the repeated use of unsterilized needles, posed the greatest danger to checking the spread of AIDS in the Soviet Union. This fact was shockingly demonstrated by the tragic case involving the infection with the AIDS virus of up to forty-one children and eight mothers in late 1988 at a children's hospital in the Kalmyk Autonomous Republic.

Major reforms of the health care system were announced in November 1987, underscoring the growing alarm over the nation's deteriorating health. The reforms reaffirmed the antialcohol and antismoking campaigns and called for improving personal hygiene and physical fitness training of the population in general and of schoolchildren in particular. The reforms stressed improving the quality of care, as opposed to the past practice of quantitative expansion alone, and advocated increasing the salaries and prestige of medical personnel. They called for shifting physician training from the narrow specialization of the past to family or general

practice, as well as expansion and improvement in certification of medical school graduates and periodic recertification of practicing physicians. The central role of mid-level medical personnel—such as physician's assistants, nurses, and pharmacists—was reaffirmed, and improvements in the quality of their training were promised. The quality of medical teaching was to be raised by directly involving medical teachers in research and development in the country's leading medical research institutes. The reforms also stressed expansion of biotechnical and other advanced medical research and called for increasing domestic production of the most modern medical equipment, high-quality pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology products.

Special efforts were planned to rectify the low level of health care found in rural areas, where 80 percent of the 18,000 polyclinics and outpatient facilities did not have specially constructed medical buildings. A majority—65 percent—of regional hospitals in rural areas had no hot water supply; 27 percent were not equipped with sanitation systems; and 17 percent had no water supply at all. To correct these serious deficiencies, plans called for construction of more than 14,000 outpatient clinics equipped with pharmacies, as well as living quarters for medical and pharmaceutical personnel. Along with continued emphasis on providing outpatient polyclinic care, a significant expansion—a fivefold increase—of fee-for-services medical care was planned by the year 2000.

The country's need for maternity wards and pediatric facilities was to be met by 1995; the population's outpatient and hospital needs were to be met by the year 2000. To this end, the reforms called for a significant increase—between 100 and 150 percent—in capital expenditures for renovation, equipment, and construction of polyclinics and hospital complexes. A final goal was the establishment by the year 2000 of a "unified system of health care" for the entire population.

To achieve these ambitious goals and to ensure the full health of its population, the Soviet Union would have to increase substantially the level of funding allocated to its health care system. Since the 1960s, the percentage of the gross national product (GNP—see Glossary) spent on health had continuously eroded, dropping from a high of 6.6 percent of GNP in 1960 to about 4 percent in the mid-1980s. (In 1986 the United States spent 11.1 percent; the Federal Republic of Germany [West Germany], 8.1 percent; and Britain, 6.2 percent of GNP for medical services.) According to Minister of Health Chazov, more than 8 percent would be needed to meet fully the medical needs of the entire Soviet population.

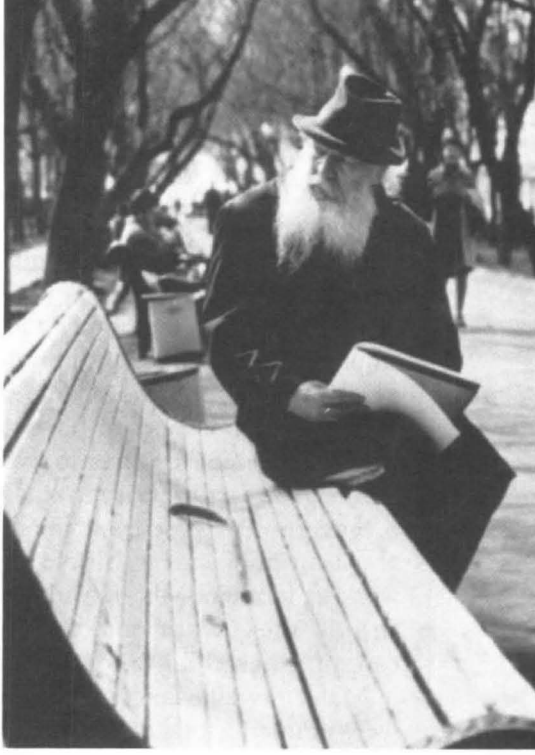
Welfare

In the 1980s, the Soviet government maintained a comprehensive system of social security and social insurance that included old-age retirement and veterans pensions, disability benefits and sick leave compensation, maternity leave and allowances, and subsidies to multichildren and low-income families. Soviet workers did not contribute directly to their social security and insurance coverage; funding was provided by the government and from compulsory deductions from industrial and agricultural enterprises. Most welfare funds were spent on retirement pensions and disability benefits.

Pension System

In 1987 the Soviet Union had 56.8 million pensioners; of this number, 40.5 million were retired with full pensions on the basis of twenty years of service and age eligibility—sixty for men and fifty-five for women. Reduced pensions were paid to those who met the age eligibility requirement and had worked at least five years, three of them uninterrupted, just prior to retirement. Miners and those working under other arduous or hazardous conditions could retire five to ten years earlier. In 1987 Soviet authorities were reducing the retirement age for other groups as well.

Pensions, on the whole, were quite low. The average monthly pension in 1986 was 75.1 rubles, with considerable disparity between the average monthly pension of blue- and white-collar workers (averaging 81.2 rubles for the two categories of workers) and collective farm workers (48 rubles). In fact, the average pension was only slightly above the unofficial level of poverty—or "underprovisioning" (*maloobespechennost'*)—of 70 rubles per month per person. It was likely that millions of pensioners lived under or close to this poverty threshold. Indeed, pensioners made up the majority of the poor. According to figures published in an official Soviet newspaper, in 1985 a minimum of 13.7 million pensioners were receiving pensions far below 70 rubles per month. About 12 million old-age pensioners continued to work, many of them in extremely low-paying jobs, for example, as cloakroom attendants in restaurants and theaters or sweeping metro station interiors and street pavements. Retirees who lived with their children (a common situation, given the extreme housing shortage) obtained some financial relief and in return helped with housework, cooking, and care of small grandchildren. In 1988 about 1 million pensioners lived alone and were by far the worst off, living in almost total neglect and near destitution.



Senior citizen resting in a Moscow park
Courtesy Irene Steckler

Not all pensions were this low, however. A special category of "personal pensions" could be awarded for outstanding political, cultural, scientific, or economic service to the state. In 1988 over 500,000 personal pensioners, including essentially all of the CPSU administrative elite, were receiving pensions of 250 rubles, and even up to 450 rubles, per month. A separate but similar retirement program, known as long-service pensions, was maintained for some groups of white-collar workers, including teachers, academic and medical personnel, and military retirees. Lowered retirement ages and/or pension augmentations were provided to disabled workers and mothers of large families.

The government operated a small network of homes for the elderly, invalids, and disabled children. In 1986 these "total-care" facilities accommodated 388,000 people, but another 90,000 were on waiting lists.

In 1988–89 the State Committee for Labor and Social Problems (Gosudarstvennyi komitet po trudu i sotsial'nym voprosam—Goskomtrud) was developing a new pension law to replace the outdated laws of 1956 and 1964. Although not expected to become fully effective before 1991, the new law envisioned a guaranteed subsistence wage, a higher ceiling on old-age pensions, and regular cost-of-living increases. Workers could also obtain supplemental pension coverage through a voluntary payroll deduction program introduced in January 1988 and administered by the Main Administration for State Insurance.

Workers' Compensation

In the 1980s, workers were covered by disability insurance. Individuals who were permanently disabled as a result of on-the-job injuries received a pension equal to 100 percent of their wages, irrespective of their length of service. Compensation for sickness or injury causing temporary incapacity to work but unrelated to employment required appropriate physician certification of the illness or injury. Benefits depended on length of service: 50 percent of full wages was paid for fewer than three years of uninterrupted work; 80 percent for three to five years; and 100 percent for more than eight years. Service in the armed forces, time spent in party or government posts, and maternity leave were not considered breaks in employment. Sick leave was also paid to workers (usually working mothers) who stayed home to care for ill family members. In 1987 the government extended the period of paid leave for the care of a sick child to fourteen days.

Maternity allowances were fairly generous. Expectant mothers were granted a total of 112 days of maternity leave, 56 days before and 56 days after the birth of a child, with payment of full wages, irrespective of length of employment. The postnatal leave period was extended to seventy days for women who had multiple or abnormal births. Mothers were entitled to unpaid leave up to the child's first birthday, without a break in their employment record and with the guarantee of returning to their original job.

Other Assistance

Since the mid-1940s, the government has provided financial subsidies to mothers with "many children," meaning two or more. This program had three facets: mothers received a lump-sum grant upon the birth of the third and each subsequent child; they received a monthly subsidy upon the birth of the fourth and each subsequent child; and, beginning with the Eleventh Five-Year-Plan (1981–85), one-time maternity grants (50 rubles for the first child and 100 for the second) were given to working women or female students on a leave-of-absence basis. In 1986 the government paid monthly subsidies to almost 2 million mothers having four or more children.

In addition to pensions and financial subsidies, veterans, invalids, and multichildren families received a number of nonmonetary benefits, such as top consideration for housing, telephones, and priority services in shops and restaurants. In 1985 and again in 1987, the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Council of Ministers, and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions

issued resolutions to improve living conditions of the "underprovisioned," including pensioners, invalids, old people living alone, and single-parent families with three or more children under the age of eighteen and with an average monthly per capita income of 50 rubles (75 rubles in certain regions, for example, the Soviet Far East). This program provided free school, sports, and youth organization uniforms and free breakfasts for children up to the age of sixteen. The resolutions also called for child-support payments by the absent parent of at least 20 rubles per month per child up to the age of eighteen, as well as a government subsidy of 12 rubles per month for each child up to the age of eight. Underprovisioned families were provided free sanatorium and rest-home stays; the children were sent to summer youth camps, as well, at government expense.

Although no official calls for comprehensive restructuring of welfare programs were made, by 1987 and 1988 the policy of *glasnost'* embraced the topic of poverty in the Soviet Union. Numerous articles appeared in the press reflecting a growing concern—on the part of both Soviet officials and the general public—about the number of poor in the Soviet Union, estimated in 1988 to include 20 percent of the population.

The leadership under Gorbachev fully acknowledged the pressing need for improving the quality and availability of education, health care, and welfare services nationwide and seemed genuinely committed to achieving these objectives by the year 2000. But the obstacles to reforms in these spheres were numerous and formidable. The country had to significantly raise funding for these programs, and to do so would require a shift in spending priorities. Moreover, excessive centralization and overbureaucratization in the administration of social services had to be overcome. And the incompatibility of maintaining ideological purity in all aspects of education, on the one hand, and developing in youth the ability to think critically, comparatively, and creatively, on the other hand, had to be reconciled.

* * *

Inside Soviet Schools by Susan Jacoby, an American educator, offers a comprehensive view of the upbringing of Soviet youth from infancy through secondary school. Kitty D. Weaver's *Russia's Future* examines the role of the youth organizations (Young Octobrists, Pioneers, and Komsomol) in the education process. *The Making of the Soviet Citizen,* edited by George Avis, covers school reforms of the 1980s, the dual concept of character formation and formal

education, the role of political indoctrination, and vocational training. *Soviet Politics and Education* by Frank M. Sorrentino and Frances R. Curcio, includes several articles dealing with the role of ideology and political indoctrination in Soviet education. Vadim Medish's *The Soviet Union* provides an excellent chapter on the education system, from the nursery school level through the university level. *Inside Russian Medicine* by William A. Knaus, M.D., an American physician who observed Soviet health care first hand, covers polyclinic and hospital care, emergency services, and psychiatric treatment. *The Medical and Pharmaceutical Sectors of the Soviet Economy* by Christopher Davis discusses the organization and financing of medical care, the medical industry, pharmaceuticals, and foreign trade in medical products. *Economic Welfare in the Soviet Union* by Alastair McAuley discusses the historical background, organization, eligibility requirements, and payments provided by Soviet welfare programs. *Poverty in the Soviet Union* by Mervyn Matthews includes some recent information on old-age pensions and child support payment. Matthews also discusses these topics in his article "Aspects of Poverty in the Soviet Union." (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 7. The Communist Party

Clockwise from bottom: Gorbachev, Brezhnev, Khrushchev, and Stalin

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of the Soviet Union (CPSU) governs the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union). In 1917 the party seized power in Russia as the vanguard of the working class, and it has continued throughout the Soviet period to rule in the name of the proletariat. The party seeks to lead the Soviet people to communism, defined by Karl Marx as a classless society that contains limitless possibilities for human achievement. Toward this end, the party has sought to effect a cultural revolution and create a "new Soviet man" bound by the strictures of a higher, socialist morality.

The party's goals require that it control all aspects of Soviet government and society in order to infuse political, economic, and social policies with the correct ideological content. Vladimir I. Lenin, the founder of the Bolshevik (see Glossary) party and the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution, justified these controls. Lenin formed a party of professional revolutionaries to effect a proletarian revolution in Russia. In the late 1980s, however, the party no longer sought to transform society and was apparently attempting to withdraw itself from day-to-day economic decisions. Nevertheless, it continued to exert control through professional management. Members of the party bureaucracy are full-time, paid officials. Other party members hold full-time positions in government, industry, education, the armed forces, and elsewhere. In addition, Lenin argued that the party alone possesses the correct understanding of Marxist ideology. Thus, state policies that lack an ideological foundation threaten to retard society's advance toward communism. Hence, only policies sanctioned by the party can contribute to this goal. Lenin's position justifies party jurisdiction over the state. The CPSU enforces its authority over state bodies from the all-union (see Glossary) level to that of the district and town. In the office, factory, and farm, the party has established its primary party organizations (PPOs) to carry out its directives.

The role of ideology in the political system and the party's efforts to enforce controls on society demonstrate the party leadership's continuing efforts to forge unity in the party as well as among the Soviet people. Democratic centralism, the method of intraparty decision making, directs lower party bodies unconditionally to execute the decisions of higher party bodies. Party forums from the town and district levels up to the Central Committee bring together party, government, trade union, and economic elites to create a

desired consensus among policy makers. Party training, particularly for officials of the CPSU's permanent bureaucracy, shapes a common understanding of problems and apprises students of the party's current approaches to ideology, foreign affairs, and domestic policy. Party training efforts demand particular attention because of the varied national, class, and educational experiences of CPSU members.

The party exercises authority over the government and society in several ways. The CPSU has acquired legitimacy for its rule; that is, the people acknowledged the party's right to govern them. This legitimacy derives from the party's incorporation of elites from all parts of society into its ranks, the party's depiction of itself as the representative of the forces for progress in the world, and the party's postulated goal of creating a full communist society. Paradoxically, the party's legitimacy is enhanced by the inclusion of certain prerevolutionary Russian traditions into its political style, which provides a sense of continuity with the past. A different source of authority lies in the power of PPO secretaries to implement party policies on the lowest rungs of the Soviet economy. The CPSU obligates members participating in nonparty organizations to meet regularly and ensure that their organizations fulfill the directives the party has set for them. Finally, as part of the *nomenklatura* system, the party retains appointment power for influential positions at all levels of the government hierarchy (higher party bodies hold this power over lower party bodies as well). Taken together, the legitimacy accorded to it and the prerogatives it possesses enable the party to perform its leading role within the Soviet political system.

Lenin's Conception of the Party

The origins of the CPSU lie in the political thought and tactical conceptions of Lenin, who sought to apply Marxism to economically backward, politically autocratic Russia. Toward this end, Lenin sought to build a highly disciplined, monolithic party of professional revolutionaries that was to act as the general staff of the proletarian movement in Russia. Lenin argued that this underground party must subject all aspects of the movement to its control so that the actions of the movement might be guided by the party's understanding of Marxist theory rather than by spontaneous responses to economic and political oppression. Lenin envisaged democratic centralism as the method of internal party decision making best able to combine discipline with the decentralization necessary to allow lower party organs to adapt to local conditions. Democratic centralism calls for free discussion of alternatives, a

vote on the matter at hand, and iron submission of the minority to the majority once a decision is taken. As time passed, however, centralism gained sway over democracy, allowing the leadership to assume dictatorial control over the party.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Lenin's ideas about the proletarian revolutionary party differed from the ideas of Marx. According to Marx, the working class, merely by following its own instincts, would gain rational insight into its plight as the downtrodden product of capitalism. Based on that insight, Marx held, the workers would bring about a revolution leading to their control over the means of production. Further, Marx predicted that the seizure by the proletariat of the means of production (land and factories) would lead to a tremendous increase in productive forces. Freedom from want, said Marx, would liberate men's minds. This liberation would usher in a cultural revolution and the formation of a new personality with unlimited creative possibilities.

As he surveyed the European milieu in the late 1890s, Lenin found several problems with the Marxism of his day. Contrary to what Marx had predicted, capitalism had strengthened itself over the last third of the nineteenth century. The working class in western Europe had not become impoverished; rather, its prosperity had risen. Hence, the workers and their unions, although continuing to press for better wages and working conditions, failed to develop the revolutionary class consciousness that Marx had expected. Lenin also argued that the division of labor in capitalist society prevented the emergence of proletarian class consciousness. Lenin wrote that because workers had to labor ten or twelve hours each workday in a factory, they had no time to learn the complexities of Marxist theory. Finally, in trying to effect revolution in autocratic Russia, Lenin also faced the problem of a regime that had outlawed almost all political activities. Although the autocracy could not enforce a ban on political ideas, until 1905—when the tsar agreed to the formation of a national duma (see Glossary)—the tsarist police suppressed all groups seeking political change, including those with a democratic program.

Based on his observations, Lenin shifted the engine of proletarian revolution from the working class to a tightly knit party of intellectuals. Lenin wrote in *What Is to Be Done* (1902) that the "history of all countries bears out the fact that through their own powers alone, the working class can develop only a trade-union consciousness." That is, history had demonstrated that the working class could engage in local, spontaneous rebellions to improve its position

within the capitalist system but that it lacked the understanding of its interests necessary to overthrow that system. Pessimistic about the proletariat's ability to acquire class consciousness, Lenin argued that the bearers of this consciousness were déclassé intellectuals who made it their vocation to conspire against the capitalist system and prepare for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin also held that because Marx's thought was set forth in a sophisticated body of philosophical, economic, and social analysis, a high level of intellectual training was required to comprehend it. Hence, for Lenin, those who would bring about the revolution must devote all their energies and resources to understanding the range of Marx's thought. They must be professional activists having no other duties that might interfere with their efforts to promote revolution.

Lenin's final alteration of Marx's thought arose in the course of his adaptation of Marxist ideology to the conditions of Russia's autocracy. Like other political organizations seeking change in Russia, Lenin's organization had to use conspiratorial methods and operate underground. Lenin argued for the necessity of confining membership in his organization to those who were professionally trained in the art of combating the secret police.

The ethos of Lenin's political thought was to subject first the party, then the working class, and finally the people to the politically conscious revolutionaries. Only actions informed by consciousness could promote revolution and the construction of socialism and communism in Russia.

The CPSU continues to regard itself as the institutionalization of Marxist-Leninist consciousness in the Soviet Union, and therein lies the justification for the controls it exercises over Soviet society. Article 6 of the 1977 Soviet Constitution refers to the party as the "leading and guiding force of Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organizations and public organizations." The party, precisely because it is the bearer of Marxist-Leninist ideology, determines the general development of society, directs domestic and foreign policy, and "imparts a planned, systematic, and theoretically substantiated character" to the struggle of the Soviet people for the victory of communism.

Democratic Centralism

Democratic centralism involves several interrelated principles: the election of all leadership organs of the party from bottom to top; periodic accounting of party organs before their membership and before superior organs; strict party discipline and the subordination of the minority to the majority; unconditional obligation

Lenin Mausoleum, Red Square, Moscow
House where Lenin was born, Ulyanovsk (formerly Simbirsk), Russian Republic
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard

by lower party bodies to carry out decisions made by higher party bodies; a collective approach to the work of all organizations and leadership organs of the party; and the personal responsibility of all communists to implement party directives.

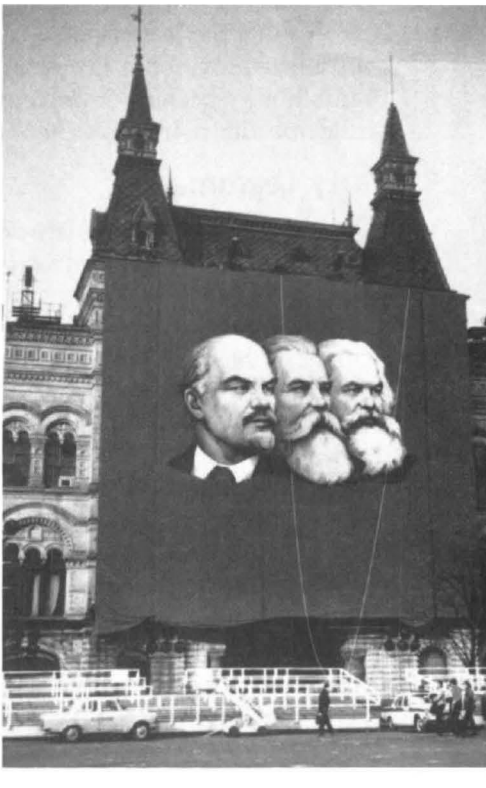
According to American specialist on Soviet affairs Alfred G. Meyer, democratic centralism is primarily centralism under a thin veil of democracy. Democratic centralism requires unanimity on the part of the membership. The concept requires full discussion of policy alternatives before the organization, as guided by the leadership, makes a decision. Once an alternative has been voted upon, however, the decision must be accepted by all. In principle, dissent is possible, but it is allowed only before a decision becomes party policy. After the party makes a decision, party norms discourage criticism of the manner of execution because such criticism might threaten the party's leading role in Soviet society.

The principles of democratic centralism contradict one another. One contradiction concerns the locus of decision making. Democratic centralism prescribes a collective approach to the work of all organizations, which connotes participation of all party members in decision making. Yet, democratic centralism also holds that criticism of agreed-upon policies is permissible only for the top leadership, not for rank-and-file party members. Hence, discussion of these policies can take place only after the leadership has decided to permit it. The leadership will not allow discussions of failed policies, for fear that such discussions will undermine its power and authority.

A second contradiction concerns the issue of accountability. Democratic centralism holds that lower party bodies elect higher party bodies and that the latter are accountable to the former. Nevertheless, democratic centralism also prescribes the unconditional subordination of lower party bodies to higher party bodies. In reality, superiors appoint those who nominally elect them to their positions and tell them what decisions to make (see Nomenklatura, this ch.).

Democratic centralism undermines intraparty democracy because the party has formally proscribed factions. The Tenth Party Congress in 1921 adopted a "temporary" ban on factions in response to the Kronshtadt Rebellion (see Revolutions and Civil War, ch. 2). In 1989 this ban remained in effect. Every party member has the right to express an opinion in the party organization to which he or she belongs. Before a decision is taken, however, party members cannot appeal to other members in support of a given position. Moreover, party members cannot engage in vote trading. In democratic systems, a party member holding a minority position

Banner across a Moscow street reflects the regime's policies in 1989. It reads, "PERESTROIKA, DEMOKRATIZATSIIA, GLASNOST'." Courtesy Jonathan Tetzlaff



May Day banner depicting Lenin, Engels, and Marx, Red Square, Moscow Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard

on an issue can exercise influence if allowed to organize people with similar views and if allowed the opportunity to persuade others. Without these opportunities, democratic procedures remain an empty formality.

Devoid of democratic content, the political and organizational logic of democratic centralism contributed to the emergence of dictatorship in the Soviet Union. Despite the formal ban, in the early 1920s factions emerged in the party because Lenin failed to work out orderly procedures for leadership succession (see The Era of the New Economic Policy, ch. 2). In the absence of these procedures, new leaders had to attempt to cloak their policies in the mantle of ideological orthodoxy. To prevent criticism from rivals, the new leader could label real and potential opponents a faction and, according to the *Party Rules* (see Glossary), which banned factions, take steps to remove them from the party. For example, Nikita S. Khrushchev took these steps against his opponents in 1957 (see Collective Leadership and the Rise of Khrushchev, ch. 2). The leader thus could eliminate real and potential rivals, but ultimately, however, only success in action could prove a leader's policies correct. Success in action required the commitment of the party, and commitment of the party demanded that ordinary party members perceive that the leader possessed infallible judgment. Democratic centralism provided a necessary condition for the leader's claim to infallibility because it prevented ordinary party members from criticizing the policies of the party elite.

Party Legitimacy

Western political scientists define legitimacy as the acceptance by the people of their government's right to rule. Legitimacy emerges from a broad range of sources. In democratic countries, the citizenry holds governments legitimate because citizens participate in the selection of their rulers, and these governments are subject to laws that the people or their representatives have made. Tradition also is a persuasive source of legitimation because it places the origins of institutions and political values in a distant and mythical past. Other governments may acquire legitimacy because they have proved themselves able to ensure the well-being of their people. Legitimacy also may emanate from an ideology (such as communism, fascism, religious orthodoxy, and nationalism) whose adherents portray it as the key to understanding human history and resolving all social problems. In reality, the legitimacy of any government emanates from a combination of these sources.

The legitimacy of the CPSU, too, derived from various sources. The party has managed to recruit a significant percentage of

members having occupations carrying high status in Soviet society. In addition, the party has served as a vehicle of upward mobility for a significant share of the citizenry. By joining the party, members of the working class could ensure a secure future for themselves in the political apparatus and access for their children to a good education and high-status jobs. The party also justified its right to rule by claiming to embody the "science" of Marxism-Leninism and by its efforts to lead society to full communism. In addition, the CPSU appealed to the patriotism of the citizenry. In the more than seventy years of the party's rule, the Soviet Union has emerged as a superpower, and this international status is a source of pride for the Soviet people. Finally, tradition bolstered the legitimacy of the CPSU. The party located its roots in Russian history, and it has incorporated aspects of Russian tradition into its political style.

The CPSU is an elite body. In 1989 it comprised about 9.7 percent of the adult population of the Soviet Union. Among the "movers and shakers" of society, however, the percentage of party members was much higher. In the 1980s, approximately 27 percent of all citizens over thirty years of age and with at least ten years of education were members of the party. About 44 percent of all males over thirty with at least ten years of education belonged to the CPSU. Hence, in the words of American Soviet specialist Seweryn Bialer, males over thirty with at least an elementary education formed a "strong, politicized, and involved stratum which provides a buttress of the system's legitimacy within society."

Among certain occupations, party saturation (the percentage of party members among a given group of citizens) was even higher. In 1989 some occupations were restricted to party members. These positions included officers of youth organizations, senior military officers, and officials of government bodies such as the ministries, state committees, and administrative departments. Occupations with saturation rates ranging from 20 to 50 percent included positions as mid-level economic managers, scholars and academics, and hospital directors. Low saturation existed among jobs that carried low status and little prestige, such as industrial laborers, collective farmers, and teachers. Thus, the party could represent itself as a legitimate governing body because it commanded the talents of the most talented and ambitious citizens in society.

The CPSU derived some legitimacy from the fact that it acted as a vehicle for upward mobility in society. People who have entered the party apparatus since the 1930s have come from a working-class background. The party widely publicized the working-class origins of its membership, which led members of that class to believe

they could enter the elite and be successful within it (see Social Composition of the Party, this ch.).

Another source of party legitimacy lay in Marxist-Leninist ideology, which both promises an absolute good—communism—as the goal of history and shrouds its understanding of the means to that goal with the aura of science. The party justified its rule as leading to the creation of a full communist society. Hence, the CPSU claimed that the purpose of its rule was the common good and not the enrichment of the rulers. The party also identified Marxism-Leninism and the policies that it developed on the basis of this ideology with the absolute truth of science. The CPSU maintained that the laws of this science hold with the same rigor in society as the laws of physics or chemistry in nature. In part, the party justified its rule by claiming that it alone could understand this science of society.

Soviet society has not reached full communism, and so the party has altered its ideology to ensure its continued legitimacy despite the inability to fulfill the promises contained in Marxism-Leninism. One modification has been the rejection of some of Marxism-Leninism's original ideological tenets. For example, in the early 1930s the party renounced an egalitarian wage structure. A second modification has been the indefinite postponement of goals that cannot be realized. Thus, the party continued to assure the populace that the achievement of economic abundance or the completion of proletarian revolutions in developed Western countries would take place, but it did not specify a date. A third modification has been the ritualization of some of the goals whose fulfillment the party has postponed. American scholar Barrington Moore has written that on party holidays CPSU leaders reaffirmed various ideals that no longer served as guides for policy. For example, in his first public address as general secretary in 1984, Konstantin U. Chernenko averred that concern for the development of the new Soviet man remained an essential part of the CPSU's program. In the late 1980s, few accorded that goal much practical import, but the reaffirmation of that objective probably reassured the party faithful that the new leadership would remain true to the CPSU's ideology and traditions.

The party attempted to strengthen its legitimacy with appeals to the pride Soviet citizens feel for their country. The party has led Soviet Russia from the devastation the country suffered in the Bolshevik Revolution and Civil War (1918–21) to victory in World War II over an ancient Russian enemy and then to superpower status. In 1989, moreover, the CPSU could still claim to lead a world communist movement (see Communist Parties

Abroad, ch. 10). Since World War II, Soviet influence has extended to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. A feeling of patriotic pride for these accomplishments united the Soviet elite, and it bound the elite to the masses.

The CPSU has incorporated aspects of traditional Russian culture into its political style. The party drew upon Russia's revolutionary tradition and represented itself as the culmination of a progressive and revolutionary movement that began with the "Decembrists' revolt" of 1825 (see War and Peace, 1796–1825, ch. 1). Most aspects of this revolutionary tradition centered on Lenin. The fact that the state preserved his remains in a mausoleum on Red Square echoed an old Russian Orthodox belief that the bodies of saints do not decay. In addition, the regime bestowed Lenin's name on the second largest city of the Soviet Union, a bust or picture of Lenin decorated all party offices, and quotations from his writings appeared on billboards throughout the country. All Soviet leaders since Lenin have tried to show that they follow Lenin's policies. The CPSU has sought to maintain and strengthen its legitimacy by drawing upon the legacy of this charismatic figure.

Another element of old Russian culture that has entered the CPSU's political style was the cult of the leader (also referred to as cult of personality—see Glossary). The Soviet cult of the leader appropriated a cultural form whose sources lay deep in the Russian past. Cults of saints, heroes, and the just tsar had long existed in Russia. In the 1920s, the cult of Lenin emerged as part of a deliberate policy to gain popular support for the regime. Joseph V. Stalin, who built the most extensive cult of the leader, was reported to have declared that the "Russian people is a tsarist people. It needs a tsar." Stalin assumed the title of generalissimo during World War II, and throughout his rule he was referred to by the title *vozhd'* (leader). Other titles appropriated by Stalin included Leader of the World Proletariat, Great Helmsman, Father of the Peoples, and Genius of Mankind.

Soviet leaders since Stalin have also encouraged the development of their own cults, although on a smaller scale than that of Stalin. These cults of the party leaders replicated that of the just tsar. Like the cult of the just tsar, who was depicted as having remained true to his faith of Russian Orthodoxy, the cults of party leaders such as Khrushchev and Leonid I. Brezhnev represented them as leaders who remained true to their faith in Marxism-Leninism. Like the just tsar, who was depicted as being close to the common people, these leaders represented themselves as having the interests of the common people at heart.

Central Party Institutions

In a political organization like the CPSU, which aims to be monolithic and centralized, central party institutions assume supreme importance. Central institutions in the CPSU included the party congress, the Central Committee, the Central Auditing Commission, the Party Control Committee, the Politburo (political bureau), the Secretariat, and the commissions. These organs made binding decisions for intermediate and local party bodies down to the PPO (see fig. 12).

According to the *Party Rules,* the party congress was the highest authority in the party. This body was too large and unwieldy to exert any influence, however, and its members were appointed either directly or indirectly by those whom it ostensibly elected to the Central Committee and Politburo. Moreover, the party congress met only once every five years. Another large party body of note was the party conference, which met infrequently upon the decision of the Central Committee. The Central Committee itself, which met every six months, theoretically ruled the party between congresses. Although more influential than the party congress and the party conference, the Central Committee wielded less power than the Politburo, Secretariat, and the party commissions.

The Politburo, the Secretariat, and the party commissions paralleled a set of central governmental institutions that included the Council of Ministers and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (see Central Government, ch. 8). The distinction between party and government institutions lay in the difference between policy formation and policy implementation. Stated briefly, the central party institutions made policy, and the government carried it out. The distinction between policy formation and policy implementation was often a narrow one, however, and party leaders frequently involved themselves in carrying out policies in the economic, domestic political, and foreign policy spheres. This problem, known in the Soviet Union as *podmena* (substitution), occurred throughout all party and government hierarchies (see Intermediate-Level Party Organizations, this ch.).

The distinction between policy formation and policy execution also characterized the differences between the Politburo, on the one hand, and the Secretariat and the commissions, on the other hand. The Politburo made policy for the party (as well as for the Soviet Union as a whole). The Secretariat and, apparently, the party commissions produced policy alternatives for the Politburo and, once the latter body made a decision, carried out the Politburo's directives. In fulfilling these roles, of course, the Secretariat often

made policy decisions itself. The Secretariat and the commissions administered a party bureaucracy that numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Through this apparatus, the CPSU Secretariat and the party commissions radiated their influence throughout the middle and lower levels of the party and thereby throughout the government, economy, and society.

The general secretary, as a member of the Politburo and the leader of the Secretariat, was the most powerful official in the CPSU. The general secretary was the chief policymaker, enjoyed the greatest amount of authority in party appointments, and represented the Soviet Union in its dealings with other states. The absence of a set term of office and the general secretary's lack of statutory duties meant that candidates for this position had to compete for power and authority to attain it. Once having been elected to this position, the general secretary had to maintain and increase his power and authority in order to implement his program.

Party Congress

According to the *Party Rules,* the party congress was "the supreme organ" of the CPSU. The First Party Congress took place in 1898 in Minsk, with 9 delegates out of a party membership of about 1,000. In 1986 the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress had 5,000 delegates, or 1 for every 3,670 party members. Delegates were formally elected by republic party congresses or, in the case of the Russian Republic, by conferences of *kraia* (see Glossary), oblasts (see Glossary), and autonomous republics (see Glossary). Attendance at a party congress was largely honorific. Approximately half the delegates were luminaries in the party. The Twenty-Seventh Party Congress included 1,074 important party functionaries, 1,240 executive government officials, 147 distinguished scholars and scientists, 332 high-ranking military officers, and 279 writers and artists. The party reserved the remainder of delegate positions for rank-and-file party members. For the rank and file, attendance at a party congress was a reward for long years of service and loyalty.

Relative to other central party institutions, the size of the party congress was inversely proportional to its importance. Lack of debate and deliberation have been characteristic of party congresses since the Tenth Party Congress in 1921 (see Democratic Centralism, this ch.). Party congresses convened every year until 1925. Thereafter, they began to lose their importance as an authoritative party organ, and the intervals between congresses increased to three or four years. From 1939 to 1952, the party neglected to hold a congress. After Stalin's death in 1953, the party elite decided to convene congresses more frequently. Since the mid-1950s,

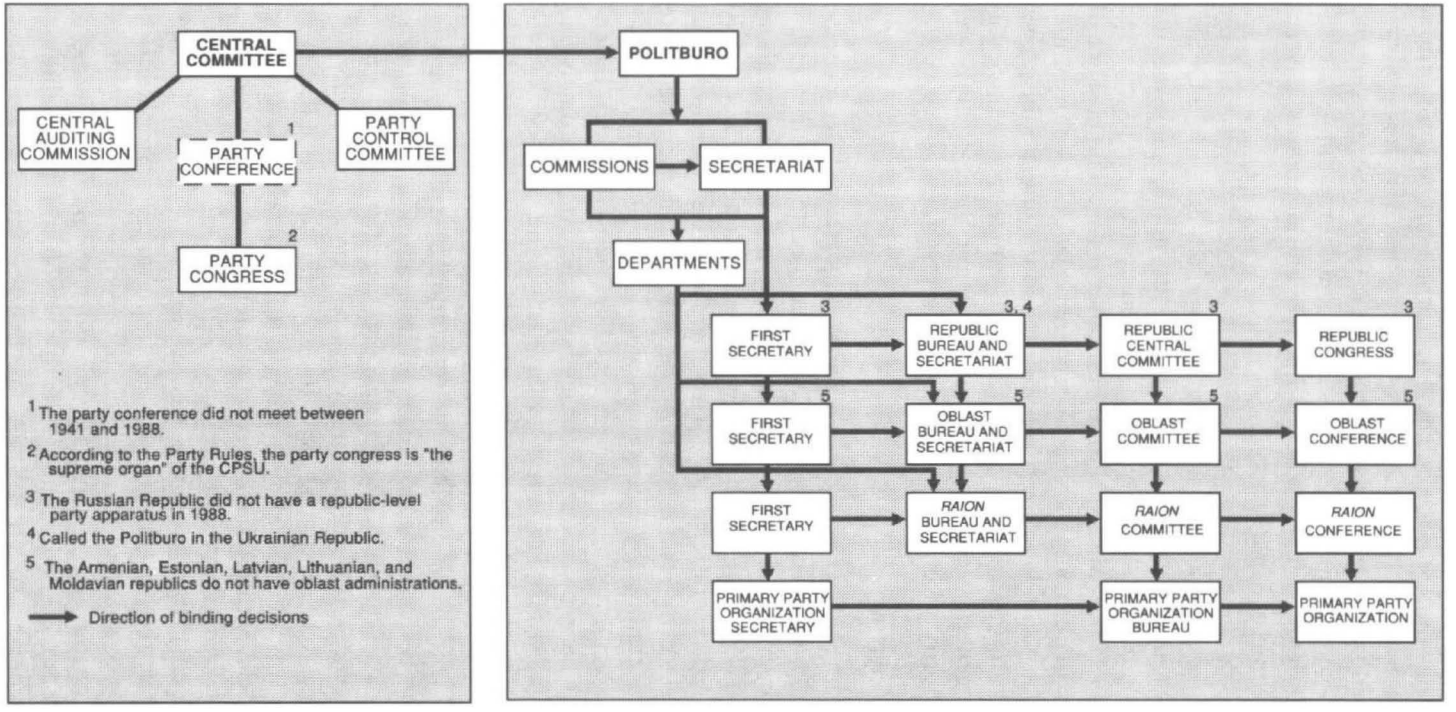


Figure 12. Organization of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1988

the *Party Rules* have stipulated that congresses be held every five years.

Since 1925, however, some notable congresses have taken place. The Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934 praised collectivization and the successes of the First Five-Year Plan (1928–32), and it confirmed Stalin as head of the party and the country. In 1956, at the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev criticized Stalin's cult of personality (see The Khrushchev Era, ch. 2). In 1986, at the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress, General Secretary Mikhail S. Gorbachev attempted to break with Stalin's legacy by enunciating policies calling for more openness (*glasnost'*—see Glossary) in Soviet life and for restructuring (*perestroika*—see Glossary).

The party congress normally met for about a week. The most important event occurred when the general secretary delivered the political report on the state of the party, reviewed Soviet economic and foreign policy over the preceding five years, cited achievements and problems of the world communist movement, and delivered a prospectus for the next five years. In another important speech, the chairman of the Council of Ministers presented the targets for the next five-year plan. These two speeches provided the setting for a number of shorter speeches that followed. Republic party secretaries, oblast committee (*oblast' komitet*—*obkom*) secretaries, and government officials offered very formalized comment on the policies enunciated by the general secretary. The central apparatus also selected a few rank-and-file members to give speeches praising party policies. Finally, the congress listened to brief reports given by secretaries of foreign communist and workers' parties friendly to Moscow. Some party congresses adopted a broad statement called the party program (see Glossary).

While in session, the party congress voted on several kinds of issues. All decisions were unanimous. The congress enacted a series of resolutions that stemmed from the general secretary's political report, and those resolutions became party policy until the next congress. In addition, the party leadership could offer changes in the *Party Rules* to the congress. Most important, the party congress formally elected the members of the Central Committee, which it charged to govern the party until the next congress.

Party Conference

Similar in size to the congress was the party conference, although unlike the congress it did not meet regularly. The Nineteenth Party Conference—the most recent—took place in 1988. (The Eighteenth Party Conference had been convened in 1941.) Officially, the conference ranked third in importance among party meetings, after

the congress and the Central Committee plenum. Oblast and district party leaders handpicked most of the delegates to the Nineteenth Party Conference, as they had for party congresses in the past, despite Gorbachev's desire that supporters of reform serve as delegates. Nevertheless, public opinion managed in some instances to pressure the party apparatus into selecting delegates who pressed for reform.

The Nineteenth Party Conference made no personnel changes in the Central Committee, as some Western observers had expected. However, the conference passed a series of resolutions signaling policy departures in a number of areas. For example, the resolution "On the Democratization of Soviet Society and the Reform of the Political System" called for the creation of a new, powerful position of chairman of the Supreme Soviet, limited party officeholders to two five-year terms, and prescribed multicandidate elections to a new Congress of People's Deputies (see Congress of People's Deputies, ch. 8). The conference passed other resolutions on such topics as legal reform, interethnic relations, economic reform, *glasnost',* and bureaucracy.

By convening the Nineteenth Party Conference approximately two years after initiating his reform program, Gorbachev hoped to further the democratization of the party, to withdraw the party from many aspects of economic management, and to reinvigorate government and state institutions. He also sought to rouse the party rank and file against the bureaucracy. In this vein, the conference was a success for Gorbachev because it reaffirmed his program of party-directed change from above.

Central Committee

The Central Committee met at least once every six months in plenary session. Between party congresses, the *Party Rules* required that the Central Committee "direct all the activities of the party and the local party organs, carry out the recruitment and the assignment of leading cadres, direct the work of the central governmental and social organizations of the workers, create various organs, institutions, and enterprises of the party and supervise their activities, name the editorial staff of central newspapers and journals working under its auspices, disburse funds of the party budget and verify their accounting." In fact, the Central Committee, which in 1989 numbered more than 300 members, was too large and cumbersome to perform these duties; therefore, it delegated its authority in these matters to the Politburo and Secretariat.

The history of the Central Committee dates to 1898, when the First Party Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party

elected a three-person body to run its affairs. In May 1989, the Central Committee had 251 full members and 109 candidate members. (Candidate members do not have the right to vote.)

Western scholars know little about the selection processes for membership on the Central Committee. British Sovietologists Ronald J. Hill and Peter Frank have suggested that the party leadership drew up a list of candidates before the party congress. Party leaders then discussed the list and presented it to the congress for ratification. Both personal merit and institutional affiliation determined selection, with the majority of members selected because of the positions they held. Such positions included republic party first and second secretaries; *obkom* secretaries; chairmen of republic, provincial, and large urban governmental bodies; military leaders; important writers and artists; and academics.

During periods of policy change, turnover in the Central Committee occurred at a rapid rate. A new leadership, seeking to carry out new policies, attempted to replace officials who might attempt to block reform efforts with its own supporters. Thus, at the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress, the first for Gorbachev as general secretary, the rate of turnover for full members was 41 percent, as compared with 25 percent at the Twenty-Sixth Party Congress in 1981. In addition, of the 170 candidate members elected by the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress, 116 (or 68 percent) were new.

Gorbachev effected further changes at the April 25, 1989, Central Committee plenum. As a result of personnel turnover because of death, retirement, or loss of position since the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress, a significant percentage of the Central Committee had come to be classified as "dead souls," that is, people who no longer occupied the position that had originally gained them either full or candidate status in the Central Committee. At the April 25 plenum, seventy-four full members resigned their Central Committee positions. Twenty-four members received promotion to full-member status. (The *Party Rules* dictate that only the party congress can name new candidate members and that a plenum can only promote new full members from among the pool of candidate members.)

The changes signified a reduction of influence for both the party apparatus and the military. Party apparatchiks (see Glossary) declined from 44.5 percent to 33.9 percent of the full members. The military's representation fell from 8.5 percent to 4.4 percent among the full members.

Worker and peasant representation rose from 8.5 percent to 14.3 percent. But because members of these groups lacked an independent political base, they usually supported the general secretary.

Thus, the changes indicated a victory for Gorbachev. He eliminated many Central Committee members who lost power under his rule and were therefore considered opponents of reform. Gorbachev also increased the number of his own supporters in the Central Committee.

The Central Committee served significant functions for the party. The committee brought together the leaders of the most important institutions in Soviet society, individuals who had the same rank in the institutional-territorial hierarchy. The Central Committee thus provided a setting for these organizational and territorial interests to communicate with one another, articulate their concerns, and reconcile their positions on various issues. Membership in the Central Committee defined the political elite and reinforced their high status. This status lent the committee members the authority necessary to carry out policies in their respective institutions. Members also possessed a great deal of expertise in their respective fields and could be consulted by the Central Committee apparatus in preparing policy recommendations and resolutions for plenums, party conferences, and party congresses.

Central Auditing Commission

Every party congress elected a Central Auditing Commission, which reviewed the party's financial accounts and the financial activities of its institutions. The commission also investigated the treatment accorded to letters and complaints by the party's central institutions. The status of membership on the Central Auditing Commission appeared to fall just below that of candidate status on the Central Committee. In 1989 the commission had seventy members. The commission elected a bureau, which in May 1989 was headed by Deputy Chairman Alla A. Nizovtseva.

Party Control Committee

The Party Control Committee, which was attached to the Central Committee, investigated violations of party discipline and administered expulsions from the party. Because it examined the work of party members in responsible economic posts, this committee could involve itself in financial and economic management. The Party Control Committee also could redress grievances of party members who had been expelled by their PPO. In 1989 its chairman was Boris K. Pugo.

Politburo

Two weeks before the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, the Bolshevik leadership formed the Politburo as a means to further centralize