

**Questions and
Answers on**

PROPERTY

(Public and Private)

IN THE USSR

A "SOVIET NEWS" BOOKLET

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PROPERTY
(Private and Public)
IN THE U.S.S.R.

Questions and Answers

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THE QUESTIONS

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PROPERTY

(Private and Public)

IN THE U.S.S.R.

1. What forms of property are there in the U.S.S.R. ?

IN the U.S.S.R. socialist ownership of the instruments and means of production predominates; it is the foundation of the Soviet economy. Public, socialist property has two forms: state property (belonging to the

whole people), and co-operative and collective farm property, that is, the property of co-operative organisations and the property of peasant collective farms.

Being different forms of socialist property, both preclude the exploitation of man by man. The firm establishment of social ownership led to the development of the socialist system of economy, which has become the source of the steadily rising material well-being and cultural standard of the people as a whole and of every individual separately.

Alongside the socialist system of economy, which is the predominant form of economy in the U.S.S.R., the law permits the small private economy of individual peasants and handicraftsmen based on their own labour and precluding enrichment at the expense of the labour of others.

The personal property of Soviet citizens consists of the things owned by them and used for the satisfaction of their personal requirements.

The right to own property in Soviet socialist society is ensured by the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. and is protected by law.

2. What is state property?

THE land, its mineral wealth, waters, forests, mills, factories, mines, rail, water and air transport, banks, communications, large state organised agricultural enterprises (state farms, machine and tractor stations,

and the like), and also municipal enterprises and the bulk of the dwelling houses in the cities and industrial localities, are state property in the U.S.S.R.

All of this wealth is the property of the whole people. None of it is owned by individuals or groups of citizens. It cannot be sold, mortgaged or alienated for debt. Instruments and means of production are transferred from one state organisation to another only on the order of the appropriate organs of state administration.

State property is used and disposed of on behalf and in the interests of the people by the socialist state of workers and peasants.

3. How did state property arise? What part does it play in the national economy of the U.S.S.R.?

STATE property arose and was firmly established in the U.S.S.R. in the process of the changes effected by the Great October Socialist Revolution, as a result of the liquidation of the capitalist system of economy, the abolition of private ownership of the instruments and means of

production, and the elimination of the exploitation of man by man.

On the day following the victory of the 1917 October Revolution, the Congress of Soviets—the country's highest organ of power—adopted the historic "Decree on Land", by virtue of which all land in the republic, including all landlord estates with their buildings, livestock and implements, was declared public, state property.

The nationalised land was turned over to the working people for use free of charge. All minerals (oil, coal, ores and so on), forests and waters became the property of the whole people. The banks, merchant fleet and a number of the larger factories were nationalised at the end of 1917, and in 1918 the railways, foreign trade, the coal, iron and steel, oil, chemical, engineering, textile, sugar refining, and other branches of large-scale industry, municipal enterprises, large capitalist real estate holdings and large trading establishments.

With these key positions of the national economy in its hands, the Soviet workers' and peasants' government was able to win victory in the fight against home and foreign enemies. Concentration of the instruments and means of production into a single fund of state property made possible the practical socialist planning of the national economy.

The Soviet planned economy has shown its great superiority in peace as well as in war. It is only because the means of production were socialised that the working people of the Soviet country could rebuild Russia's backward economy into an advanced and constantly developing socialist economy. The following figures give an indication of the rate of growth of national property in the U.S.S.R. in twenty-eight years: from 1925 to 1953, industrial output in the Soviet Union increased twenty-nine times

over, and the output of means of production fifty-five times.

State property—property of the whole people—is the predominant form of property in the U.S.S.R., and it is on the basis of its expansion and consolidation that the other form of socialist property—co-operative and collective farm property—has come into being and developed.

4. What is co-operative and collective farm property?

CO-OPERATIVE and collective farm property constitutes the common enterprises of co-operative organisations and collective farms, with their livestock and implements, the products of the co-operative organisa-

tions and collective farms, and the money realised from their sale, and also their common buildings.

The land is not owned by the collective farms or the co-operative organisations, since it belongs to the whole people. The Soviet state has ensured the land to the collective farms for use free of charge and for an unlimited time, that is, in perpetuity. This is certified in an instrument which each collective farm has received from the state.

The property of the collective farms and the co-operative organisations is not at the disposal of the Soviet state. This property belongs entirely to the individual collective farms and co-operatives. In contrast to state property, therefore, this property is group property.

Co-operative and collective farm property has the following features:

1. It arose through the voluntary collectivisation of the means of production, which formerly were the private property of small owners.
2. It is developing on the basis of collective labour in conformity with the objectives of the socialist national economic plans.
3. The use of the means and instruments of production belonging to co-operative organisations and collective farms precludes the possibility of exploitation of man by man.

All this signifies that co-operative and collective farm property is of the same type as state property (property belonging to the whole people), and that it is therefore socialist property.

Collective farms are guided in their activity by the Rules of the Agricultural Artel adopted by the collective farm peasantry.

The peasants who have joined together to form a collective farm are complete owners of the collective farm property, which is disposed of by the general membership meeting of the collective farmers, the highest management body in the collective farm. It approves production and other economic plans of the collective farm, its budget, the amount of its fixed assets, and distributes the income. The general membership meeting thus decides how the collective farm property is to be used, what part of it should be set aside to meet the general needs, and what part is to be distributed among the members.

The executive body elected by the collective farmers—the collective farm board—is entrusted with specific rights for managing the collective farm property. However, the board acts only in conformity with the decisions adopted by the general membership meetings of the collective farmers.

The system of possessing, using and disposing of property by co-operatives is the same. The members of the co-operatives are the sole owners of the co-operative property and they alone, and the managing bodies elected by them, dispose of that property.

The Soviet laws protect the property rights of collective farms and co-operative organisations.

5. *How did co-operative and collective farm property arise? How did it grow?*

CO-OPERATIVE and collective farm property arose as early as the first months following the October Revolution, through working peasants, artisans and handicraftsmen voluntarily collectivising their property. Seeing the advantages of large-scale

production from the daily example of the Soviet state enterprises, they voluntarily joined their small private economies into farming, producers' and marketing co-operatives and artels, taking the path of joint, collective labour. The workers' and peasants' state encouraged the organisation of collective enterprises, helping them with machinery, money, people, advice and guidance.

The process of collectivisation reached especially wide scope in the Soviet village between 1929 and 1934. By that time the country had created a new and powerful industry, which began to turn out on a large scale tractors, combines and other modern machinery, and mineral fertilisers for agriculture. The success of the first collective farms (*kolkhoz*) showed the peasants the superiority of collective farming. In addition, the state-organised machine and tractor stations (M.T.S.) rendered the collective farms a great deal of help, doing the more arduous work with machines.

As a result of all this, the Soviet peasants started to join the collective farms *en masse* (whole villages at a time), they expropriated the rural bourgeoisie—the *kulaks*—who hindered collective farm development.

The peasants collectivised their draught animals, agricultural implements (ploughs, seeders, threshers, mowing machines), stocks of seed, as much fodder as was needed for the upkeep of the collectivised livestock, and farm buildings and enterprises required for carrying on the common husbandry.

However, everything required to carry on the personal subsidiary husbandry (dwelling house, some of the productive livestock, poultry, certain buildings and minor agricultural implements for use on the household plot) was not collectivised, but remained the personal property of the collective farm household.

That is how the Soviet peasants carried out solid collectivisation in order to operate their farms on a socialist basis.

That is how co-operative and collective farm property arose, through the working peasants' voluntary collectivisation of their resources.

As a result of the great agrarian reforms, by 1937 the collective farm peasantry already had 370 million hectares (nearly 914 million acres) of farm land, compared with the 135 million hectares (about 333½ million acres) which the working peasants had before the Revolution. Before the Revolution the peasants spent more than 700 million gold roubles a year on rent or on buying land, and for that purpose they had to sell or pay in kind to the landlords over a thousand million poods (well over 16 million tons) of grain a year. These material values now remain in the peasant husbandry.

Soviet peasants do not have to buy or rent land, or spend money to acquire the principal instruments of production, such as tractors, combines, and so on. All these means of agricultural production the collective farms get from the state: the land for use free of charge and in perpetuity, and the machines for working the fields for a small fee under contracts with the machine and tractor stations.

In place of the 25 million peasant farms which operated before collectivisation, the U.S.S.R. today has 94,000 collective farms, and they are served by 8,950 machine and tractor stations. In addition, 4,700 state farms help the peasant collective farmers to increase the efficiency of farm production. The machine and tractor stations lighten the labour of the peasant by performing some three-quarters of all agricultural operations on the collective farms, and, in particular, practically all of the ploughing.

More and more electricity is used for production purposes on the collective farms and the latest scientific achievements are applied. The collective farms have become highly developed diversified farming enterprises with high incomes. The collective farms' indivisible funds doubled between 1940 and 1952, and the real income of the collective farmers today is several times that of the working farmers before the Revolution.

In 1953 the Soviet government put through a number of new measures providing economic incentives for the collective farms and collective farmers, as a result of which their incomes (owing to those measures alone) increased by over 13,000 million

roubles. The same year the government spent around 52,000 million roubles on the further development of agriculture, and the collective farms themselves put more than 17,000 million roubles into their common husbandry from their own funds.

These data show how, on the basis of collective labour and the steady growth of state property, the common husbandry of the collective farms is growing richer, co-operative and collective farm property is increasing, and the prosperity of the collective farmers is rising and their personal property multiplying.

All this in turn explains also why the Soviet peasants are vitally interested in the growth of state property and commonly-owned collective farm property and do everything to promote it.

6. What is the attitude of the Soviet state to private property acquired through work ?

THE private property of the landlords, capitalists and kulaks, which was used to exploit the working people, was liquidated in the Soviet Union, but private property based on work was not confiscated, since it did not serve to exploit the labour of others. With the peasants

forming collective farms and the handicraftsmen producers' co-operatives, small private property, as we have seen (*see answer No. 5*), gradually became the common property of the very same citizens united in the collective farms or co-operatives. This uniting together was strictly voluntary.

The peasant or handicraftsman who does not want to join a collective farm or a co-operative has the right to operate his private economy. This right is ensured by the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. (*Article 9*). But the private economy must be based exclusively on the peasant's or handicraftsman's own labour. Hired labour in private economy is expressly prohibited by the Constitution. Hence, the only private enterprises in the Soviet Union are enterprises based on the labour of the owners themselves.

Individual peasants, and handicraftsmen not belonging to a co-operative, use state land, within fixed limits, for carrying on

their enterprise, and have their own instruments of production required for the purpose. Individual peasants, for example, may have a horse, plough and other agricultural implements, and a handicraftsman may have as his own property the tools, machines and materials he requires.

Both the instruments of production and the things produced by these people belong to them and may be disposed of by them under the right of ownership.

The things produced by working owners of private enterprises are sold by them on the market, and the income realised from the sale of their products also becomes the property of the individual peasant or handicraftsman.

It should be noted that the proportion of individual enterprises in the U.S.S.R. is insignificant. The peasants and handicraftsmen have found it much more profitable to work in a co-operative enterprise than to operate an enterprise on their own.

7. What constitutes a citizen's personal property in the U.S.S.R. ? How does it differ from private capitalist property ?

THE overwhelming mass of citizens of the Soviet Union are not engaged in private enterprise but take part in the public economy, working in a state enterprise, organisation or institution or in a collective farm or co-operative. Citizens are paid for their work either in the form of wages—at state enter-

prises and institutions; or in the form of a definite share of the income in kind and cash—in the collective farms and co-operatives. The income from work is the personal property of Soviet citizens. Those Soviet citizens who want to, deposit some of their income in a savings bank.

Towns people live in houses belonging to the state, paying a very small rent, which amounts to about 4 per cent of their income. Citizens, however, may have their own one- or two-storey houses with from one to five rooms (exclusive of kitchen and bathroom) in town or outside the town.

The local organs of power (executive committees of city and district Soviets, and so on) are obliged to render citizens help in acquiring their own homes. Plots of land for building homes are assigned to citizens; in towns the plots come to 600 square metres (about 6,500 square feet) and outside the town to 1,200 square metres (about 13,000 square feet). These plots are provided free for use in perpetuity.

In addition, prefabricated brick and wooden houses are put up and sold to individual citizens; they include central heating, gas, water, sewers and other amenities.

Incomes and savings from work, their houses and subsidiary home enterprises, articles of domestic economy and household utensils, articles of personal use and convenience are thus the personal property of citizens.

The Soviet Government grants citizens plots of land for their use, and everything raised on these plots is the personal property of the citizens to dispose of as they please.

In general, a Soviet citizen has the exclusive right to dispose of all property which is his personal property in the way he thinks fit. If he has a house of his own, he may live in it, rent it out

to others, make a gift of it, sell it, mortgage it or use it for other transactions permitted by law.

All this notwithstanding, personal property of Soviet citizens differs sharply from private capitalist property. Private capitalist property consists of means of production (land, mills, factories, and so on) which are used for getting unearned income, for the exploitation of man by man.

The personal property of citizens of the U.S.S.R. comprises only objects which go to satisfy personal requirements and which cannot be used for the exploitation of the labour of others.

Thus the characteristic feature of personal property of Soviet citizens is that it is meant for consumption.

8. What does the personal property of a collective farm household consist of?

THE main source of personal property of the collective farm household is the income from the common collective husbandry. However, each household has its subsidiary husbandry, which is of secondary importance only.

A collective farm household may have as personal property minor agricultural implements required for cultivating the subsidiary plot, and farm buildings. It goes without saying that collective farmers' articles of personal use and convenience, like those of all other Soviet citizens, are their personal property.

For carrying on its subsidiary economy, a collective farm household receives from the collective farm a plot of land the size of which is fixed by the Rules of the Agricultural Artel; depending upon the locality, it ranges from a quarter to a half of a hectare (1 hectare=2.471 acres), and in special cases up to a hectare, not counting the land on which the dwelling house stands.

The produce raised on the plot (potatoes, vegetables and fruit) is also the personal property of the collective farm household, and is used to satisfy the personal requirements of the collective farm family or is sold on the market.

The number of livestock a collective household may have as personal property is fixed by the Rules of the Agricultural Artel

in accordance with what branch of agricultural production predominates in the particular area.

In the purely crop-growing areas, each collective farm household may have as personal property a cow, two head of young cattle, one or two sows with litters, up to ten sheep and goats, any number of poultry and rabbits and up to 20 beehives.

In agricultural areas where livestock raising is developed, a collective farm household may have as personal property two or three cows and also young animals, from two to three sows with their litters, from 20 to 25 sheep and goats, any number of poultry and rabbits and up to 20 beehives. Among such areas are the agricultural areas of Kazakhstan, the Polesie areas of Byelorussia, the Chernigov and Kiev regions of the Ukraine, and districts of the Barabinsk Steppe in Siberia.

In areas where land cultivation is of minor importance and livestock raising plays the decisive role in the economy, a collective farm household may have as personal property from four to five cows and also young animals, from 30 to 40 sheep and goats, from two to three sows with their litters, any number of poultry and rabbits, up to 20 beehives, and also one horse or one milch mare, or two camels, two donkeys or two mules.

Examples of such areas are the livestock raising districts of Kazakhstan, Turkmenia, Tajikistan, Karakalpakia and Kirghizia, Khakassia, the western part of Buryat Mongolia, the mountainous districts of the Daghestan, Kabardinian and North Ossetian Autonomous Republics, and the mountainous districts of the Azerbaijan, Armenian and Georgian Republics.

In areas where land cultivation is negligible and stock raising is the universal form of economy, as for example, certain areas of Kazakhstan and Buryat-Mongolia, a collective farm household may have as personal property from eight to ten cows and also young animals, from 100 to 150 sheep and goats, an unlimited number of poultry, up to ten horses and from five to eight camels.

Under the Rules of the Agricultural Artel, the board of management of a collective farm, in case of need, may lend horses from the draught animals to serve the personal needs of members of the collective farm.

9. Is the personal property of Soviet citizens increasing?

YES, it is increasing. The increase is ensured by the steady advance of the entire national economy of the U.S.S.R. and the resulting higher material standard of life of the Soviet people.

Labour productivity in the Soviet socialist economy is constantly growing on the basis of the extensive development of mechanisation. The resulting steadily increasing output per worker makes for higher earnings. And since each year prices are reduced in the U.S.S.R., the real wages of Soviet citizens are also growing all the time. In 1953 alone, the real income per factory and office worker went up more than 13 per cent, and for the four-year period ending with 1953 the income of factory and office workers and collective farmers rose 60 per cent, if the reduction of state retail prices is taken into account.

People in the U.S.S.R. buy more and more consumer goods from year to year, satisfying their requirements more and more fully. This is what is meant by the personal property of Soviet citizens increasing. That is testified to also by the constantly increasing amount of savings deposits. The balance of savings deposits in 1953 was five times as much as in the pre-war year 1940.

Also attesting to the rising income of the population are the retail sales figures. In 1953, retail sales by state and co-operative establishments were 79 per cent higher than in 1940.

In 1953, the population bought 38 per cent more clocks and watches than in 1952, 39 per cent more furniture, 2.3 times as many vacuum cleaners, 64 per cent more television sets, 55 per cent more motor cycles, 26 times as many motor cars, and so on.

The Government of the U.S.S.R. and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union are giving constant attention to improving the well-being of the people. In August 1953 a new agricultural tax law was adopted, under which the tax on the personal subsidiary husbandry of the collective farmers was cut by more than half and a new basis was fixed for calculating it, so as to stimulate livestock raising by collective farmers in their personal husbandry. Moreover, exemptions are provided by the law for collective farm house-

holds which have no cows of their own, to enable them to acquire cows as soon as possible.

The Government and Communist Party have set the task of bringing up, by October 1, 1954, the number of cows in the personal husbandry of the collective farmers and of factory and office workers to 16 million; of sheep and goats to 26,900,000; of pigs to 8½ million, and so on.

Thus, along with a higher income from the commonly operated collective farm enterprise, the collective farmers will receive income from their personal subsidiary husbandry.

The achievements in the development of heavy industry have made it possible to undertake a broad programme for substantially increasing the production of consumer goods. To this end the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. and the Central Committee of the Communist Party adopted a number of measures for the further development of retail trade, expansion of production and improvement of quality of foodstuffs and manufactures. Compared with 1950, sales in 1955 of domestic refrigerators, washing machines and vacuum cleaners are to go up more than ten-fold, of radio and television sets 4.4 times, of bicycles 5.5 times, of sewing machines 5.1 times, and so on.

Along with making provision for citizens to increase their personal property, the Soviet government also protects this property in every way. Soviet legislation provides that in the event of any encroachment on the personal property or violation of the rights of an owner, the owner is entitled to restitution and the persons guilty are to be punished.

Under the law the owner of property found in the possession of another is entitled to retrieve it, and not only the property itself but also all income which the unlawful possessor had derived or could have derived from the property for the entire time he held it illegally.

If anyone causes damage to property, the owner is entitled to proper reimbursement for the damage from the person responsible.

Larceny, or attacking another person with the aim of seizing his property are criminal offences punishable by law.

10. What rights have husband and wife to personal property ?

UNDER Soviet legislation covering marriage and the family, all property which belonged to the parties before the marriage remains the personal property of each party. It does not become joint property on marriage.

Each party has the right to dispose of his or her property as he or she sees fit and the other party may not restrict this right in any way. Where, for instance, the wife had a motor car before marriage, it remains her private property also after marriage.

All property acquired by the couple during their married life is regarded as their joint property, and this property may be disposed of by them only by mutual agreement. With respect to joint property, the husband and wife have equal rights. This is another example of the equal rights with men enjoyed by women in the U.S.S.R. in all spheres of economic and public life.

In the case of divorce, the joint property is divided equally between them.

The husband or wife may freely enter into lawful transactions covering his or her property with other persons and also with one another.

The personal property of the peasant family has certain specific features which distinguish it from other personal property. The household property is joint property, and the articles of personal use (clothing, shoes, musical instruments, and so on) are the personal property of the individual members of the household. All articles which are used in common by all members of the family (the house, other buildings, implements, livestock, furniture, and so on) are the joint property of all members of the household.

In the event of a household being divided up, or individual members leaving it, the joint property is equally divided among the members of the household, irrespective of sex or age.

11. Does the right of inheritance obtain in the U.S.S.R. ?

YES, citizens have the right to inherit personal property.

The right of inheritance in the Soviet Union combines maximum freedom for the citizen to dispose of his personal property with the pro-

tection of the interests of his family, and especially of minors and disabled members.

Every Soviet citizen has the right to dispose of his property by will. If a citizen dies intestate, his property passes on to the persons designated by law as heirs.

The law recognises as heirs children (including adopted children), the surviving spouse and the deceased's disabled parents and other disabled persons who were dependents of the deceased for not less than a year before his death. If there are no such persons, or if such persons do not accept the property of the deceased, the law recognises able-bodied parents as heirs, and if there are none, then the brothers and sisters of the deceased. The Soviet Union thus has a definite order of succession. Brothers and sisters, for instance, can be heirs if the deceased has neither children, nor a surviving spouse, parents or disabled dependents, or if they refuse the inheritance.

Grandchildren and great-grandchildren inherit in the following case: if a child of a person leaving property dies before the estate is divided, the share the child would have received passes to his children (the decedent's grandchildren) and in the event of the latter dying, then to their children (the decedent's great-grandchildren).

A Soviet citizen may will his property to any one of those who are recognised as heirs under the law or to state or public organisations. He may leave it all to one or several heirs, depriving all others of a share, or he may fix the share of each heir differently from what the law provides. However, he may not deprive his children who are minors or disabled heirs of the share they are entitled to under the law.

If a citizen has no one recognised as an heir under the law, he may will his property to anybody.

Any controversy involving inheritance is decided by a court of law.

12. Why are Soviet citizens interested in strengthening and developing socialist property, property belonging to the whole people?

CITIZENS of the Soviet Union are interested in strengthening and developing public, socialist property because this property belongs to the people, that is, to themselves. It is primarily on the development of this public property that the welfare of all citizens of the U.S.S.R., the material standard of life of every individual citizen

depends, since everything that is produced in state mills and factories goes for the use of citizens, or becomes their personal property, or is used by the state to meet public requirements, that is, in the interests of every Soviet citizen. Hence, the more the Soviet state builds, the more products it turns out in its enterprises, the more food and manufactures go to the citizens and the more fully are the rising requirements of the population satisfied.

In 1953, for instance, on the basis of the new advance of the socialist economy and growth of socialist property there was again a considerable rise in the real wages of workers and real income of the peasants and the purchasing power of all sections of the population went up.

As proof of this it is enough to point out that that year retail sales (in comparable prices) by state and co-operative shops were 21 per cent more than the year before, and in the second half of the year they were 26 per cent more than in the corresponding period of 1952.

Money put into state housing construction in 1953 was 11 per cent more. Housing construction by state enterprises and institutions, local Soviets and people living in cities or industrial settlements, the latter with the aid of government loans, came to a total area of over 28 million square metres (about 301½ million square feet).* The same year over 400,000 new houses were built by individuals in rural localities.

Further expansion by the Soviet Government of the network of health institutions enabled close on 12,000 more persons to

* Soviet figures for housing do not include space devoted to kitchens, bathrooms, lavatories, halls and passageways.

stay at sanatoriums and rest homes in 1953 than in 1952.

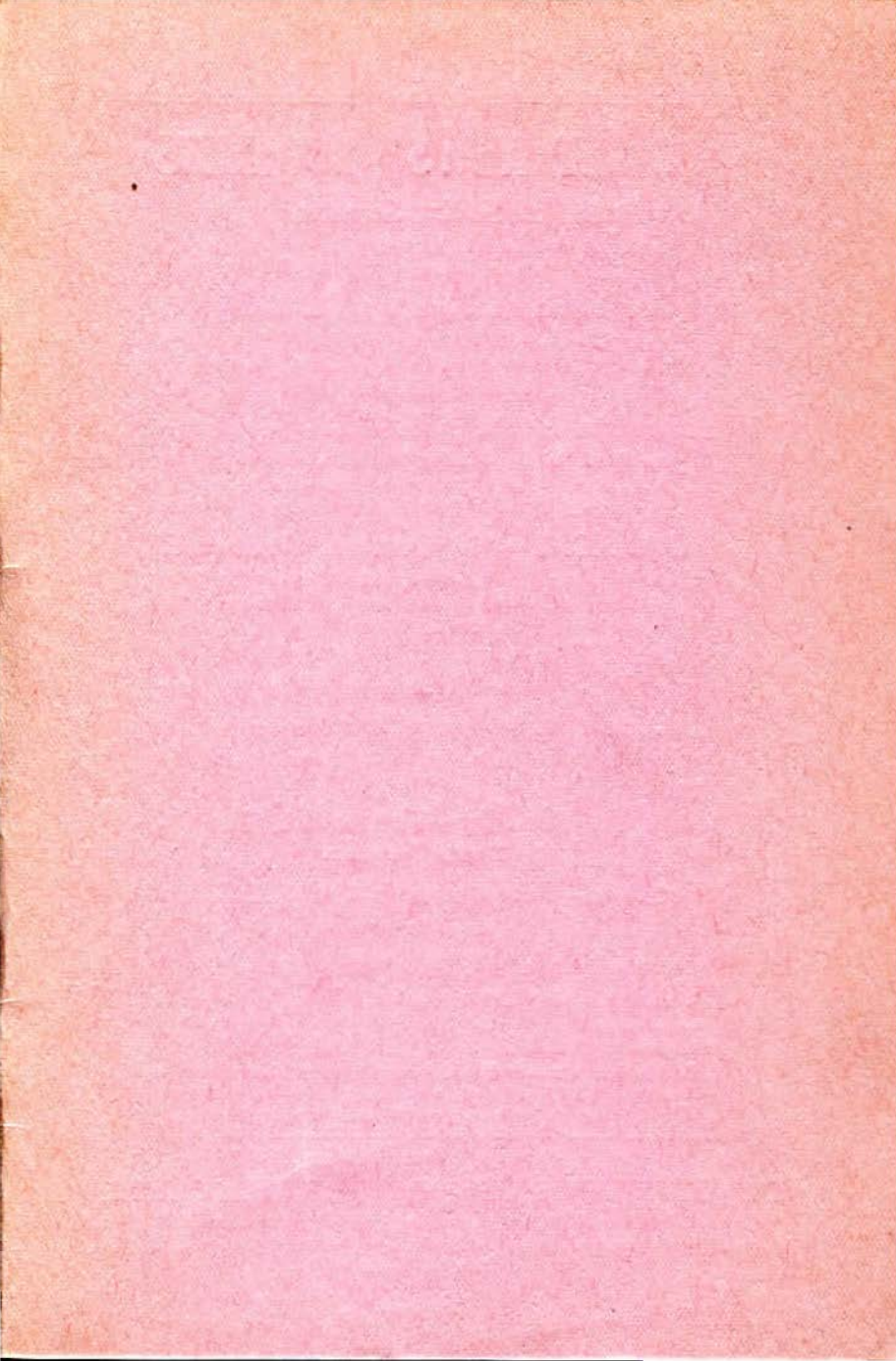
As Soviet industrial enterprises are the property of the people, they are used in the interests of the people. Hence, with expanded production of consumer goods, increased labour productivity in state enterprises and lower costs of production, prices of manufactures and foodstuffs are regularly reduced. Between 1947 and 1954 there were seven reductions of retail prices, or one each year. The price level in 1954 is less than half of what it was in 1947.

With retail prices constantly going down, on the one hand, and output of consumer goods going up, on the other, Soviet citizens are able to acquire more and more goods for their personal consumption and thus more fully satisfy their requirements all the time.

In addition to their money income, Soviet citizens get other benefits from the state, that is, from the socialist property belonging to the whole people. The Soviet state provides citizens with free medical service, free accommodation or accommodation at a substantial discount in sanatoriums, rest homes and children's institutions, paid holidays, social insurance benefits, pensions, and so on.

With socialist property as the source of the well-being of the Soviet people, it is sacred and inviolable to them. Soviet citizens' attitude toward public property is one of care, of efficient management. Encroachment on the public wealth on the part of anyone is severely condemned and those guilty are regarded as enemies of the Soviet people.

The Soviet Union is now experiencing a new great advance. On the basis of the powerful development of heavy industry an extensive system of measures designed sharply to advance agriculture and the consumer goods industry is being put into effect, measures leading to a further and greater rise in the people's general well-being and to fuller satisfaction of the personal requirements of the Soviet people.



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