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**WHAT IS  
DEMOCRATIC  
CENTRALISM?**



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Что такое демократический централизм?

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**THE ESSENCE AND IMPORT  
OF THE PRINCIPLE OF  
DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM.  
FUSION OF CENTRALISM  
AND DEMOCRACY**

Marxism-Leninism provides a clear-cut answer to the problem of how a revolutionary proletarian party should be organised. The party should be built on the basis of democratic centralism. This guiding principle of party structure is a most important component in the doctrine on a party of a new type. It was born of the revolutionary practice, the experience of the extensive struggle waged by the proletariat to overthrow the system of exploitation and to establish new, socialist relations in society.

The principle of democratic centralism stems from the essence and laws of the class struggle, the objective necessity of the unity of the working class and its vanguard, the Communist Party, as well as great goals and tasks facing them both.

In elaborating the ideological and organisational principles of a revolutionary party Karl Marx and Frederick Engels saw its primary historic mission in organising the working class, ensuring an indissoluble proletarian unity in class battles and in the struggle for the transformation of society on new, communist principles. The profound and comprehensive analysis of the revolutionary practice

had led them to conclude that this great and noble mission could be accomplished by the party of the working class only if that party relied in its activities on the principle of democratic centralism. True, their works do not supply an exhaustive formulation of that principle and all ensuing requirements. However, the very idea of fusing centralism with democracy in the activities of a proletarian party was put forward with utter clarity.

It is especially important to stress this now because bourgeois ideologists and revisionists are intensifying their attempts to divorce Lenin's doctrine on the party and the principles of its structure and activities from Marxism. The falsifiers attempt to prove that Marx and Engels did not attach any particular significance to the role of the party and, consequently, to the principles of party structure, that the idea of democratic centralism was alien to them, that this idea was later on artificially imposed by Lenin and the Bolsheviks on the communist movement. They also allege that the principles of party structure, and the principle of democratic centralism in particular, are alien to the ideas advanced by the founders of scientific communism and are of an exclusively Russian, national significance determined by specific realities of the political struggle in Russia.

Meanwhile, Lenin's teaching and the present-day communist movement are a direct sequel and a comprehensive elaboration of the ideas put forward by Marx and Engels, the continuation of the finest traditions of the first communist organisations. And these ideas and traditions themselves, the very

teaching of the founders of scientific communism totally disprove the fabrications that Marx and Engels relied primarily on a spontaneous labour movement, that they underrated the role of the political party of the working class and were opposed to centralism and discipline in the proletarian parties. Both the theory and the revolutionary practice of Marxism, and the experience of the first international communist organisations, including the experience gained in the course of the practical implementation of the idea of democratic centralism, were vividly and convincingly reflected in their works.

Indeed, we can find in their works not only the stipulation of the need to set up a political party of the working class but also advice concerning the basic issues of party organisation. Their uncompromising struggle in the First International against sectarianism and anarchism vividly proves that they were consistent proponents of a coherent, centralised party organisation, of a skilful combination and a correct interpretation of the requirements of centralism, discipline and inner-party democracy. As is well known, they scathingly criticised the doctrine and the actions of Mikhail Bakunin who was attempting to substitute an organisation of a sectarian and anarchist nature for a proletarian organisation with its structure and activities rooted in the idea of democratic centralism. Attacking Bakunin and his adherents, Engels wrote: "There should be no disciplined sections! Indeed, no party discipline, no centralisation of forces at a particular point, no weapons of struggle! ...where would this new orga-

nisation get us? To the cowardly, servile organisation of the early Christians, those slaves, who gratefully accepted every kick."<sup>1</sup>

One can recall other instances when they waged an unrelenting struggle against those who attempted to replace inner-party democracy with dictate, one-man decisions and super-centralism, who violated the collective will of the majority and the party principles, and displayed lack of discipline. For example, they sharply but justifiably criticised the behaviour of Ferdinand Lassalle who had imposed fallacious, autocratic forms and methods on the Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein. As to the intolerance Marx and Engels displayed towards any violations of the principles of centralism and party discipline, the following fact well illustrates it. When the New York section of the International had officially adopted a resolution asserting its right to arbitrarily interpret the charter and the rules of the International Association of Workers and to use their organisation to the ends running counter to the goals pursued by the Association Marx insisted on the expulsion of this section from the International.

The resolution on that issue written by Marx and adopted by the General Council stated that if all the members of the International would follow the same principles, that would leave the International Association of Workers with nothing else but its name.

<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, "The Congress of Sonvillier and the International", in: K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1987, p. 67.

These, as many other examples and facts, convincingly prove that the founders of scientific communism constantly paid serious attention to the implementation, as well as the theoretical elaboration, of the basic principles of party structure, that they not only put forward the idea of democratic centralism but were persistent in carrying it into practice.

In creating a party of a new type V. I. Lenin, in a new historic setting and on the basis of the experience of the international and the Russian labour movements, creatively developed and rendered concrete the ideas on a proletarian party set down by Marx and Engels, and first of all their idea of democratic centralism. In particular, he convincingly substantiated that it was the principle of democratic centralism that brought a high degree of organisation in the party activities and enabled it to exercise "the *organisational* role of the proletariat (and that is its *principal* role) ... correctly, successfully and victoriously."<sup>1</sup>

Democratic centralism is the objective necessity, a law-governed evolution of any truly Marxist-Leninist party rather than a political phenomenon produced by political developments in Russia, as bourgeois ideologists assert. Therefore, it is not confined exclusively to Russia: it is also of great international significance.

Sometimes the Lenin's principles of party structure, including the principle of democratic centralism are interpreted as applicable

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, " 'Left-Wing' Communism—an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, p. 44.

only to the organisational foundation of the party. One cannot agree with that. The principle of democratic centralism is incarnated first of all in the indissoluble, organic unity of the strategic, tactical and organisational ideas consolidated in the Party Programme and the Rules. Lenin called the organisation devoid of ideas a total inanity. His principles and standards of party life did not merely pertain to the organisational foundations of the party. They stemmed from its ideological and tactical principles and simultaneously embodied these principles in certain forms of organisation and methods of leadership.

However perfect the organisational foundations of the party, it cannot play the role of the vanguard of the working class unless it bases itself on an advanced theory and consistently and creatively develops it. Only by relying on the scientific foundations of communism, the progressive revolutionary teaching of Marxism-Leninism, can the party ensure a correct political guidance of the masses, elaborate a scientifically sound strategic line, skillfully apply flexible tactics and the most diverse forms and methods of the struggle, and be irreconcilable to any manifestations of opportunism and revisionism.

Unity and strict adherence to the programme goals and the political line, the strategy and tactics, the ideological views and organisation are the necessary prerequisite for the unity of the will and action without which a successful and fruitful activity of the Communist Party is just inconceivable.

Neither can one agree with the principle of democratic centralism being regarded, in

a number of cases, as just one of the norms of party life. It follows from Lenin's works and statements that essentially all norms of party life stem from the principle of democratic centralism.

The questions connected with the content, significance and the practical implementation of this principle are becoming even more relevant today.

Let us take up the international aspect of the problem. This relevance stems from the unprecedented exacerbation of the political and ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism, the intensified sallies not only by the undisguised apologists of capitalism, but also by the opportunists with right and "leftist" leanings against the Leninist principles of party structure and, first of all, against the principle of democratic centralism.

If one speaks of the ruling parties in the countries of existing socialism the significance of this problem continues to grow as the role of a Communist Party as the leading and guiding force in socialist society is growing. The fruitful activity of the party in guiding the increasingly complex processes of socialist development is unthinkable without a comprehensive development of inner-party democracy accompanied by the consolidation of party discipline.

It is not that difficult to understand the intensification of the bourgeois and revisionist attacks on the principle of democratic centralism, particularly in view of the events in Poland in the early 1980s. Our ideological opponents and the revisionists realise quite well that to undermine the principle of democ-

ratic centralism means to sap the very foundation of the organisational structure and the activities of a Marxist-Leninist party and, consequently, its guiding role and influence with all the ensuing pernicious consequences.

So, what are the basic features of the principle of democratic centralism?

The unity of the ideological, tactical and organisational views, fundamental to a Communist Party, predicates the following:

first, the party should possess a single Programme, single Rules, and a single authoritative leading body, i.e., its congress and, in the inter-congress period, the Central Committee;

second, a uniform party discipline is maintained, equally obligatory for all party members. The minority is subordinated to the majority, individual organisations—to the centre, the lower organisations—to the higher ones;

third, the decisions taken by the higher bodies are obligatory for the lower ones;

fourth, the leading bodies in all the links of the party are elective, accountable and replaceable. They submit periodic reports on their activities to their party organisations and to the higher bodies.

The principle of democratic centralism is an expression of the organic, dialectical unity of the two basic principles—centralism and inner-party democracy. As Lenin put it, "We defend always ... the democracy in the party. But we never speak against the centralisation of the party. We are for the democratic centralism"<sup>1</sup> This proposition is imbued with the

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Letter to the Secretary of the Socialist Propaganda League", *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, 1977, p. 424.

most profound meaning of tremendous practical importance. While still engaged in the struggle for the establishment of a party of a new type, Lenin raised an urgent problem. He said that the unity on questions of programme and tactics was an essential but by no means a sufficient condition for party unity, for the centralisation of party work. He pointed out that the latter required, in addition, unity of organisation which was inconceivable without formal Rules, without the subordination of the minority to the majority and of the part to the whole. He believed that the idea of centralism determined, in principle, the method of deciding all particular and specific questions of organisation and this idea had to pervade the entire Party Rules.<sup>1</sup>

Centralism in the structure and activities of a Marxist-Leninist party, while reflecting the need for the centralised guidance of the entire class struggle waged by the proletariat and the fact that the victory of socialism cannot be attained by the efforts of individual strata or groups of the working people and requires a joint and concerted effort by all its forces, ensures a high degree of mobility of the party, the cohesion and efficiency of action by all its detachments, and the unconditional implementation of party decisions. A revolutionary party is inconceivable without a centre rallying around itself everybody and everything relevant to that party, without a centre which would cement and set into motion all

<sup>1</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back", *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, 1977, pp. 242, 387.

its component parts. It is not by chance that, as Lenin believed, "refusal to accept the direction of the central bodies is tantamount to refusing to remain in the Party, it is tantamount to disrupting the Party."<sup>1</sup>

As the party was just emerging Lenin and the Bolsheviks were waging an irreconcilable struggle against the opportunists who were disgusted with the very idea of centralism, against the attempts to impose the nationalist principles of federalism on the party, and against the Mensheviks' principle of autonomy. These were the trends that would inevitably lead to disintegration of the united labour party, to exacerbation of ethnic strife and nationalistic blacklegging. In their attempts to legitimise a separate status and alienation of Social Democrats in various parties based on ethnicity the national-opportunists, particularly Bund members, undermined the unity of the revolutionary actions which could be secured exclusively by the collective will of the entire party and its individual segments. Separation by "national compartments" was fraught with heavy consequences for the proletariat and its party. Felix Dzerzhinsky recollected for instance the heavy toll engendered by the separatism of the Bund in Poland when the Bund, staging a demonstration in Lodz on June 14, 1903, barred Polish Social Democrats from the preparations. The result was that out of the 120,000 workers of the city only 1,500 Jewish workers took part in the demonstration. The demonstration had been doomed to failure from the outset and

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 363-64.

ended in a ferocious battering of the participants by the police.

Leninism countered the national-opportunist principle of federalism with the principle of proletarian internationalism on the basis of which the workers, irrespective of their nationality, unite and rally into concerted collectives, and the most progressive workers, the Social Democrats of various nations, unite in a single, centralised party. The need for such a centralised party of an international type stems from an irrefutable fact that the emancipation of the workers and all the exploited and the construction of a new, communist society is a social, rather than a national task.

The Mensheviks' principle of autonomy was also an echo of organisational federalism. It led to the isolation of the local organisations from the common centre and to dissociation and the eventual disintegration of the party. The Mensheviks never sought to create a united, disciplined party. Their organisational principles could only give birth to a diffused, reformist party, an incidental conglomeration of individuals or groups who were not duty-bound to submit to the collectively elaborated decisions of the party bodies.

In his work *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* Lenin defined the basic features of the organisational opportunism propounded by the Mensheviks as a hostile attitude to centralism, negation of discipline in the party, defence of organisational backwardness and disunity, freedom of entry into the party for petty-bourgeois opportunistic elements, and negation of the party as the basic implement

in the struggle of the working class for the dictatorship of the proletariat, for socialism. While Bolsheviks championed the proletarian principle of organisation and discipline, the unity of collective actions, Mensheviks defended the principle of bourgeois-intellectual individualism.

In the irreconcilable struggle with the Mensheviks and the opportunists the Bolshevik Party and its founder and leader Lenin defended the organisational principles of the party of a new type, and first of all the principle of democratic centralism. The victory of the socialist revolution would have been impossible without these efforts. Indeed, if the party sets itself such a great goal as the restructuring and transformation of the world along totally new, socialist lines, how can it attain that goal if it is not cemented by the unity of will and action, if it is not a monolithic whole? It is just impossible.

The idea of democratic centralism was inherent in the organisational structure of the Communist Party from its very inception. The party has been, and is, an integrated system of organisations, an integral association incorporating the supreme and the lower bodies where the minority should submit to the will of the majority, a part should submit to the whole, etc. The fact that the party is led by a single centre allows to subordinate the work of all party organisations to the common will, to impart a common thrust to their policies and, proceeding from specific tasks, to direct their efforts to achieve the greatest effect. Indeed, centralisation makes it possible for the party to reorganise its ranks and to concentrate the

efforts of hundreds of thousands of its members on the most important directions in its work without bringing confusion in its midst.

The activity of the party during World War II is a vivid illustration of that. It quickly and adeptly reorganised its ranks, concentrating the main forces of the Communists in the decisive sectors of the battle front and the rear. The energetic, purposeful and flexible work of all the links of the party guided from the single centre, the Central Committee, played a decisive role in turning the country into a unified military camp and, in the final count, in ensuring the victory over the enemy.

Centralism in the Communist Party in no way contradicts inner-party democracy but rather has a clearly expressed democratic nature. It is organically permeated by electivity, accountability and replaceability of the guiding bodies, and is combined with the initiative of party masses and the all-round application of their creative potential. Democratic centralism inevitably implies the involvement of all Communists in the life and work of the party, the collective discussion and settlement of the issues connected with the party policy.

Marx and Engels repeatedly stressed that organisation relying exclusively on centralism and rejecting democratic leadership can suit only secret societies and sectarian movements. Such a method of organising is unthinkable in guiding a mass-scale labour movement. As Engels pointed out, the party of the working class should be on a par with the tasks facing it, so that it would be able to lead the masses and to avoid even a semblance of dictatorship.

The class essence of party democracy consists in that the Communist Party upholds the basic, vital interests of the working class and all labouring masses. This draws a sharp line between the Communist Party and the bourgeois parties whose activities are in the final count geared to serve the interests of the exploiting classes to hold in check the workers.

Inner-party democracy is determined by the mission placed upon the Communist Party by history. Indeed, the historic mission of the Communist Party is to organisationally consolidate the working class and to arouse it, together with the other working people, to the struggle against the system of exploitation for the triumph of communism. This giant and most complicated task can be tackled only by an energetic and constantly developing body in which cohesion, discipline and organisation are invariably combined with the most extensive democracy and creative activity of all members.

The Marxist-Leninist teaching on the decisive role the people play in social development serves as the scientifically substantiated foundation of inner-party democracy. It inevitably implies a full and all-round reflection of the collective experience and the wisdom of the masses in the policy and practical activities of the party. The decisions taken by the party organically combine the theory and the practice, for they are the result of an in-depth theoretical analysis and summing-up of practical experience. This is particularly important after the victory of the socialist revolution when the Communist Party becomes the ruling party.

The successful guidance of society and the elaboration of a correct party policy are possible only when scientific analysis of the reality and practice is applied. The party treads upon the untrodden path on the way to its final goal. The problems of creating communist society are multifaceted and complicated. In these conditions the assimilation by the party of the collective experience and the wisdom of the broad masses acquires particular importance. Besides, as socialist society develops, this experience becomes increasingly rich and diversified.

Lenin thus defined the essence of inner-party discipline: "All the affairs of the Party are conducted, either directly, or through representatives, by all the members of the Party, all of whom without exception have equal rights; moreover, all officials, all leading bodies, and all institutions of the Party are subject to election, are responsible to their constituents, and are subject to recall."<sup>1</sup> He persistently called for instilling in every Communist the sense of his own initiative in the party and stressed the need to systematically and consistently develop creative activity of the membership. He was profoundly opposed to any possibility of supplanting collective decisions with one-man decisions, for when the broad masses of the people have been set into motion and there is a party embodying all the best which can be found in the people no leadership of the movement can be possi-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "The Social-Democrats and the Duma Elections", *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, 1978, p. 434.

ble without relying on the collective wisdom and experience of the party and the people.

Idealistic attempts to ascribe an omnipotent influence on the course of history to prominent public figures inevitably diminish the role of the party and the people. The sum-total of knowledge, initiative and experience of an individual party branch linked with the mass of people exceeds by far the sum-total of the qualities of an individual public figure, however brilliant he might be. This has been repeatedly stressed by the founders of Marxism-Leninism, and this is the lesson to be drawn from the experience.

Only the efforts of many people can ensure the optimal solution of any problem and radically reduce the probability of making errors in the work. And this is not only a matter of the number of the members in a given body or their merits. Rather, it is the fact that the collectivist approach makes it possible to hold discussions, exchange opinions, to profoundly analyse all the aspects of a particular problem and, consequently, to ensure, as a rule, the successful solution of that problem avoiding errors in the process. In relying on the Marxist-Leninist theory and the laws of social development, the experience and the wisdom of the masses, collective leadership creates the best conditions for the elaboration of the correct party line and its successful implementation.

It is a well-known fact that neither Marx, nor Engels nor Lenin displayed the slightest signs of personality cult; moreover, they waged a resolute struggle with any manifestations of idolisation and blind worship of a

personality. Wilhelm Liebknecht said in his memoirs that Marx was too great to be vain.

The same is true of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. His behaviour can serve as an example of a totally intolerant attitude to worship, belauding and adoration of individual personalities and the belittlement of the role of the collective, an example of the strictest abidance by the principle of collectivism.

When in 1919 Henri Guilbeaux, a French writer, asked Lenin to write a book on the leaders of the October Revolution Vladimir Ilyich answered that it was not worthwhile to write about personalities. When registering in the Moscow party organisation he was asked about his participation in the October Revolution, Lenin answered, "A member of the Central Committee", stressing thereby the role of the CC as a collective body leading the uprising.

Here is another example. At the end of 1921 the Commission for the Collection of the Materials on the History of the Party and the October Revolution proposed to create a museum devoted to Lenin. As was reported by M. S. Olminsky, the head of the Commission, Lenin said: "You cannot imagine how exasperating this constant limelighting of my person is."

Another example is the episode mentioned by Anatoli V. Lunacharsky. While recovering from a dangerous wound Lenin summoned V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich and some other people and told them: "I'm utterly displeased seeing how they have taken to lauding my person. This is annoying and harmful. We all know that it was not the matter of personali-

ties. I'd feel awkward to try and prohibit these things myself, there's something ridiculous and pretentious in it. But you should quietly put the brake on this whole story."

At the same time it should be emphasised that criticism of the personality cult does not in the least imply underestimation, least of all rejection, of the role played by the leaders. Engels persistently and resolutely rebuffed the attacks by anarchists on the principle of authority. Lenin repeatedly spoke and resolutely fought against the anarchist rejection of the role of the leaders. The leaders play a considerable and important role if they are trusted by the masses and are placed by their collective will at the helm of the party or any of its bodies, if they march with the times and are capable of grasping better than the others the thrust of and the prospects for the movement and put their brain, knowledge and organisational talent at the service of the party and the people.

Lenin regarded the recognition of the great role played by authoritative personalities as an elementary idea of Marxism, and the rejection of that role was in his opinion an infantile "leftist deviation", an anarchistic bourgeois trait. The broader the scale of the historical creativity of the people and the more complex the tasks facing them, the higher the significance of the people leading the mass movement.

Authority of the leader and the cult of personality are not at all one and the same thing. The recognition of the services rendered by the leader whose activities meet the interests, aspirations and needs of the broad

strata of the population does not in the least imply the superstitious worship by the people of this or that personality. The authority of the leaders rests on the organic community of the interests, aspirations and goals of the leading and the led, on genuine collectivism in work, on the ability of the leaders to listen to the voice of the masses and assimilate their collective experience and knowledge. This authority is won by the selfless service to the people and the cause of communism, by energetic work and creative thinking, by the correct understanding of the vital interests of the party and the people, the vigorous struggle for these interests, rather than due to the rank and social standing. The party and the people appreciate and support only those leaders who can do that.

The CPSU, as other Marxist-Leninist parties, not only proclaims these or those programme, tactical and organisational principles and goals but also takes steps to put them into life and spares no effort to attain full unity between the goals and the means of achieving them. This is equally applicable to the principles of inner-party democracy and collective leadership. The party not only declares the collectivist approach as the supreme principle of party leadership but also elaborates certain forms and methods of its practical application. These forms and methods are reflected in the CPSU Rules, the fundamental law of party life.

The Rules stipulate that party decisions should stem from a collective discussion and reflect the multifarious and rich experience of party organisations, the experience accu-

mulated collectively. Under the Rules each party member has the right to participate in a free discussion of the policy and practical activities of the CPSU at party meetings and in the press.

Centralism and democracy allow to combine guidance from top with initiative from bottom. Centralism is becoming more workable as inner-party democracy expands. And vice versa, democratism within its ranks is becoming more effective and profound with the growing organisation and discipline in the life of the party.

The development of inner-party democracy raises the creative activity of the Communists and this, in turn, contributes to organisation and purposefulness of the entire activity of the party. Conditions themselves and the democratic norms of party life ensuring extensive rights of the Communists raise their responsibility for the implementation of party policy. For a true Communist discipline is not a heavy burden: he maintains and strengthens it in every way. One of the fundamental principles in the development of the party lies in the fact that the greater the scope of inner-party democracy, the higher the feeling of responsibility of the Communists for the common cause and the higher the level of organisation and discipline in the activities of every party organisation and every Communist.

At the same time, the strengthening of party discipline guarantees concerted and united action by party masses which is a basic prerequisite and an expression of inner-party democracy and a vital condition for its

unhampered development. It is inadmissible to counterpose centralism and inner-party democracy. Lenin indicated that correctly interpreted centralism presupposes an upsurge of the activity and self-expression of the party membership and party organisations; it is of paramount importance for a political party that "the masses themselves must vote intelligently on the substance of the very important questions at issue."<sup>1</sup> And he repeatedly stressed that centralism within the party has nothing to do with bureaucratic centralisation which is profoundly alien to the spirit of the Marxist party, that centralism of party leadership does not in the least preclude, but, on the contrary, unconditionally implies the initiative of local party organisations, their independence, autonomy in resolving local problems within the framework of the general party policy, that stereotypes and uniformity imposed from above have nothing to do with democratic centralism.

With the development of the party, discipline increasingly becomes self-discipline, conscientious discipline of the members of an organisation thinking as well as acting in accord. Such a discipline evolves only against the background of wide-scale and all-embracing democratism in the party ranks.

Therefore, it would be wrong to counterpose democratism and centralism without risking to violate the principle as a whole. This can lead in practice to either an excessive centralism, when the party operates as a sec-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Social-Democrats and the Duma Elections", *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 441.

tarian bureaucratic organisation whose members are being turned into ordinary functionaries differing from each other only by the posts they hold, or to the party becoming a sort of a discussion club whose members examine and discuss all sorts of problems but are not bound together by a single will and, thereby, are incapable of undertaking any organised, concerted action. That is why any excessive emphasis on centralism or on democracy and any attempts to divorce or isolate the two components of the integral whole can only harm the party. And this is corroborated by the past and recent experience.

The revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party should display a creative approach to the solution of all problems, be they of a theoretical, political or organisational nature. The principle of democratic centralism is also applied with due regard for the specific historic conditions, rather than by dogmatically abiding by prescribed rules. Meanwhile, some people abroad assert that the CPSU has failed to develop the above-mentioned principle for decades now. Some of these people supply their own interpretation of the majority and minority concept which, they say, so far has persisted as an acute problem in relations in the Communist Parties while at present it loses its "classic substance".

As for that problem, it will be dealt with subsequently. Here we shall just note that this principle, as all other principles of organisation, is evolving along with the development of the party itself as a living political entity. Decades back, in the resolution of the 10th Party Congress dealing with the matters of

party structure it was indicated that the methods and forms of party work were changing depending on a particular historical situation and conditions and specific tasks facing it at a particular stage in its development. The changing forms and methods of work lead to changes in, and further stimulate, the development of the norms of party life stemming, in the final analysis, as was said above, from the principle of democratic centralism. Indeed, such norms of party organisation as regular accountability of party organs to their organisations and higher bodies, the strict party discipline which implies subordination of the minority to the majority, the unconditional obligatory nature of the decisions taken by the higher bodies for the lower ones, the right of every party member to elect and be elected, to appeal to any party body and to criticise any Communist regardless of the post he holds, and other norms of inner-party life are an expression and an inalienable feature of the principle of democratic centralism. It follows that since these norms are being further developed, the principle of democratic centralism is expanding, too.

The Communist and Workers' Parties approach its practical implementation dialectically, with due account for the specific historic conditions and the tasks facing the party at a particular stage in its development. If one speaks about the CPSU, there were different periods in its history when centralism moved to the fore, even accompanied by a certain militarisation of party organisation. For instance, that was the case in the years of the underground activities in conditions of the

despotic police regime of the tsarist autocracy, when the circumstances required the deepest conspiracy and rigid centralisation.

However, even then the party made maximum use of all available opportunities to develop the activity and local initiative of the membership, to maintain the collective principle of leadership. This can be said, in particular, about the period of the first Russian revolution, 1905-1907, and the later revolutionary upsurge. In the early days of the revolution, Lenin in his article "On the Reorganisation of the Party" posed the problem of a much more extensive application of democratic principles in the party, on the introduction of the elective principle in particular, which would inevitably upgrade inner-party democracy and the collective nature of party leadership.

There is no point in arguing that in those conditions certain limitations inevitably did exist in observing the principle of inner-party democracy. However, immediately after the February revolution, when the party emerged from underground, and particularly after the Great October Socialist Revolution, which brought the party to power, there appeared opportunities for a closer intertwining between centralism and democracy. And this is only natural, for Marxism-Leninism teaches, and the experience is a convincing proof of that, that the more complex the tasks posed by social development and the more radical revolutionary transformations, the more imperative the task of arousing the masses, setting into motion, organising, inspiring and channelling their will towards final victory. The

Great October Socialist Revolution carried out the most complex and difficult revolutionary transformation in the life of broad strata of the people who, led by the working class and its party, moved to set up a new social system. The conscientious, organised and purposeful activity of the broadest masses of the people had never played and, indeed, could not play such a truly tremendous role in human history as after the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in conditions of socialist development.

Only the socialist system offers opportunities for the fullest realisation of the boundless resources of creative energy and the initiative of the working people. The party would be unable to solve great and challenging problems facing it without making maximum use of these opportunities. However, this, in its turn, requires an extensive and all-round development of inner-party democracy.

Consistent democracy is inherent in the working class due to its place in social production. This inevitably makes its mark on the party as well since the party is the vanguard of the proletariat. The entire life of the party, its policy and practical activities rest on the principles of comradeship and democratism. With political power in the hands of the working class inner-party democracy has found its unprecedentedly wide application.

In the early days after the victory of the revolution Lenin believed it vital to raise the role of collective bodies of the party, to comprehensively develop the initiative and activity of the masses. It was all the more impor-

tant since the party could not know the forms of socialist transformations and their pace. As Lenin pointed out, "Collective experience, the experience of millions can alone give us decisive guidance in this respect."<sup>1</sup>

Lenin displayed great concern for the regular and fruitful work of the top bodies of the party and the local party organisations. In the new historic setting it was important to create a streamlined system of party organisations based on the principle of democratic centralism. That process had begun already before the October Revolution. After it the party went on with vigorous efforts aimed at establishing its structure. New regional organisations were set up and the already existing organisations were strengthened. The rapid growth of the party membership put on the agenda the need to set up local party centres.

As was stated in a letter the Central Committee addressed to all Party organisations on May 29, 1918, "Our Party is at the helm of Soviet power. The decrees and measures of Soviet power are initiated mostly by our party. All of them are aimed at attaining the eventual goals of the working class, at the complete elimination of class inequality and exploitation, at achieving the triumph of communism. All these measures can be carried into life only through stern dictatorship over the bourgeoisie. However, dictatorship requires that the working class, and our party, as its vanguard, first of all, have reliable and

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Speech at the First Congress of Economic Councils, May 26, 1918", *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, 1977, p. 410.

streamlined organisation. Without the fulfillment of the latter condition the ironclad dictatorship capable of suppressing the bourgeoisie will turn into a paper dictatorship.”

It is quite indicative that in determining the structure and the functions of the local committees the Central Committee relied on the collective experience and the wide-scale initiative of the party membership. As a rule, the structure and the duties of the party committees were elaborated and devised locally to be subsequently approved by party conferences.

The Central Committee carefully studied and summed up local experience to be used later on for making recommendations as regards the most appropriate forms for the establishment of the party apparatus.

At that time the party made every effort to set up a network of its organisations at the lower level. Thus, the number of locals had grown from 577 in 1917 to 3,460 the next year. As *Pravda* wrote, “The struggle for strengthening the party organisations has united all party workers perceiving the party cell as the stronghold in our revolutionary work for which we should spare no effort.”

Thus, all these activities of the party and its Central Committee for the establishment of a strong system of local organisations and the management of its practical work clearly reflect guidance from a single centre combined with local initiative and the creativity of the broad masses of Communists in local organisations. From the very first days of the October Revolution the efforts of the party aimed at strengthening mass organisations,

first and foremost the Soviets and trade unions, were based on wide-scale democracy and the development of the revolutionary creativity of the masses.

Two examples can serve to illustrate how democratic centralism worked in that period. First of all mention should be made of the crushing rebuff by the party in the early days of Soviet power to those who put into question its collective role, that is to Kamenev, Rykov, Zinoviev and some others who insisted that the Soviet government should incorporate Mensheviks, Right Socialist-Revolutionaries and other parties and groups, a demand that ran counter to the decision already taken. Second, the history of the most intense and dramatic struggle waged by Lenin and his supporters in pursuing the line for the withdrawal from the war. In that instance V. I. Lenin acted against the majority in the Central Committee and in the leadership of a number of the major party organisations, including the Moscow and Petrograd branches which were influenced at that time by "Left Communists" and Trotskyites. At first glance it looked like a violation of the democratic centralism principle by Lenin. However, that was not the case.

A most serious crisis pregnant with a split in the party was overcome eventually on the basis of collective decision-making, after the discussion which took place within the party, including its supreme forum—the 7th Congress which approved by majority vote the decision to sign the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty to be subsequently approved and supported by most of the membership, which was con-

firmed, in particular, by the decisions taken by the Moscow district conference, the Petrograd extraordinary city conference and other party organisations.

It should be noted, however, that inner-party democracy was considerably curtailed as a result of the Civil War and the foreign intervention which began soon after the socialist revolution. In those circumstances centralism moved to the fore. Democratic centralism, as Lenin put it, was not the end in itself but rather a means of attaining political goals; it should be subordinated to revolutionary expediency.<sup>1</sup>

It should be a mistake to assert that in that period inner-party democracy was completely non-existent. Lenin was always a strong opponent of turning centralism into the absolute, however difficult the circumstances in which the party had to operate. And although the Civil War necessitated a shift of emphasis to centralism, the principles of inner-party democracy even in those most difficult conditions were observed, with party congresses and Central Committee plenary meetings called regularly. They collectively elaborated decisions on the vital problems connected with the routing of the interventionists and with assuring the victory of the working class and the toiling peasantry in the Civil War.

The 8th Congress, marked by an extensive

<sup>1</sup> See: V. I. Lenin, "Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin", *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, 1975, p. 86.

exchange of views, adopted a new Party Programme which set forth the tasks of the party for the period of transition from capitalism to socialism and identified the ways and means of accomplishing these tasks. The decisions of the Congress on some matters concerning party structure were aimed at facilitating the successful implementation of the provisions contained in the Programme. The principle of democratic centralism was further developed in the decisions mentioned above. The Central Committee was expanded to 19 members and 8 candidates, and its structure was defined. It was established that plenary meetings of the Central Committee were to be held at least twice a month to discuss the most important political and organisational issues, that plenary meetings would elect the Political Bureau, which was entrusted with passing decisions on urgent problems, the Organising Bureau, which would guide all organisational work in the party, and the Secretariat guiding the work of the Central Committee departments. The Political Bureau, the Organising Bureau and the Secretariat of the Central Committee were to report to plenary meetings of the Central Committee every two weeks.

The decision of the Congress making it obligatory for the Central Committee to convoke, at least once every three months, conferences of the representatives of the regional party committees to discuss vital issues contributed to the development of inner-party democracy and the consolidation of the ties between the Central Committee and the local party organisations. The Congress instructed the Central Committee to arrange the publica-

tion of *Izvestia of the CC RCP(Bolsheviks)*—  
(News of the CC RCP(B.)).

The changed conditions and the new tasks facing the party made it necessary to make some important amendments to the Rules. In particular, it was necessary to define more precisely the functions performed by party groups in non-party organisations and relations of the groups with the party committees, to define the role of party cells, their rights and functions, and the structure of the party bodies.

The 8th Congress established a Rules Commission which, drawing on the previous experience and the materials of the 8th Congress itself, drafted new Rules. The draft was published in *Izvestia* on September 30, 1919 and was widely discussed in the party press and at conferences and meetings of party committees. Numerous amendments were proposed which were later on studied and summed up by a special Commission on the Rules, elected at the 8th Party Conference (December 2-4, 1919). Many such amendments and supplements were adopted by the Commission and then by the Conference. For instance, the Moscow regional party conference recommended a wording of Para. 1 of the Rules that would make it obligatory for every party member not only to be listed as a member of a party organisation but to work in it as well. This supplement was of a cardinal significance for it reflected the requirement put forward by Lenin under which it was not sufficient for a party member to recognise and accept the Party Programme; besides this recognition he had to take an

active part in the struggle for implementing this Programme. This requirement is a direct consequence of the principle of democratic centralism.

For the first time the new Rules established organisational patterns of the party, from the Central Committee to the bureaux of the party cells. It established the order of subordination and the implementation of party decisions, the structure of party bodies and the exact terms of holding elections in all organisations. It stressed the role of party congresses, conferences and meetings as the forums expressing the collective will of the membership and defined the functions of the cells (for the first time the RCP(B) Rules contained a special section on them) and also the functions of party groups in non-party establishments and organisations. The Rules allotted much space to defining the role and powers of the Central Committee as the supreme body of collective leadership in the periods between the congresses to coordinate the work of all party, state and managerial bodies and mass public organisations.

Thus, even in the difficult years of foreign intervention and the Civil War both facets of the principle of democratic centralism were put into effect and inner-party democracy was not relegated to the oblivion, as all sorts of factionalists and deviationists from Leninism inside the party and bourgeois falsifiers of the CPSU history claimed at that time. Speaking about the unsoundness of the assertions about the lack of democracy in the party leadership Lenin pointed out at the 9th Congress that the RCP(B) Central Committee

would have been unable to resolve the most difficult problems of the war period if it had not acted as a united and active leading collective body. He said: "It must be emphasised from the very outset, so as to remove all misunderstanding, that only the corporate decisions of the Central Committee adopted in the Organising Bureau or the Political Bureau, or by a plenary meeting of the Central Committee—only these decisions were carried out by the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. The work of the Central Committee cannot otherwise proceed properly."<sup>1</sup>

The preparations for the 9th Congress and the Congress itself vividly showed that the Central Committee and Lenin personally had taken special care for this supreme forum to proceed in the spirit of genuine collectivism. The Congress was preceded by a wide-scale discussion at party conferences and meetings of a special letter by the Central Committee to the party organisations written at Lenin's initiative and the theses of the Central Committee for the Congress, "The Immediate Tasks of Economic Development".

At the same time one cannot dispute the fact that in the years of foreign intervention and the Civil War it was impossible to consistently and extensively implement the principle of inner-party democracy for lack of objective conditions for it. The 8th Congress particularly stressed in its decisions that the party was working in such circumstances when the strictest centralism and discipline

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, 1976, p. 444.

were an absolute necessity. Proceeding from that, the Congress proposed to introduce the strictest and regular accountability of local party organisations before the Central Committee and to ensure obligatory fulfilment of the Central Committee's instructions dealing with such issues as mobilisation, formation of military units, supplies for the Red Army, organisation of defence, etc.

These requirements of the Congress were subsequently reflected in the Party Rules adopted by the 8th All-Russia Conference of the RCP(B). The new Rules said that the strictest discipline was the primary duty of the party members and all party organisations; the decisions of the central bodies were to be carried out quickly and precisely. For the first time the Rules defined the measures of disciplinary censure for members and organisations violating party discipline in one way or another.

Lenin pointed out more than once that democratic centralism was not the end in itself, that it was just a means of attaining political goals and that formal democratism should be subordinated to the considerations of revolutionary expediency. While it would be wrong to set democratism against centralism, it was all the more harmful and extremely dangerous in conditions of foreign intervention and the Civil War. As was noted subsequently by the 10th RCP(B) Congress, the most appropriate form of party organisation had to be militarisation of party life which was reflected in an extreme organisational centralism and the curtailment of the activities of collective bodies of party organisation.

In those years the methods of party work, while corresponding in form to party organisation, tended, on the whole, to be a system of military orders. In these conditions such a form of party organisation and a temporary relative curtailment of collective leadership was expedient, for it ensured a state of constant militant readiness of all party organisations and the membership which was a must for attaining the victory over the external and internal counter-revolutionary forces.

However, when the situation changed for the better the party took all measures necessary for expanding democracy, collective leadership and the fullest and most comprehensive implementation of the principle of democratic centralism.

This is borne out by numerous examples and facts of the activities of the Communist Party in the period of transition to a new economic policy, in the years of the struggle for the victory of socialism, and in the present-day conditions of communist construction.

Thus, centralism and democratism are indivisible parts of the whole. This indivisibility is a most important prerequisite for the successful and fruitful activity of the Communist Party. At present, as never before, it is important to consistently and comprehensively observe the principle of democratic centralism. Any compromises or any extremes can have a pernicious effect on the party's efficiency. That is why the documents adopted by the CPSU particularly emphasise that the strength and the vitality of the party are determined to a considerable extent by how consistently and unerringly the party follows

the principle of democratic centralism and that both anarchic leniency pictured as democracy, and bureaucratic centralism holding back the initiative and activity of Communists are equally harmful for a Marxist-Leninist party. This vital idea which further develops Lenin's definition of the principle of democratic centralism hits hard at all kinds of the perverters of the basic principle of the organisational structure and the activities of the party. Simultaneously, it once again points to the need to interpret this principle in an appropriate manner so as to exclude any one-sidedness, and this is both of a theoretical and of a great practical significance.

## THE STRENGTH OF PARTY LEADERSHIP IS IN COLLECTIVE AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY OF COMMUNISTS

As we have attempted to show, inner-party democracy, collectivity in work and leadership are inherent in the party and are the most important features of the principle of democratic centralism. They characterised the activities of the CPSU from its inception which is corroborated by some examples and facts mentioned above. However, as it has been already noted, due to objective historic conditions these features have been most fully revealed in the years of socialist construction. The party made maximum use of the opportunities offered by peace-time to comprehensively develop inner-party democracy and collectivity as the supreme principle of party leadership.

While preparing for the 10th Congress, the Central Committee in its letter of January 27, 1921 emphasised the need to raise the responsibility of each party member for the eventual success of communist construction and all undertakings of the RCP. Guided by that document, party organisations restructured the organisational political work with due regard for the tense situation which had taken shape before the Congress. The elections of party bodies, visits of CC members to various

localities, letters and instructions of the Central Committee, etc., played a great role in this respect. Only in the four months of peace-time construction (November 1920—February 1921) 21 plenary meetings of the Central Committee, 17 meetings of the Political Bureau and 34 meetings of the Organising Bureau were held to discuss the matters of the organisational consolidation, the activities carried out by the Communist Parties of the national republics, regional bureaux, major regional organisations, trade unions, and the Young Communist League.

The decisions of the 10th Congress contained concrete instructions on the further development of inner-party democracy, activity and initiative of the membership, collectivity in leadership. The Congress suggested that a wide-scale discussion of all vital issues of party work and political and local life should become a regular feature of general meetings of party members and in party cells, and that it should be carried out according to the plans drawn up by party committees. As it was stressed in the resolution of the Congress, "Only such a systematic coverage of all the indicated issues will elevate conscientious attitude to them on the part of the entire body of the Party members and will raise the general level of Party life".<sup>1</sup>

The Congress took special care of organising the work of the Central Committee in new

<sup>1</sup> *CPSU in the Resolutions and Decisions of Its Congresses, Conferences and Plenary Meetings of Its Central Committee*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1970, p. 213 (in Russian).

conditions and of further improving the style and methods of its leadership. The resolution of the Congress "On the Questions of Party Structure" contained a special section entitled "On the Work of the Central Committee" notable for the fact that it further elaborated the principle of democratic centralism. It was made incumbent on the Central Committee to convoke its plenary meetings at least once every two months; it was deemed expedient to discuss new cardinal issues of party life at CC meetings with the people representing organisations of major industrial centres invited; the theses on all agenda items of the All-Russia congresses and conferences had to be published at least a month prior to the convocation; the Central Committee was to report through the party press on the work done and send confidential letters to the regional committees on the internal and external political situation, the state of the party and the immediate tasks entrusted to the regional committees by the Central Committee.

The Congress deemed it necessary to expand the Central Committee to 25 members (instead of the 19 members elected at the 9th Congress) and to 15 alternate members (instead of 12).

Such falsifiers of the history of the CPSU as Rudolf Fiedler, Georg Rauch and Fedá Stepun allege that Lenin recognised centralism but rejected inner-party democracy and the collectivity of leadership, and that he strived to boss the party. One can also come across similar allegations made by present-day revisionists. Quite on the contrary, however, Lenin developed democratism and collec-

tivity in every way.

He constantly paid serious attention to ensuring genuine collectivity in the work carried out by the party and its Central Committee. In his concluding speech at the 10th Congress he particularly stressed that the most important subjects and directions in the policy were discussed by the Central Committee and without such discussions political work would be impossible.

In the party, a special place belongs to the Central Committee. As Lenin put it, it upheld the principles of the party from one congress to another and was their collective interpreter. The supreme body of the party is composed of the persons known to the Congress and it receives its powers from it. The Central Committee is elected by the Congress which thereby is "expressing its supreme confidence and vesting leadership in those whom it elects".<sup>1</sup> Lenin believed that the party should systematically, little by little and persistently prepare people who can work in the Central Committee, that it "must see clearly, as in the palm of its hand, *all the activities* of every candidate for these high posts, must come to know even their personal characteristics, their strong and weak points, their victories and 'defeats'".<sup>2</sup>

Lenin attached great significance to expanding the membership of the Central Committee, infusing it with fresh blood, the peo-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Tenth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)", *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Letter to *Iskra*", *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, 1977, p. 117.

ple who had proven their wholehearted loyalty to the party cause and the ability to carry into life the party's policy. The 11th Congress further expanded the CC membership, from 25 to 27, and increased the number of alternate members from 15 to 19. After the Congress Lenin noted: "Our Central Committee has grown into a strictly centralised and highly authoritative group."<sup>1</sup>

At the end of 1922, in his "Letter to the Congress" Lenin once again put the question of expanding the Central Committee, now to 50 or 100 members, to make the work of that headquarters of the party more stable and better coordinated. The 12th RCP(B) Congress elected 40 members and 17 alternate members, and the 13th Congress—53 and 34 respectively.

New experienced workers closely connected with the masses were added to the Central Committee. As was stated in the resolution of the 13th Congress on the CC Report, "The experience has proved that the expansion of the CC membership by incorporating in it local workers connected with the masses has been of tremendous benefit to the cause."<sup>2</sup>

With every passing year the principle of collectivity was further developed in the work of the Central Committee in guiding the political and economic life of the country. Regular CC plenary meetings were held in the

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "How We Should Reorganise the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection", *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, 1973, p. 485.

<sup>2</sup> *CPSU in the Resolutions...*, Vol. 3, 1977, pp. 41-42.

spirit of genuine collectivity. The most important party and government issues dealt with by them were carefully prepared and discussed in no haste. The CC plenary meeting held on February 24, 1923 once again stipulated that all vital matters in the life of the party and the country had to be examined by CC plenary meetings. In view of the comprehensive examination of the problems it was deemed expedient to extend CC meetings to two to three days and that the materials to be discussed at the forthcoming plenary meetings should be submitted to all CC members in advance. These requirements were later approved by the resolution of the 12th Congress on the agenda item dealing with organisational matters.

It was established that each plenary meeting should set the date for the next, which can be changed in exceptional cases only by a joint resolution of the Organising Bureau and the Political Bureau; all vital issues had to be examined by a plenary meeting; an extraordinary plenary meeting was to be convoked in accordance with a resolution of the Political Bureau or at the request of one-fourth of the CC members; the preparations for plenary meetings should be more thorough. It was stressed that the Political Bureau should submit a progress report to each plenary meeting.

The consistent implementation of the principle of collectivity is also reflected in the instructions on the need to persistently improve the work of the CC executive bodies.

At Lenin's proposal the plenary meeting held after the 10th Congress adopted a reso-

lution under which the CC secretaries were instructed to pay attention to the proper distribution of the questions to be examined between the Organising Bureau, the Political Bureau and CC plenary meetings. The Political Bureau and the CC plenary meeting held on April 3, 1922 adopted a draft resolution submitted by Lenin on the working procedure of the CC Secretariat stating the following: "The C.C. directs the Secretariat to strictly fix and adhere to the schedule of official reception hours and to publish it; the secretaries are to make it a rule not to personally undertake any work other than major tasks of a principled nature, and to turn such work over to their assistants and technical secretaries."<sup>1</sup>

The resolution of the 12th Congress included special sections dealing with the activities of the Political Bureau and the Organising Bureau. Lenin paid particular attention to the work of the Political Bureau. The April 1922 Plenary Meeting expanded the composition of the Political Bureau from 5 to 7 members. Meetings of the Political Bureau dealt with the major issues in party, government and economic affairs.

The meetings of the Central Committee, the Political Bureau and the Organising Bureau were imbued with the spirit of businesslike, free and truly collectivist discussion. Lenin was extremely attentive to the views of his comrades and invariably set the example of abiding by the principle of collec-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, 1971, p. 413.

tivity. While never forsaking his credo, Lenin never imposed unconditionally his views on the collective and always resorted to persuasion.

Volume 44 of the *Collected Works* contains a typical note written to M. F. Andreyeva who asked Lenin to intervene into the matter which had been already settled by the Council of People's Commissars. Lenin declined her request and wrote: "I cannot go against the will and decision of my Council colleagues."<sup>1</sup> Equally indicative in this respect is Lenin's reply to A. I. Okulov who had asked him for support for the publication of a newspaper of a general political nature. Lenin replied: "Comrade Okulov: I am very sorry that I cannot send the recommendation you request. I should very much like to do this if it entailed only a personal recommendation. But that is not what is involved. This is a political matter, and I am sending it on to the Politbureau."<sup>2</sup> Permission to publish the newspaper was granted by the CC RCP(B).

There are numerous other similar examples. Lenin was always concerned about the collective leadership of the party and the country. As was noted by Anatoli Lunacharski, Lenin liked very much collective work in the genuine sense of the word. With all his greatest and unchallenged authority and with his broad powers he never took decisions all by himself on the matters to be discussed in a

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 44, 1975, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, 1981, p. 386.

collective body. Enjoying the unlimited trust of the party and the people, he never abused it.

Indeed, Lenin invariably argued for a skillful combination of centralism and democracy in the guidance of the party and against the attempts to pervert and violate the principle of collective leadership. Unfortunately, such perversions did take place, but they met with the most resolute rebuff by Lenin and the party.

The 13th Party Conference urged strict observance of the principle of electivity of the functionaries; prevention of the foisting of these persons on a particular organisation contrary to the will of its members; making all essential matters, barring exceptional circumstances, subject to discussion in party cells and by the membership as a whole; precluding "party discipline" pretexts in matters involving the right and the duty of the members to discuss the issues of interest to them and to take pertinent decisions; implementation in practice of obligatory accountability of the party bodies to the collectives which elected them and to broad masses; and providing more information to party members.

These and other measures, important as they were, acquired particular significance when the party lost its tested leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. The resolution of the 13th Party Congress said: "Numerous new proletarian cadres should become active participants in the elaboration of a collective party opinion as soon as possible."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *CPSU in the Resolutions...*, Vol. 3, p. 47.

The 13th Congress decision providing for further expanding the composition of collective party bodies, first of all by incorporating into them factory workers, stimulated the development of inner-party democracy. It was recommended that representatives of the working class should comprise from one-third to a half of the membership of party committees. It was allowed to bring the number of the members in the bureaux of the party cells at enterprises to 7 to 9 on the average and to increase the number of members on district committees to 15 to 17. The Congress suggested tying in the discussion of specific issues with the basic guidelines of the party. The agenda of party meetings should be composed in such a way that along with particular, practical issues they would also discuss general problems of the work of the party, the state, trade unions, etc. These recommendations were aimed at ensuring active participation by all Communists in the elaboration of party policy and the unity of action in the struggle for the implementation of that policy.

The 14th Party Congress further consolidated that line by recognising the need to further pursue the course towards expanding inner-party democracy, invigorating the activities of Communists, involving them into the collective elaboration and implementation of party decisions, the course towards steadily raising the leading role of the party in all spheres of socialist construction.

Following the decisions of the 14th Congress, the party intensified its organisational, ideological and political work in tackling the

tasks involved in the socialist transformation of society. The Central Committee was constantly striving to stimulate the activity of Communists and paid attention to the strict and consistent implementation of accountability and electivity of party bodies, the expansion of the ranks of the party's activists and raising their level, and to the unconditional observance of all requirements stemming from democratic centralism. All that was reflected in the practical activities of party organisations. Congresses, all-Union conferences, plenary meetings of the Central Committee and local party committees, meetings of the activists and party cells were convoked on a regular basis. Accounts and elections of party organs were conducted in accordance with the schedule stipulated in the Rules.

The decisions of the 15th, 16th and 17th Party Congresses on party organisation were instrumental in promoting inner-party democracy and democratic centralism as a whole. New Rules adopted by the 17th Congress were supplemented with a special section dealing with inner-party democracy and discipline. It contained vital provisions on the implementation of the principle of democratic centralism. A number of the paragraphs of the section were dedicated to the issues of the unity of the party and party discipline.

Simultaneously, the Rules confirmed the inalienable right of each and every Communist for a free and businesslike discussion of the party policy in individual organisations or within the party as a whole and emphasised that it was only inner-party democracy that

could serve as a basis for Bolshevik criticism and self-criticism.

However, the development of inner-party democracy was retarded by the personality cult of Stalin. There were instances of a considerable curtailment of inner-party democracy and deviations from the Leninist norms of party life and the principle of collectivity. In particular, CC plenary meetings and meetings of the Political Bureau were convened most irregularly.

The transformation of the well-deserved reputation of Joseph Stalin into the cult of his personality was due to several reasons. The party had its weighty say on that problem and took steps to preclude such occurrences in future. As was pointed out in CPSU documents, despite their gravity, perversions engendered by the cult of personality had not affected the nature of socialist society and failed to undermine the foundations of socialism. Despite everything, the party and the people preserved their faith in the cause of communism and worked to realise Lenin's ideals, overcoming hardships, temporary setbacks and mistakes.

The party has consistently opposed any attempts to make use of the mistakes committed in the past to anybody's advantage and comes out against a one-sided approach to the problem when some people cannot see the wood for the trees.

The Theses of the CPSU Central Committee on the centenary of Lenin's birth stated: "In analysing the nature of the social processes and summing up the experience of the masses, in mapping out the ways for the on-

ward movement, the Party reveals new opportunities and elaborates measures allowing to overcome difficulties and contradictions. The CPSU has resolutely condemned the cult of personality which had led to power abuse, the violation of socialist democracy and revolutionary legality. It has also condemned subjectivism which ignores the laws of social development and the opinion of the collective organs and substitutes voluntary decisions for scientific leadership. The strict abidance by the Leninist norms of Party and state life, the development of criticism and self-criticism, the consistent implementation of the principle of collective leadership and extensive ties with the masses are a pledge of preventing these negative phenomena in future."

The *Theses* also contain the provision which condemns those who under the pretext of criticising personality cult besmear the entire heroic past of the party and the Soviet people: "The Party rejects any attempts to channel the criticism of the personality cult and subjectivism against the interests of the people and socialism with the aim of tarnishing the history of socialist development, discrediting the revolutionary gains and revising the principles of Marxism-Leninism."

Those who make these attempts, whether they want it or not, deviate from the basic principles of the Marxist-Leninist methodology, from historicism which makes it imperative to objectively and comprehensively analyse various phenomena, not infrequently complex and contradictory, and to draw correct conclusions from that analysis.

For instance, it would be wrong to say that in the years of personality cult the party failed to observe inner-party democracy and the principles of collective leadership altogether. Unfortunately, at one time this point of view gained wide currency. However, the analysis of historic event and facts convinces that the CPSU invariably, including the years when the negative consequences of personality cult were most pronounced, acted as a collective leader and organiser of the masses in tackling the tasks of socialist construction, in combatting the enemy in the Great Patriotic War and in the rehabilitation and development of the economy and culture in the post-war years.

Let us cite just a few facts.

In the 1933-1941 period there were two party congresses, an all-Union party conference and seven plenary meetings of the Central Committee. Prior to these important meetings the Central Committee sought advice of the representatives of the working class, collective farmers, the intelligentsia. As for the local party organisations, they quite extensively and consistently implemented the principles of inner-party democracy, particularly as a result of switching to secret balloting in electing their leadership in accordance with the decision taken by the February-March 1937 plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee and in compliance with the new Party Rules reflecting profound changes in the life of the party and the country.

The decision of the 18th Congress altering the Rules played a major role in the further democratisation of inner-party life and con-

tributed to upgrading the activities of the party leadership and developing the activity of the membership. All this promoted the fulfillment of the decisions of the Congress aimed at completing socialist construction.

Even during the Great Patriotic War, when inner-party democracy was inevitably restricted and there was a militarisation of all facets of public life, the party observed, to a certain extent, the principles of collective leadership, particularly in local organisations. True, in the first months of the war in many cases plenary meetings of party committees were held irregularly, which is quite understandable if one takes into account the nature of the war waged against the USSR by nazi invaders and the need to restructure the entire work in the military way. However, already from 1942 regional and territorial committees and the Central Committees of the Union Republics periodically held their meetings. Meetings of city and district committees were held more often. In 1943, in accordance with the instruction of the Central Committee election meetings were held in primary organisations, and in 1944 and early 1945 regional party conferences were held.

At the initial stage of the war, having come across some facts indicating that some party organisations strove to curtail inner-party work and to totally supplant collectivity of the leadership with one-man decisions and orders, in the autumn of 1941 the secretaries of the Central Committee sent a special letter which stressed the need to seriously strengthen each organisation, to upgrade the work with the body of party activists and to invig-

orate inner-party life. The same goal was served by the resolutions adopted by the CC CPSU(B) "On the Tasks and Structure of the Organisational-Instruction Department" (September 1943), "On Control Over the Implementation of the CC CPSU(B) Resolutions on the Reports of the Regional and Territorial Committees and the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Union Republics" (April 7, 1945), as well as the measures taken on the instructions of the CC CPSU(B) with the aim of raising the role of the instructors of local party bodies.

Immediately after the war the party took steps to restructure the activities of its organisations with the view of expanding and deepening democracy and ensuring a more consistent compliance with the principle of collectivity. The Central Committee took care that party meetings, plenary meetings of party committees, reports and elections of party leadership were held on a regular basis. In 1945-1947, district and city conferences were held, in 1947-1948—regional and territorial, and in 1949—congresses of the Communist Parties of the Union Republics.

In this work an important role belonged to the Central Committee resolution of July 26, 1946 "On the Growth of the Party and the Measures for Intensifying Party-Political Work with New Members" and to the Central Committee resolutions on the work of the Salsk district committee of the Rostov region and the party committees of the Ivanovo, Glukhovsk and Tashkent textile mills. The resolutions stressed the need to improve the style and methods of party work, to eradicate

excessive administrative control in the activities of some top party bodies and the substitution of their authority for state, economic and other organisations.

These and other measures helped upgrade the work of party bodies and primary organisations, and party life became more active and pithy.

The decisions of the 19th Party Congress and the new Rules adopted by it were of great importance for summing up the experience amassed in party work at the final stage of building socialism.

The new Rules contained, for the first time, a concise definition of the party as a voluntary militant union of like-minded Communists, comprised of the representatives of the working class, the peasantry and the intelligentsia. They set forth in greater detail the tasks of the party and, correspondingly, contained a new wording of the paragraph on party membership. Only those people could become party members who not only recognised the Party Programme and the Rules but also vigorously assisted in their implementation and carried into life all party decisions. The Congress deemed it necessary to provide in the Rules a more extensive and detailed definition of the duties carried by the Communists. The goal was to raise the activity and responsibility of the Communists for the affairs of the entire party and enhance the guiding and organising role of the party.

A bit more than a year later, at the July 1953 plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, violations of the Leninist norms of party life and the principle of democratic

centralism were seriously criticised. The meeting ruled that all party members at all levels should strictly abide by these norms and principles.

The practice of holding regular CC plenary meetings was re-established, and the CC collegia began to function normally. In the three years preceding the 20th Congress eight plenary meetings of the Central Committee were held to discuss cardinal political and economic problems. The party took steps to eradicate violations of socialist legality, to improve the style and methods of work of the party and the state apparatus, to invigorate organisational and ideological work, and to expand and strengthen its links with the masses.

The Party's line towards a consistent application of the principle of collective leadership, the implementation of the Leninist norms of party life was further consolidated and developed by the 20th CPSU Congress which was held in February 1956. That congress ushered in a new period in the life of the party and the entire Soviet people. The congress paid particular attention to overcoming the personality cult and its consequences. It noted that the Central Committee was correct in condemning the personality cult which diminished the role played by the party and the masses, undermined the role of collective leadership and not infrequently led to serious shortcomings in its work. The congress instructed the Central Committee to be unremitting in its struggle against the personality cult and proceed in its activity from the fact that the real makers of a new life were

broad masses guided by the Communist Party.

The resolute measures taken by the Party to eradicate the negative consequences of the personality cult, to restore and develop the Leninist principle of democratic centralism as the basis of the party's guiding role benefited the life of the party, invigorated the activities of party bodies and expanded and consolidated their ties with the masses.

The 22nd CPSU Congress made a tangible contribution to the development of the Leninist teaching on the party and its organisational principles. It adopted the third Party Programme and new Party Rules. They embodied the line of the party which pursued the goal of raising the activity and responsibility of each party member for the cause of the party and the implementation of its decisions. The Rules contained a special provision on collectivity as the supreme principle of party leadership.

Substantial changes in, and supplements to, the CPSU Rules were aimed to make the organisational role of the party correspond to the magnitude of the tasks involved in communist construction. The Programme and the Rules incorporated provisions intended to further develop the principle of democratic centralism. This basic principle was later elaborated on in the decisions of the October 1964 Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee and the subsequent 23rd to 26th Congresses and plenary meetings of the Central Committee. The processes connected with the improvement of inner-party life in between the congresses and high requirements on the organisation of inner-party life, the es-

sence, style and methods of the activity of every party section, on the work and behaviour of Communists, their activity, responsibility and discipline stemming from the present-day course of the CPSU are all reflected in the new edition of the CPSU Programme and amendments to the CPSU Rules adopted by the 27th CPSU Congress.

Over the past years the party, strictly abiding by the Leninist principles of organisation, and first of all the principle of democratic centralism, has further consolidated its ranks, strengthened its influence in all fields of communist construction and reinforced its ties with the masses.

The party attaches particular importance to a profound, comprehensive and consistent development of inner-party democracy, genuinely collective work and leadership, and to raising the creative activities of Communists. This is only natural because democracy, inherent in the party at all stages from its very inception, has acquired particular significance in present-day conditions. This significance is determined first of all by the fact that the all-round development of socialist democracy, the participation of millions upon millions of people in the management of production, state and public affairs set forth as an urgent task constant and consistent development of democracy in party life, promotion of the activity of Communists in the elaboration and implementation of party policy, strategy and tactics, and creative participation of broad party masses in all its undertakings.

The activity of the CPSU Central Committee may serve as an example of the consis-

tent and unswerving implementation of inner-party democracy. The style and methods of guidance by the Central Committee are characterised by scientific approach to the problems of communist construction, collectivity and businesslike approach to work, a profound understanding of the essence of work, an ability to timely assist any party organisation in resolving its problems and overcoming difficulties that face it.

Party life shows encouraging signs by its further democratisation at the local level. Plenary meetings, meetings of local committees and bureaux, meetings of activists and grassroots organisations are held on a regular basis. The level of their work is rising and the content and results of these activities are becoming more diversified and rewarding. They discuss urgent problems in a businesslike atmosphere of principled attitude.

In its Leninist approach to the problems of developing inner-party discipline the CPSU consistently upholds the principle of electivity and accountability of all its bodies.

Large-scale electivity is one of the most convincing and vivid manifestations of democracy. As was pointed out by Lenin, democracy was a universal application of the electivity principle. The collective spirit in work and leadership has asserted itself, reflected in the upgrading of the role of elective party bodies centrally and locally. Problems pertaining to the internal and external policy of the party are discussed and resolved on a broad democratic basis.

The accountability of party bodies is assuming an increasingly systematic nature.

Most party organisations regularly hear progress reports of district and city committees and reports on the implementation of decisions taken by party conferences. Plenary meetings of district, city, regional and territorial committees and the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Union Republics discuss reports on the activities of the bureaux of party committees in the periods between plenary meetings.

Regular reports and elections vividly show the grown political level of Communists and their concern for consistently improving the entire activity of party organisations and the party as a whole.

Elective party leadership at all levels is an embodiment of consistent democracy, collective reason and the experience of the party at large and its organisations. It is indicative that the membership of the elective bodies is steadily growing. Thus, on the eve of the 24th CPSU Congress (in 1970-1971) 3,622 thousand Communists were elected to the leading bodies, while there were 4,308 thousand elected before the 25th Congress (1975-1976) and 4,853 thousand on the eve of the 26th Congress (1980-1981). At present there are 5,500 thousand Communists elected to party bodies. The democratic nature of the elective bodies is bolstered by a large proportion in them of workers and farmers.

Reports and elections on the eve of the 27th CPSU Congress were a convincing proof of the further development of democracy based on the principle of democratic centralism. They were a major socio-political event which showed a high level of consciousness

and activity of the Communists, the unity and cohesion of the party ranks. As it was recommended by the April 1985 Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, meetings and conferences were held in keeping with Lenin's teaching—without false idealisation, long-winded discussions and unnecessary formalism, superfluous lauding and commendation. They summed up what had been done, summarised positive experience, exposed shortcomings and identified ways and means of improving work. As a result of reports and elections the composition of leadership bodies was considerably renewed.

The work of the party is becoming increasingly public, and party members are better informed, which is a vital prerequisite for democracy and for raising the effectiveness of collective leadership. The CPSU Central Committee informs on a regular basis all party organisations and Communists on the most important matters of party life, the internal and external situation of the country. The press covers each regular meeting of the CPSU Central Committee and its decisions.

The activists, rank-and-file Communists and the local press are informed on a regular basis on the activities of local party bodies. They make a more extensive use of information as an instrument of guidance, education and control. Practice has shown that in resolving important problems extensive information helps better appraise the situation and take into account the opinion and experience of party organisations and broad masses of the working people. Consequently, in this

sense such information is an instrument of leadership. Regular and full information from bottom to top on the implementation of the decisions taken by the party and its leading bodies is an indispensable and effective means of control.

The party believes that an expanded party democracy is inseparably linked with the development of businesslike criticism and self-criticism.

The realisation of historic responsibility and duty before the people protects the party against complacency. This approach allows the party to comprehensively and sober-mindedly assess its own activities and to see in them both indisputable successes the party and the people have every right to be proud of and difficulties, shortcomings and problems. It allows the party not only to see these difficulties and shortcomings but also to do everything in its power to overcome them.

Communists can and should expose shortcomings and contradictions, but do that in a constructive way, forestalling extremes, excesses and all kinds of misinterpretations. To put it otherwise, it is a matter of sound criticism from exclusively party positions, aimed at strengthening the party, doing away with everything outdated, dogmatic, all which holds up advance. Meanwhile, some people abroad would rather like a different sort of criticism. Falsifiers of the party's history are at pains to prove that the ban on factions and groupings within the CPSU bars criticism. That is what is claimed, for instance, by the authors of the ill-famed work *World Communism. A Handbook*. There are people like

Wolfgang Leonhard who asserts that a party member is in no position to engage in criticism since the party does not permit it for it is only for the party to decide what is positive and what is negative in criticism. The absurdity of such statements is glaring.

The Communist Party displays a realistic approach to the problems facing it. Along with the indisputable great achievements the Soviet people are proud of the party sees difficulties and shortcomings, unresolved problems and existing contradictions and sober-mindedly appraises the situation without exaggerating or underestimating the progress made. Only such realistic approach allows to avoid political mistakes and wishful thinking and to see it clearly, as Lenin put it, what we have done and what there is still to do.

As for the difficulties, it is important not to confuse, as sometimes happens, objective difficulties with subjective ones. One should identify those of them engendered by the onward movement and those caused by inertia and conservatism which, however, are not rooted in the socialist system as is asserted by bourgeois ideologists and revisionists. CPSU documents point out that it is bureaucratic obstacles, a dulled sense of responsibility of these or those leaders and violations of party and state discipline that make it more difficult to resolve economic and other problems. Socialism is a dynamic and permanently developing society which, guided by the party, is capable of timely removing all barriers and impediments from the difficult path of revolutionary transformations. The CPSU invariably underscores the need to constantly

instill the spirit of self-criticism and intolerance to shortcomings. This fully corresponds to Lenin's idea that the party of the revolutionary proletariat is strong enough to openly criticise itself, to call a mistake a mistake and a weakness a weakness.

There have been profound changes in the life of the Soviet Union in recent decades. The Soviet Union leads the world in many fields of production, science and technology. However, the realities of life necessitate further changes and transformations for attaining a qualitatively new level in the development of society. What is needed is modernisation of production by making use of scientific and technological achievements and reaching the highest world level in labour productivity, improvement of relations in society, first of all economic relations, profound transformations in the working, living and cultural conditions for the people, stimulation of the functioning of the entire system of political and public institutions, and promotion of socialist democracy and socialist self-government at all levels.

The party is aware that along with obvious achievements in the economic development there exist unfavourable trends and serious difficulties. Vigorous measures taken by the party allowed to mitigate the impact produced by these trends and difficulties and to upgrade the work of many sectors of the national economy. However, still a lot has to be done in this field. An intensified development of the economy, a comprehensive improvement of social production on the basis of scientific and technological progress, the

restructuring of management and planning and a better structural and investment policy, as well as an overall improvement in the organisation of production and discipline are indispensable for accelerating economic growth rates necessary for the overall development of the country.

The powerful economic, scientific, technological, cultural and moral potential of Soviet society creates more opportunities for making use of the advantages offered by the socialist system. However, these opportunities are still to be translated into life, and this requires a tremendous concentration of the efforts and abilities of the working people, an all-round development of their initiative and activity and a truly scientific management of the national economy and the entire life of society. That was again stressed at the June 1985 conference convened by the CC CPSU, which examined the issues of an accelerated scientific and technological progress. In their speeches General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and other participants in the conference spoke about urgent measures required to carry into life the concept of an accelerated socio-economic development of the country on the basis of scientific and technological progress which had been advanced by the April 1985 Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee. They spoke about the need for mobilising organisational, economic and social factors, strengthening discipline in all spheres, improving management and making maximum use of all available resources so as to speed up production growth rates, upgrade quality and move forward in strategically important directions.

To solve this large-scale problem it is necessary to make profound changes in party work and in economic management, to raise the responsibility of all workers, and first of all officials from top to bottom, for the implementation of the party policy. However, as was noted by the April Plenary Meeting many workers still display inaptitude, inertia, conservatism and practice red tape. In a number of places workers are promoted on the strength of personal loyalty and protectionism, which quenches criticism and self-criticism, weakens ties with the masses and, in the final count, leads to failures.

The March and April 1985 Plenary Meetings of the CC CPSU set the task for the party and the Soviet people to wage an uncompromising struggle against such facts and all manifestations of disregard for, or violation of, state interests, against irresponsibility, formalism and violations of moral norms and ethics. And here frank, precise, forthright and constructive criticism has a major role to play.

Thus, the CPSU shows constant concern for an all-round development of democracy in party life, the creative activity of the membership, the expansion and consolidation of collectivity in work and leadership. The underlying premise is that a more developed democracy and greater collectivity, initiative and responsibility of Communists are a great asset of the party. If they show more vigour in the fulfillment of the adopted decisions the party will be able to tackle its tasks more successfully.

Lenin stressed many times over that the party draws its strength and invincibility from

its ties with the masses, that the successful construction of communism is entirely out of the question without an alliance with non-party masses. Accordingly, the party and its Central Committee spare no effort to expand and consolidate the links with the masses. The truly popular nature of the CPSU is determined by its policy corresponding to the vital interests of the working people, as well as by the methods of its work and leadership which rest on profound democracy, reliance on broad popular masses, on their collective wisdom and experience. The development of democracy serves as an important prerequisite for raising the level and a consistent improvement of the party's political and organisational leadership of the development of society, the expansion and consolidation of the party's ties with the masses.

The profound essence of the party's decisions as regards the further socio-economic development of the country consists in that they contribute to the utmost realisation of the principle of democratic centralism in economic construction and a proper combination of the centralised planned management with an extensive initiative of the masses. The CPSU's economic policy facilitates further democratisation of management and opens up new opportunities for the people's most active participation in the elaboration, adoption and implementation of managerial decisions.

The party maintains its contacts with the people first of all through its primary organisations which exist at present in every collective of the working people and which, partic-

ularly in recent years, have grown considerably and become stronger organisationally. Still, besides direct contacts the party has an opportunity to consolidate its ties with the people through the Soviets, trade unions, the Komsomol and other mass organisations. The strength of collectivity in party leadership carried out on the basis of democratic centralism lies in its ability to rely on these organisations, to implement its decisions through them, to organise the people for the attainment of the goals involved in building communism, to rouse their creative initiative and energy, to involve many millions of people in the management of the state and social production. In doing so party organisations resort to their own methods of political, organisational and educational work.

One of the most important requirements of democratic centralism is systematically increasing responsibility and activity of the government, trade unions, Komsomol and other bodies and the full use of their activity in the further consolidation of the links binding the party and the masses.

The expansion and consolidation of the ties maintained by the party, by all its sections with the masses is also facilitated by the public discussion of major social and political problems, by the improvement of the system of people's control over the activities of state and economic bodies, reporting of top officials to the working people, the entire most diversified array of the methods of mass-scale political, ideological and educational work allowing to timely and comprehensively explain to the people the internal and external

policy of the CPSU and the all-round improvement of political information by the party from top to bottom and from bottom upward.

The development of party democracy, collectivity of leadership and the expansion and consolidation of the links with the masses further raise the authority of the party as the leading and guiding force of the Soviet people in the struggle for communism.

## DEMOCRACY SERVES AS THE BASIS FOR THE UNITY OF THE PARTY AND STRENGTHENS PARTY DISCIPLINE

The ideological and organisational unity of the Communist Party is a driving force in its development. And this unity is only possible if it rests on sound, conscientious party discipline and the most strict observance of the principle of democratic centralism.

Meanwhile, present-day revisionists under the guise of "liberalisation and democratisation" put into question and actually reject such an important element of democratic centralism as strict party discipline, subordination of the minority to the majority. Things have gone so far that some people abroad calling themselves Marxist-Leninists advance the idea of freedom of factions and groupings. These people referring to some specific features and different conditions in which they have to operate would like to modify the structure of the Communist Party, to revise or, so to say, modernise the principle of democratic centralism. And here "modernisation" is essentially perceived as a radical revision and the eventual elimination of the principle of centralism. However, there is nothing new in this approach: this is just a camouflaged repetition of opportunistic petty-bourgeois views on organisational matters which

gained currency at the turn of the century and later on were resolutely discarded by the international communist movement.

The experience accumulated by the CPSU in its struggle against various opportunistic movements and factions is very instructive. This experience has been of assistance to many fraternal communist parties; it helps them in the struggle against opportunism and "Left" deviations, against the attempts made by all sorts of revisionists to undermine the unshakable organisational principle of Marxism-Leninism.

The party had to wage a resolute struggle not only against Mensheviks but also against other revisionists, factionalists and dissenters. Let us recall, for instance, the uncompromising and resolute rebuff by the party and Lenin in 1919-1921 to the anti-party group called "democratic centralism" whose members demagogically posed as active proponents of broad democracy and a corporate approach, which, in fact, was just a refrain of Trotskyite, Menshevik and anarchic views reflecting the mood of the petty bourgeoisie. Their revolutionary phrases served as a cover-up to political adventurism and were a betrayal of Marxism.

If the party had followed the line of "democentralists" who believed that centralism had outlived itself and should be replaced by "unrestricted democracy" when local organisations were under no duty to submit to central bodies, while party groups in the Soviets would be released from the ideological guidance of party committees, there is no doubt that the party would have been disorganised

and weakened and the revolution would have been doomed to an unavoidable defeat. Lenin called that group a faction louder than all shouters and its views the worst kind of Menshevism and SR views. That is why the 8th Congress, the 8th Party Conference and the 9th Party Congress resolutely condemned "democentralists". In his concluding statement at the 9th Congress Lenin pointed out that the theses of Osinsky, Maximovsky and Sapronov were "a mistake which in a way provides a banner, a justification for the worst elements"<sup>1</sup> and that all demagogic phrases of "democentralists" about independence served as a cover for disorganising elements.

It is not by chance that Mensheviks, SRs and other opponents of Marxism-Leninism were so delighted by the position and anti-Party activities of "democentralists". It is also no mere coincidence that at present such bourgeois historians as Werner Scharndorff and Leonard Schapiro heap lavish praise on "democentralists" as "democracy fighters".

Trotskyites, the so-called "labour opposition" and participants in other trends and groups reflecting the pressure of petty-bourgeois sentiment abused centralism in the structure and activities of the party. It is indicative that all those factions masked their splitting activities with high-flown phrases about collectivity, inner-party democracy, freedom of criticism, the struggle against "functionaries", "bureaucracy" and so forth and so long. Actually, they were against the collective will of the overwhelming majority

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 466.

of party members and defended petty-bourgeois lack of discipline. These encroachments were aimed against the organisational foundations of the party which, as was noted by Lenin, implied "full *freedom to criticise*, so long as this does not disturb the *unity of a definite action*; it rules out *all* criticism which disrupts or makes difficult the *unity* of an action decided on by the Party."<sup>1</sup>

The freedom of open discussion by all party members of all most important matters of party life and other issues does not at all imply the freedom of organising factions propagating anti-party views. Such opposition groupings undermine cohesion, the unity of the party and can lead to a split. Successful collective activity of the party and all its organisations is only possible when the party is united ideologically, organisationally and tactically. While taking care of creating all necessary prerequisites for an unrestrained collective discussion, bold criticism of mistakes, blunders and shortcomings, the party cannot and does not allow its members to overstep the line dividing loyalty from disloyalty to the party. When the clash of opinions in the course of collective discussion at the level of a congress, a conference, a plenary meeting of a party committee or at any other level is over and a corresponding decision resulting from collective creativity has been adopted, collective actions of Communists acquire overriding importance irrespective of the opinions held by individual Communists

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Freedom to Criticise and Unity of Action", *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, 1978, p. 443.

prior to the decision taken by a particular body. Lenin said: "Discussing the problem, expressing and hearing different opinions, ascertaining the views of the *majority* of the organised Marxists, expressing these views in the form of decisions adopted by delegates and carrying them out conscientiously—this is what reasonable people all over the world call *unity*."<sup>1</sup>

Present-day revisionists and renegades, just like Mensheviks, "democentralists" and Trotskyites seek to distort and cast doubt on the Leninist interpretation of the problem of the majority and the minority. Some of them, like, for instance, Franz Marek, say that the decision of the 10th RCP(B) Congress on the prohibition of factions was "fatal". Insisting that the "rights of the minority" should be recognised legally and actually, they believe that their viewpoint is archdemocratic. However, is disregard for the will of the majority, which would follow had such proposals and views been accepted, democratic? Would it not be more correct to call such a stance undemocratic, introducing disorganisation, violating the unity of the party and leading to petty-bourgeois anarchism and, sometimes, to the usurpation and retention of power by a handful of political adventurers and office-hunters?

In this connection it would be appropriate to note that bourgeois and revisionist authors sometimes allege that in the CPSU there has been a change of attitude to the prob-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Working-Class Unity", *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, 1980, p. 519.

lem of the majority and the minority and to the principle of democratic centralism in general, that the present-day interpretation of this principle differs from the interpretation advanced in the early years of Soviet power and this evolution was prompted by "the political processes of the Soviet Union in its Stalinist phase"<sup>1</sup>, Michael Waller, Senior Lecturer at the University of Manchester, writes. He also asserts that some Communist Parties begin to stress the significance of democratic centralism only in political crises when it becomes necessary to preserve unity and solidarity within a particular party and social cohesion around the party. In these periods the centralising aspect of that notion is becoming inevitably stronger.<sup>2</sup>

As regards a change in the interpretation of the principle of democratic centralism it should be noted that this conclusion is totally unsubstantiated. There have been and can be no changes in this interpretation. Waller himself refers to the works of Soviet authors repudiating that version including *The Principle of Democratic Centralism in the Construction and Activity of the Communist Party*, a joint publication by the CPSU Central Committee Institute of Marxism-Leninism and the Karl Marx Higher Party School of the Central Committee of the Socialist United Party of Germany, based on the papers of a symposium held in Berlin.

The book, Waller writes, provides "very

<sup>1</sup> M. Waller, *Democratic Centralism. An Historical Commentary*, Manchester, 1981, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 17.

full treatment of fractionalism, which deserves quotation, both because it puts the Soviet view of fractionalism in clear terms and also because it illustrates the relationship which has grown up between fractionalism and democratic centralism.

"Revisionists, says Rodionov, attempt to prove that the existence of fractions in the party furthers the development of inner-party democracy, and that if there are no fractions there is no democracy either. But in practice it is fractions which stifle inner-party democracy, making impossible businesslike discussion in which all arguments might be peacefully weighed. All that emerges is 'platforms' which stand in opposition to each other, and groups arise based on no set principles... The Bolsheviks considered that the decisive determining factor of the strength of Lenin's party was the monolithic unity of its ranks, the inadmissibility of actions aimed at destroying its unity and weakening its iron discipline... It is therefore no accident that the statutes of almost every communist and workers' party specifically stipulate a ban on fractions."<sup>1</sup>

In citing these quotations from the report made at the symposium by the author of this work, Waller concludes: "The legacy of the Bolsheviks' tenth congress speaks very clearly in these words."<sup>2</sup>

Further on he writes: "It has another clear echo in a third passage, this time from Samosudov, where the organisation of the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 64, 65.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

party is spoken of as an organism, subject to good and to bad health: any living organism's normal activity is possible only as long as it stays within the 'parameters' of the life activity specific to that given organism. Outside these parameters lie the starting points and foundations for sick processes... The rejection of democratic centralism, an incorrect interpretation of the norms of party life which stem from it, the destruction of the dialectical interconnection between democracy and centralism in practical activity lead to sickly phenomena in party life, destroy the unity of action and engender crisis situations.'<sup>1</sup>

Well, we can sign these quotations again and again since they are in full accord with Lenin's concept of democratic centralism. The reference to the 10th Congress reveals the unsoundness of all the talk about the evolution of views as regards this concept.

Incidentally, the same Waller, citing Antonio Gramsci, who had compared the party with a living organism subject to good or bad health, notes that Lenin himself drew the same interconnection between factionalism and sickness within the party when in 1921 he proposed to ban factionalism.

Experience shows that only when the party strictly abides by the principle of democratic centralism and the relevant norms of party life its health will be invariably good and the unhealthy symptoms are possible and even unavoidable only when it departs from these requirements rather than as a consequence of some flaws in these or those prin-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

ciples of party structure. Only when the Leninist principles of party organisation are unswervingly observed, and first of all the principle of democratic centralism, can the party successfully play the leading, vanguard role in the life of socialist society. And this role always, under any circumstances, is the decisive prerequisite for the successful solution of the tasks of socialist construction.

And when Heinz Timmermann, a scholar from the Institute of Oriental and International Studies in Cologne (FRG), in an article in *Osteuropa* (No. 3, 1985, pp. 169-80) specifically dedicated to the principle of democratic centralism and its implementation in Communist and Workers' Parties in modern conditions, puts into question the legitimacy of preserving the very essence of the principle of democratic centralism, one has every reason to believe that attempt as totally unsubstantiated. And here the author's arguments do not become more convincing when he refers to discussions over that issue in some Communist Parties or recalls some deviations from the basic precepts of democratic centralism and manifestations of factionalism, or refers to other authors whose views are identical with the views he holds, including, by the way, M. Waller, or when he refers to Lenin who, Timmermann claims, believed that democratic centralism was "an exclusively Russian phenomenon" engendered by "the conditions of the Civil War".

Experience leaves no doubt that only strict abidance by the principle of democratic centralism ensures, as has been already mentioned, the unity of the party which is a

reliable guarantee of its fruitful, purposeful activities. We believe that what is needed is not a new approach to the problem of unity, the problem of party discipline and freedom of discussion, as it is sometimes heard or aired in the press, but rather, every effort to consolidate that unity on the Leninist principles and basis. The need for unity was not something transient engendered by the strenuous conditions in which the socialist republic and the party found themselves immediately after the October Revolution: it is an essential requirement stemming from the Leninist doctrine on the party and confirmed by the experience of the CPSU and other fraternal parties.

This experience proves beyond any doubt that factionalists who pose as advocates of democracy and freedom of criticism actually create an atmosphere of intolerance towards all those who do not share their views and do not support their actions. This sharp criticism they turn against the party itself and its leading centres, against the principle of partisanship. Meanwhile, Lenin thought that genuine democracy and free criticism could exist only when differences among party members were discussed calmly and on their merit so that they would not disrupt party activities and impede the proper functioning of the central bodies. Simultaneously, he stressed that the supreme judge in the arising arguments and disagreements should be party masses.

It should be also said that factions unavoidably lead to the struggle for power within the party instead of ensuring an honest and open struggle of ideas, for if a party splits into factions and they are engaged in their

internal struggle the organisational unity of the party crumbles. Parties lose their ability of concerted action and cannot accomplish the tasks facing them. That is why Bolsheviks rebuffed any attempts to turn the party into a discussion club, a kind of conglomeration of factions and groupings. Lenin and the Bolsheviks believed that the party's strength rested on the monolithic unity of its ranks, the inadmissibility of any actions undermining its unity and weakening its discipline.

Toleration of factions within a Communist Party would spell the beginning of its demise as a militant revolutionary party. Therefore, the rules of almost all Communist Parties contain special provisions banning factions and the rules of a number of the parties which did not contain such provisions were supplemented with them at their recent congresses.

Ironically, some revisionists, including the above-mentioned Marek, when discussing the majority-minority problem, call on nobody else but Lenin as their ally. This stratagem is refuted by Lenin's works and his uncompromising struggle against revisionists, including on the majority-minority issue, which was covered above. In examining that problem Lenin stressed that "unless the will of the majority is carried out there is no use talking about the Party spirit, or even of organised political action in general"<sup>1</sup> and that unity

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "How the Workers Responded to the Formation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Group in the Duma", *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, 1972, p. 539.

was impossible without organisation and that organisation was impossible without subordination of the minority to the majority. "If people really want to work together, they should also be willing to submit to the will of the majority."<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes voices are heard that maybe these ideas were appropriate in their time and day and were applicable only in conditions of the Soviet Union and that they have outlived themselves by now.<sup>2</sup> The unsubstantiated nature of these assertions is quite obvious, for Lenin's provisions reflect the meaning and the substance of the principle of democratic centralism which retains its cardinal significance in any circumstances and conditions, any time.

The problem of correlating the majority and the minority has not lost its "classical essence", as revisionists claim. On the contrary, it has become particularly meaningful and relevant today when we see more fierce attempts on the part of all sorts of revisionists to pervert the Leninist organisational principles and first of all the principle of democratic centralism, to put at loggerheads centralism and democratism, to separate and isolate these two notions, to justify the existence of factions so as to undermine the unity of the party.

When socialism has triumphed in the

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Session of the Council of the R.S.D.L.P., January 15-17 (28-30), 1904", *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance: *Marxism, Communism and Western Society*, Vol. 2, N.Y., 1972, p. 339.

Soviet Union and matured and is being further improved, when Soviet society is united morally and politically there is no soil for sprouting political factions with their ideological platforms. However, it would be a delusion to think that now there is no need to consolidate the unity and cohesion of the party. Only the approach to the solution of this problem has changed in response to new requirements posed by life. And life insistent-ly puts forward the tasks of raising the efficiency of party members and combining in one single whole wide-scale and profound party democratism, collectivity of leadership and sound conscientious discipline with high responsibility of all Communists for the activities of their party.

The party cannot tackle its multiplying and more complicated tasks and carry out its obligations unless it develops as a dynamic organism and if its unity, cohesion and activities do not constantly consolidate and intensify in that process. That is why the CPSU attaches key significance to the most strict and consistent observance of the Leninist norms of party life, the principles of party leadership and of the entire system of inner-party relations so it can constantly strengthen its ideological and organisational cohesion and raise its prestige and influence as the guiding and organising force in socialist society. It allows the party to ensure to the decisive degree the most effective guidance of society and bear high responsibility before the working people, the working class and to fulfill its internationalist duty.

The entire rich experience of the CPSU

and other Marxist-Leninist parties is proof that the unity of the party ranks and solid party discipline are attainable on a democratic basis. In its true meaning democratism is an expression of the will of the majority. Inner-party democracy which organically combines a high degree of organisation and firm conscientious discipline is based exactly on the recognition of that will as the supreme authority.

Party discipline is a conscientious performance of duties by the members of the organisation as the people thinking and acting in concert. This self-discipline emerges in conditions of extensive and all-round democratism, an active participation of the Communists in the elaboration and implementation of party policy.

The Communist Party is a party of revolutionary action, a party of fighters, and this role is successfully performed thanks to the skilful combination of inner-party democracy with centralism and extensive creative initiative, with discipline and organisation. The growing and guiding role played by the party does not emerge automatically, all by itself. It stems from the growing responsibility of all Communists for the affairs of the party, their activeness and initiative, the intensification of organisational and ideological work.

The level of political and organisational guidance of the party is determined by collective efforts and actions of all party organisations and Communists. Active participation of each party organisation and every Communist not only in the elaboration but also

in the implementation of the policy and decisions of the party is indispensable for fruitful and efficient party guidance. "Collegiate methods," Lenin said, "are essential for the conduct of the affairs of the workers' and peasants' state."<sup>1</sup>

A strong proponent of collective leadership, Lenin stressed more than once that it should be combined with extensive and precise organising work that would ensure speedy implementation of collective decisions, and with personal responsibility for that. As he wrote, "any expansion of these methods, any distortion of them resulting in red tape and irresponsibility, and conversion of collegiate bodies into talk-shops is a supreme evil, an evil which must be halted at all costs as quickly as possible and by whatever the means."<sup>2</sup>

While strictly abiding by the collectivity principle, Lenin simultaneously stressed personal responsibility of each worker for the work entrusted to him and requested the most strict abidance by party and state discipline, taught businesslike approach to problems, organisation and flexibility, condemned ado and pomp. He attached crucial significance to verifying the execution of decisions and the ability to organise work, and was intolerable to any violations of party and state discipline.

*Complete Works* by Lenin contain his letter to the CC RCP(B) Organising Bureau in which he discussed the lack of discipline

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "All Out for the Fighting Against Denikin", *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, 1977, p. 437.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

of some party workers who were against the CC RCP(B) decision to mobilise party members for resolving the food problem. Having read their letter, Lenin put forward a proposal of censuring or "reproving them for their gossip about the policy of the C.C. R.C.P.(B.), which is a violation of discipline and an obstacle to organised and harmonious work;

"—for, without indicating anything concrete, these people are wasting valuable time and diverting attention from speediest departure to the Ukraine for work there.

"The C.C. calls on them to cease their gossip and project-mongering and get down to work immediately, strictly carrying out the policy and instructions of the C.C. R.C.P."<sup>1</sup>

And here is another example. In 1921 the Council of People's Commissars instructed A. I. Rykov, the then Chairman of the All-Russia National Economy Council, to draft concession agreements. Rykov failed in carrying out these instructions on time and, on top of that, submitted unsatisfactory materials. This is what Lenin wrote on that subject: "I have gone over your material on the concession agreement, and am highly indignant..."

"There is a host of useless and ridiculous details..."

"The serious matters have been swamped in bureaucratic litter.

"There is no sign of *brains*, thinking *brains*..."

"You have wrecked the C.P.C. decision

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 44, 1975, p. 318.

(2/II. 1921), requiring the working out of the *main principles within three weeks!!...*

“Stop the sabotage and do the job *properly*, otherwise I shall fight it out in the C.C.”<sup>1</sup>

Lenin insisted that each worker, irrespective of the post he held, should work not only by the rules but approach the solution of problems as a conscientious revolutionary, that all Communists spare no effort, inventiveness and enterprise with the aim of implementing collectively adopted decisions.

People who worked with Lenin at that time said that he was literally raging when anyone showed lack of discipline or approached the implementations of decisions taken by the party and its supreme organs in a wrong way. For instance, as A. M. Durmashkin wrote in his reminiscences, when Lenin discovered that Tomsky, Chairman of the All-Russia Central Council of Trade Unions, displayed irresponsibility in implementing a decision taken by the CC of the Party he said with indignation: “This is no way to work. Without discipline we shall perish. The Politbureau is a collective organ. We have our disagreements. Everyone has the right to defend his own opinion. However, once a decision is taken, carry it into life. This is ABC.”

Nowadays, when our party and the entire Soviet people are tackling major complex problems of creating a material and technical basis of communism, upgrading social relations and bringing up a man of the future it is becoming particularly important to make the

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, 1981, p. 107.

word and the deed, the decision and its implementation inseparable, and to expand the political and organising activities of all party sections.

The political and ideological maturity of Communists and understanding that inner-party democracy and discipline are indivisible are reflected in the active and persistent struggle for the implementation of the policy and decisions of the party. Our Communist Party and its Leninist Central Committee, while taking constant care of the development of inner-party democracy, initiative and activity of the Communists, sees the development of inner-party democracy in an inseparable unity with the strengthening of party discipline in accordance with Lenin's idea that every Communist is responsible for the party as the latter bears responsibility for each of its members.

The steadily growing guiding role of the party in building communism is linked, on the one hand, with the deepening of inner-party democracy and, on the other, with an all possible increase of exactingness towards Communists and with strengthening party and state discipline. That is why, while stressing the importance of an all-round expansion of democratic principles in inner-party life, which is in line with the objective requirements and the peculiarities of the present stage in the development of the CPSU, the party simultaneously focuses attention on the need to further strengthen party discipline, to raise the awareness of Communists of their responsibility for the state of affairs in their local organisations and the party as a whole.

In its documents the party invariably emphasises the fact that the development of inner-party democracy is inseparable from the strengthening of party discipline, that it is important to further strengthen discipline in the party and to strive to achieve an unconditional fulfilment by the Communists of the demands placed on them by the CPSU Programme and the Party Rules.

This is of paramount importance if we look at that problem through the prism of the prospects for further raising the leading and guiding role of the party, for an all-round consolidation of party and state discipline is an indispensable condition of this process. The more complicated the tasks of communist construction, the more imperative the need for a high level of organisation and discipline of all Soviet people and first of all Communists. Indeed, let us look at the basic, decisive task of creating a material and technical basis of communism. It involves a constant development and perfection of production on the basis of the latest achievements of the scientific and technological revolution and this, in turn, needs to be based on strict discipline, precise management and supervision, a correct correlation of forces and a further improvement of organising activities.

It is important to note that the party has infused the notion of party discipline with a new content and introduced new criteria and requirements. Party documents pay more attention to the need to raise the ideological level and activity of the CPSU members and to eliminate passivity, indifference and lack of political consciousness. The party puts to

the fore with particular force the requirement that each Communist has to be a political fighter and bear with dignity the high rank of a member of the Leninist Party. The notion of party discipline is inseparable from instilling into Communists high ideological and moral qualities. The party regards it an absolute condition for ensuring the unity of thinking, will and action of broad party masses.

This is a natural approach first of all because the high ideological level of Communists underlies party discipline. Nowadays, the party leads the people to accomplishing tremendous creative tasks. The higher the ideological and moral background of every Communist, the higher his moral authority. Communist conviction lies at the basis of a more conscientious abidance of Communists by the requirements and duties embodied in the Party Programme and Rules, and moral demands and obligations which makes a Communist a real political fighter of the party, always and everywhere—in labour and public life, in learning and everyday life. The party is strict with those of its members who cringe when faced with difficulties, who pay no attention to shortcomings and pander to retrograde views. It should be noted that the party also poses the task before the system of political education that every man should not only assimilate a certain amount of political knowledge but also the task of turning that knowledge into deep-seated convictions and of instilling the traits of an ideological and political fighter into all Communists.

The CPSU has always attached great significance to the vanguard role of the Communists in tackling all economic and political tasks. In modern conditions this significance is growing still more. To play that role means in practice the unity of communist convictions and actions of the Communists, their discipline and a high degree of organisation. The well-known slogan "Communists—forward!" is being infused with a new meaning. The party demands from its members that they should be in the vanguard in the struggle for everything new and progressive, for raising the efficiency of social production, for accelerating scientific and technological progress, for new social relations which would not bear any traces of bourgeois ideology and nationalism or would mean a retreat from the norms of communist principles and morality, against stagnation. This task is still more important because already today the ideological, spiritual and moral character of the Communist is an embodiment of a man of the future.

In this connection it should be noted that since the growth of activity and, simultaneously, responsibility of the Communists depends to the decisive degree on the level of the work carried out by primary party organisations the party takes great care of constantly upgrading their role.

Speaking about strengthening discipline and ensuring unity between conviction and actions, words and deeds, one cannot but stress that in putting forward these requirements the party does not in the least intend to achieve this goal by administrative methods. Such methods are not typical of the

party. Moreover, they are alien to it and can only harm the party. First of all it requires discipline built on a high degree of consciousness and the feeling of responsibility, rather than discipline built on fear and rigid administrative methods which deprive people of confidence and initiative and engender over-cautiousness and dishonesty. This profound postulate of the party is of cardinal importance. Incidentally, it exposes those foreign "critics" who assert that discipline in the Communist Party is "discipline based on order", that it is based on coercion, blind compliance and obedience, on purely administrative methods.

In its work with its members the party follows the Leninist policy of combining trust to, and respect for, its workers with principled exactingness towards them, with raising the responsibility of its members for the tasks entrusted to them, which excludes sheer administration, ordering about, nervousness and diffidence. The party relies first of all on a high degree of consciousness and responsibility of its workers. At the same time it is intolerable to those who violate party and state discipline, who are dishonest with the party and the people, who commit acts incompatible with the world outlook, moral norms and the code of behaviour of Communists.

Sometimes one happens to hear or read that as society moves towards communism the firm and strict party discipline is becoming unnecessary. Meanwhile, Lenin's instruction on the need to preserve party discipline is relevant not only in the period

of revolutionary actions; the party needs solid, conscientious discipline also in the period when it leads the masses in the struggle for the establishment of a socialist society and at the stage of developed socialism and its perfecting.

The attainment of the goals involved in communist construction urgently calls for creating everywhere an atmosphere of businesslike efficiency, organisation, intolerance to shortcomings, respect for criticism, excluding indiscipline, irresponsibility, a gap between the words and the deeds. The overwhelming majority of party organisations spare no effort to create such an atmosphere. In carrying into life the decisions of the 27th CPSU Congress they persistently improve the style and methods of party leadership in guiding social and political life, concentrate their attention on solving the basic, decisive problems of social development and are mastering the art of organising and directing the efforts of the masses towards attaining major goals, the art of blending together their talent, knowledge and experience.

The activities of party organisations are nowadays increasingly characterised by purposeful efforts, a more profound and comprehensive analysis of social, political and economic phenomena and processes. Party organisations pay particular attention to raising the level of organising activities, upgrading the work with the cadres, educating Communists in the spirit of high responsibility for the work they are entrusted with. Mindful of the fact that systematic control over the implementation of the party policy is indis-

pensible for the proper upbringing of the cadres, strengthening party and state discipline party bodies spare no effort to make that control constant and effective rather than casual. Party activists take part in that control on an increasingly broader scale.

The style and methods in the work of party organisations in recent years are increasingly characterised by such important features as a businesslike, purposeful and careful approach to the solution of complex problems in socio-political life; constantly growing exactingness to the cadres, all Communists; the intensification of the organising, ideological and educational work; the improvement of supervision over the fulfillment of the decisions taken by the Party and the government; the striving of party organisations to carry out their activities purposefully, steadfastly, on the basis of a comprehensive and profound analysis of socio-political and economic factors and processes with account taken of social consequences of each particular step and the collective experience and wisdom of the masses.

Particular attention is being paid to a considerable and practically universal increase of the role played by the members of party committees in supervising the fulfillment of party decisions and directives of the party and the government. And this is quite natural, for the members of party committees bear responsibility for the state of affairs in their organisations and for the entire work of a particular party body. Their activeness and keen interest in the success of their work is the main prerequisite for fruitful collective work. Hence,

the duties of each member cannot be reduced exclusively to the participation in the work of plenary meetings, even if most active participation. They are much more extensive. Members of a party committee are called upon to be in the midst of events, to timely raise burning issues, to reflect the needs of the masses, to carry out extensive organising work.

Many party committees entrust the same group of comrades that prepared an issue for the elaboration by the bureau or a plenary meeting also with supervision and organisation of the implementation of a particular decision. This group which is as a rule composed mostly of the members of the party committee elaborates together with a particular primary party organisation and the management of a particular collective practical measures for the implementation of planned measures, supervises and contributes to that work. This supervision is lifted only if and when all points of the decision have been carried into life and all relevant measures have been taken.

This experience which is gaining in scope is valuable first of all because it combines control and the measures necessary for the implementation of the corresponding decision, combines a collective elaboration of decisions with the collective efforts for their implementation.

Party organisations show more exactingness and intolerance when it comes to the facts that Communists do not display enough responsibility for the work of their organisation, their collective and for the work entrusted-

ed to them and are more demanding and intolerant towards Communists who abuse their official position and violate norms of communist morality and ethics.

We cannot ignore the fact that there are still Communists, and some leaders in their midst, who do not fulfill or poorly fulfill directives of the party and the government, the decisions of a party committee or a party meeting, violate party and state discipline. The CPSU Central Committee constantly draws attention of party organisations to the need that they, without any exception, should pay unabating attention to raising the responsibility of Communists for the tasks entrusted to them, for carrying into life the decisions taken by the party and the government and their own decisions, for instilling the feeling of high exactingness towards themselves and their comrades and for eradicating liberalism towards those who forget their party duty and obligations imposed on them by the Party Rules. A genuine Communist, a genuine political fighter of the party cannot and should not pass over any shortcomings, the more so abnormal phenomena. He is called upon to be irreconcilable in fighting anything that hinders our progress and contradicts the norms of our life, its high principles. He has to be a fighter against alien ideology and morals. There is no and cannot be for a Communist a duty higher and more noble than the duty to remain a conscientious fighter of the party and to carry out unswervingly its policy under any circumstances, always.

Organised actions are impossible without

an all-round consolidation of conscientious discipline. Failure to do so would undermine Lenin's most important provision to the effect that being the supreme political organisation of the working class, the Communist Party is an organisation not only of those who think alike but also those who act in concert. Inner-party democracy is based exactly on majority will recognised as the supreme driving force. Those who wish to support democracy should subjugate their will to the will of the majority and do everything that was planned together in concert. As Lenin pointed out, "we have given the workers visual proof that the Party is a special kind of thing which needs forward-looking men prepared for sacrifice ... that it guides and selects men who know the way and the obstacles before us".<sup>1</sup> He also stressed that genuine party members were only those who followed the tactical line of the party, and that "a man proves his party allegiance by taking a most energetic, direct, and open part in the affairs of his party".<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays, when the CPSU is faced with extremely broad, difficult and important tasks these instructions have become particularly topical. We can see the growing significance of moral factors, political maturity, high Communist consciousness and strict discipline of the Communists, the growing feeling of personal responsibility for the state of

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, "The Second All-Russia Congress of Miners", *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, "A Weak Defence of a Weak Case", *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, pp. 443, 444.

affairs in one's own collective and society as a whole, responsibility for the implementation of the policy and decisions of the party. The line of the party and its Central Committee towards strengthening discipline, order and organisation has met with nation-wide ardent support. The CC CPSU regards this line as a matter of cardinal importance, one which reflects the striving to make progress, overcome difficulties in the economic, socio-political and spiritual development. Hence, the conclusion: Communists are called upon to serve as an example of discipline and organisation, a high degree of responsibility in fulfilling their tasks, intolerance to shortcomings, an example in the struggle for invigorating all processes involved in the improvement of developed socialism and strengthening Soviet positions on the international scene.

The constant deepening and expansion of inner-party democracy with a simultaneous consolidation of party discipline which means, in the final count, a consistent and strict abidance by all requirements stemming from the principle of democratic centralism and creative attitude to these requirements are a reliable, time-tested and the only correct way of developing and strengthening the Communist Party.

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The principle of democratic centralism, as all other basic Leninist principles of party structure, have brilliantly withstood the test

of time. Its validity and primary importance have been proven by the experience gained by the CPSU over many years of its existence and the experience amassed by other Marxist-Leninist parties.

The successful activity of the Communist Party stems from a skilful combination of organisation and discipline, extensive and profound democratism and free discussion with an active implementation of relevant decisions. This vital conclusion is borne out by many documents adopted by the international communist movement, the documents of the fraternal parties.

The inviolable law of the Communist Party is its loyalty to the traditions of revolutionary struggle, the subjugation of its entire activity to the task of attaining the final goal. Hence, the need to act in such a way that future generations of Communists would not only keep their loyalty to these traditions but would also propagate them and regard the development and implementation of the principles and norms of party life, and first of all the principle of democratic centralism, as the most important means of solving the tasks facing the party rather than purely a goal in itself.

As for the ruling parties in the socialist countries, they will be unable to tackle the mounting tasks and fulfill their increasingly more complex present-day obligations unless they develop as a dynamic entity and deepen and strengthen the unity, cohesion and activity of party masses. That is why the Communist and Workers' Parties in the socialist countries regard as their key task the constant

improvement of the entire system of inner-party relations and an all-round consolidation of the ideological and organisational unity of the party ranks on the basis of strict and consistent abidance by the principle of democratic centralism. This is the decisive factor allowing them to ensure the most effective guidance of society and the fulfilment of their obligations towards the working class and all working people in their country, as well as carrying out their internationalist duty.

One of the major lessons to be drawn from the crisis developments in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz) in the late 1960s is that it is necessary to resolutely rebuff any opportunistic attempts aimed to undermine the principle of democratic centralism and to counteroppose democratism and centralism. As was pointed out in the report of the CPCz Central Committee it was important for the unity of the party to find a proper solution to the problems of its organisational structure, and it was stressed that the vigorous struggle of the party makes it necessary to further consolidate and consistently observe the principle of democratic centralism. The report said in particular: "We are convinced that democratic centralism and inner-party democracy cannot be separated or counteropposed. Bureaucratic centralism, as well as anarchy and spontaneity, are harmful and must be eradicated. So as to ensure the confluence of discipline and the vitality of the party it is necessary that all Communists should take an active part in the elaboration and implementation of party policy, that all of them have equal rights and enjoy them,

as well as carrying out their obligations.”<sup>1</sup> Documents of the 16th CPCz Congress reiterated that the consistent implementation of the underlying principle of the party’s activity and organisational pattern, the principle of democratic centralism, was an important prerequisite for preserving the guiding role of the party.<sup>2</sup>

Speaking at the 10th Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party about the importance of democratic centralism and collective leadership as the most important principles in the activities of the party, scientifically substantiated for the communist movement by Lenin, János Kádár said: “Proceeding from our own experience we can say with total confidence that violation of these principles leads to abandoning Marxism-Leninism, to the distortion of the policy of the party, to weakening its ties with the masses and to the decline of its militant spirit. On the contrary, correct implementation of these principles multiplies the forces of the party.”<sup>3</sup>

The Report of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany to its 8th Congress contains an analysis of correlation between centralism, party discipline and inner-party democracy, and, on this basis, provides the conclusion that only a skilfull

<sup>1</sup> *The 14th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*, Moscow, 1971, pp. 86-87 (translated from Russian).

<sup>2</sup> See: *The 16th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*, Moscow, 1981, p. 58 (translated from Russian).

<sup>3</sup> *The 10th Congress of the Socialist Workers’ Party of Hungary*, Moscow, 1971, p. 97 (translated from Russian).

combination of the basic, imperative requirements stemming from the principle of democratic centralism gives power to the party as a militant union of the people thinking alike, that every member of that union should ardently, sparing no effort, come out for the implementation of the adopted decisions on a collective, democratic basis, against passivity, indifference, egoism and lack of discipline.<sup>1</sup> Proceeding from that the 8th Congress stated in its resolution on the CC Report that "in accordance with the principle of democratic centralism it is necessary to ensure the consistent implementation of the decisions of the Congress and the Central Committee and timely identification and surmounting of obstacles" and that it was necessary "to intensify the activities of all party members in the elaboration and implementation of party decisions."<sup>2</sup>

Documents of the 10th SUPG Congress drew attention to the fact that nowadays, as never before, the importance of collectivity in work and personal responsibility of Communists, inner-party democracy and unconditional loyalty to party decisions grew immeasurably, which reflected the essence of the principle of democratic centralism.

Recent party congresses in a number of other socialist countries and Communist Party congresses in the USA, France, Portugal

<sup>1</sup> See: Erich Honecker, *Report of the Central Committee to the 8th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany*, Dietz Publishers, Berlin, 1971, p. 87 (in German).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

and some other countries, stressed the exceptional significance of the uncompromising and total abidance by the requirements stemming from the principle of democratic centralism. That problem was seriously discussed, for instance, by the 10th and subsequent congresses of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCYu). In the course of the party discussion in preparation for the 13th Congress on the draft resolution of the LCYu Central Committee on the strengthening of the leading role of the League in society and the consolidation of its unity, party members are raising the problem that the League should prove by its deeds its revolutionary character and its ability to translate its decisions into life. As the participants in the discussion stress, it is possible only if the principle of democratic centralism is unswervingly observed. V. Zharvovic, Chairman of the Presidium of the CC LCYu, has said: "We must proceed from the firm conviction that the LCYu is not a sort of a coalition, but an integral organisation. Therefore, it is necessary to resolutely rebuff any attempts to undermine the unity of the party and to infringe on the principle of democratic centralism—the basis of the LCYu leading ideological and political role." The plenary meeting of the CC LCYu held in June 1985 once again discussed attempts to supply a different interpretation of the principle of democratic centralism which affects the work of the LCYu. The meeting stressed that any inconsistency in that matter undermined prestige of the party and its leadership, their militant spirit and vigour in attaining the goals of social development, and played into the hands

of anti-socialist forces.

Consequently, as we see it, the principle of democratic centralism is not of a "purely Russian origin and significance". Rather, it is of a universal international character and is an objective necessity, a feature inherent in the development of any Marxist-Leninist party. Not only is it not at variance with the principles and traditions of the Western socialist movement, but on the contrary, it is fully applicable to the organisational structure and activities of all parties, with no exceptions. Strict, undeviating and consistent implementation of the principle of democratic centralism is the source of the strength and invincibility of every section of the international communist movement. Communist and Workers' Parties are able to carry out their revolutionary and transforming activities only on the basis of the principle of democratic centralism.

It is important to note that, as was stressed by the leaders of the fraternal parties, these parties carefully study and apply the experience accumulated by the CPSU, including the experience in implementing the principle of democratic centralism. In its turn, the CPSU makes use of everything valuable and instructive which can be learned from party work and leadership in the fraternal parties.

Life exposes total untenability of isolationist concepts and views and the attempts made under the guise of creative assimilation of collective experience, to put into question the objective and universal nature of common, law-governed features. In practice, they mean counteropposing one party to others,

national to international tasks, and overlooking the experience of the fraternal parties, including the experience accumulated in the field of party organisation. Such an approach inevitably undermines the activities of that party, degrades the effectiveness of its work and is detrimental to the party itself, its role as the leader, as well as to the international communist movement and the socialist gains. The loyalty of the ruling parties to the Marxist-Leninist teaching on the party, socialist construction and strict abidance by the Leninist norms of party and state life is the basic pledge of success.

Of course, Communist and Workers' Parties carry out their activities in the most diverse, specific conditions which requires a flexible approach to the solution of particular problems. Each party independently elaborates its own policy line, determines basic trends, forms and methods of the struggle with due account taken of specific national conditions. Besides, Leninism in general, and Lenin's teaching on the party in particular, are creative by their nature. Dogmatic conservatism and adherence to the letter rather than the spirit are alien to them. Consequently, it is necessary to display an innovative approach to particular provisions of the Marxist-Leninist science on organisational issues. As Lenin pointed out, "the task consists in learning to apply the general and basic principles of communism to the *specific relations* between classes and parties, to the *specific features* in the objective development towards communism, which are different in each country, and which we must be able to

discover, study and predict.”<sup>1</sup>

As for the specific features in the application of Lenin's organisational principles, they are embodied in the rules of the Communist and Workers' Parties which formalise these or those specific forms of party organisation. At the same time, Marxist-Leninist universal organisational principles, and first and foremost the principle of democratic centralism, should, and do, serve as a foundation for the activities of each Communist Party.

Socialist democracy is developing and party and state guidance of society on the basis of democratic centralism is being perfected on the basis of democratic centralism in the Soviet Union and other socialist community countries. The implementation of socio-economic policy is accompanied by the mounting creative activity of the masses and their growing role in the management of production and economy and, consequently, in conditions of the general democratisation of public life. This, in turn, places greater responsibility on the party and its role as the leader. It should be noted here that this concerns the leading role of the party in general, not only its elective bodies as it is sometimes erroneously interpreted: it is necessary that all party organisations and all party members, each in a particular field, should actively carry into life the policy and decisions of the party.

The experience accumulated by the CPSU

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, “‘Left-Wing Communism’—an Infantile Disorder”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 89.

and other Communist and Workers' Parties of the socialist countries vividly shows that further democratisation of party life is an indispensable prerequisite for the successful guidance by the party in the development of the economy, science and culture, all facets of life in society. It shows how important it is to carry out democratisation on the correct Marxist-Leninist basis so that the principle of democratic centralism should not be distorted under the impact of some difficulties or due to subjective mistakes.

As was shown above, both a lop-sided emphasis on centralism and the total negation of this principle are equally unacceptable and harmful. Genuine ideological and political cohesion of the party and the inculcation of profound consciousness in Communists based on their internal conviction are unthinkable without inner-party democracy which provides necessary conditions for an all-round and free discussion of problems, without due account being taken of various opinions in the elaboration and adoption of decisions. At the same time, without centralism and the subordination of party organisations from top to bottom the party cannot be an organised force and forfeits its role as a vanguard capable of concerted actions.

For the CPSU, its growing leading role in communist construction is inseparable from its growing responsibility before the Soviet people who boundlessly trust the party. The party constantly raises its prestige as a recognised, tested and collective leader of the people by its selfless service to the cause. The dedication of the party to the interests of the

working class and all other segments of the working people, the uncompromising adherence to the principle of democratic centralism, the consistent development of inner-party democracy, criticism and self-criticism and the persistent improvement of the style and methods of party guidance in all fields of socio-political life are a reliable guarantee of the successful implementation by the party of tremendous and complex tasks involved in communist construction.

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