

# Viewpoint 3

“Only socialism can provide real freedom—freedom for all.”

## The People of the Soviet Union Are Free

Vladimir Denisov

The democratic countries of the West tended to look at the Communist systems in Eastern Europe as fundamentally opposed to freedom due to their restrictions on civil liberties. But Communists did not define freedom in entirely the same way as people in the West. In the following viewpoint Vladimir Denisov, deputy editor in chief of the Soviet Novosti Press Agency during the 1960s, presents the Communist view of freedom. He argues that freedom from hunger, cold, and material needs is much more pressing for human happiness than are civil liberties. Denisov contends that socialism is the only system that provides for these necessities, therefore making it the only system that can truly assure human beings real freedom. Under socialism, he asserts, all people are equal and have equal access to all services and opportunities, a further condition of true freedom. Moreover, it is socialism, he argues, that allows people to enjoy their labor instead of being forced to work for their survival as under capitalism. The advancements brought about by socialism also allow people greater freedom for creative endeavors and for recreation, according to Denisov.

Vladimir Denisov, *Communism Stands for Freedom*. London: Soviet Booklets, 1962.

*Capitalism is the road of suffering for the people. . . . Socialism is the road to freedom and happiness for the people.*

FROM THE PROGRAMME OF THE C.P.S.U.  
[Communist Party of the Soviet Union]

The future of mankind depends on the outcome of the competition taking place in the world of today between the two social systems—socialism and capitalism. Victory in this contest will go to the social system that provides men and women with the greatest material and spiritual advantages, creates real conditions for the full development of the human personality, and establishes a real “kingdom of freedom”.

## What Is Freedom?

*The entire life of socialist society is based on the principle of broad democracy. . . . Socialist democracy includes both political freedom—freedom of speech, of the press and of assembly, the right to elect and to be elected, and also social rights—the right to work, to rest and leisure, to free education and free medical services, to material security in old age and in case of illness or disability; equality of citizens of all races and nationalities; equal rights for women and men in all spheres of political, economic and cultural activity. Socialist democracy, unlike bourgeois democracy, does not merely proclaim the rights of the people, but guarantees that they are really implemented.*

FROM THE PROGRAMME OF THE C.P.S.U.

When people in Western countries read these lines in the Programme of the Soviet Communist Party, they may object that all political parties talk about freedom. The United States describes itself as the “free world” and the “champion” of freedom. But communists reject what the capitalists call freedom. They declare that only socialism can provide real freedom—freedom for all.

Which is right?

History has already given the answer.

Communists do not only promise freedom in their Programme. They also explain what they mean by freedom. And—what is perhaps the best argument—the Soviet Communists, who were the first in the world to build socialism and have now set about build-

ing communism, have shown in practice that the new social system liberates working people from all forms of oppression and exploitation, and provides the most favourable social conditions for every man and woman to obtain real, tangible and not merely formal opportunities for free and all-round development.

Man has today achieved such a level of maturity that people no longer acquiesce in the absence or limitation of freedom. “Life without liberty is worthless,” said Romain Rolland, the great French writer. Mankind possesses no prouder or more sacred word than “freedom”. The history of mankind is the history of the struggle for liberation.

Many great sacrifices have been made for the cause of freedom. But its universal triumph has yet to be achieved. There are still nations fettered by the chains of colonialism.

Hunger and poverty still threaten the lives and health of certain sections of the population in many parts of the world, even in economically advanced countries. Scientists have invented many miraculous medicines—but epidemics still flare up, killing or crippling many people. Millions of families still live in slums.

Can large-scale unemployment, the lack of opportunities for young people to get an education or a trade, the banning of progressive political parties and the peace movement supporters, or the disfranchisement of large sections of the population for reasons of colour or property qualifications—all to be found in the capitalist world—be considered compatible with “freedom”?

In the light of such facts, how is one to understand freedom? What is it that freedom should give to the individual and to society as a whole? Where is the borderline between genuine and false liberty, between freedom for the few and freedom for all?

## The Foundation of Freedom

The rights and liberties of citizens may be solemnly proclaimed in a country’s constitution, which describes those rights and liberties as “inalienable” and “natural”. But is it sufficient to possess a right in order to enjoy it? The formal possession of a right is not enough; it must be confirmed materially. Otherwise, equality means merely formal equality in the eyes of the law, while man’s actual status in society is determined solely by his wealth. . . . Society can give its

members genuine freedom only if it can first and foremost guarantee their material welfare and economic independence. The degree to which any society is free is indicated by the material foundations of the freedom it extends to its citizens. . . .

Working people, who make up the vast majority of society, . . . need . . . first and foremost, freedom from want and oppression, freedom from fear for the morrow and for the future of their children. That is the principal freedom, the foundation of genuine economic and social freedom for the mass of the people. "Freedom of speech, of ideas and of conscience can acquire significance only given the freedom to live. . . . Therefore to judge whether or not freedom exists in a given society, it is first of all necessary to see whether there is unemployment there, how people are ensured the means of existence, how social security is given effect, and whether life is maladjusted. . . . If the basic freedoms are not provided in a society, it cannot, in essence, be considered free, no matter how many non-basic freedoms are provided," writes the Japanese philosopher Yanagida Kenzuro.

The most extensive and lavishly proclaimed freedom is worthless unless it has a material basis. Under such "freedom" man has only two alternatives—to fall into line, or starve.

The yardstick of genuine freedom is the existence of the economic basis necessary for the unhampered enjoyment of freedom by every member of society. . . .

## Liberated Labour—The Foundation of All Freedoms

Our socialist society is a united family of working people enjoying equal rights. Wealth, national origin, or position are neither privileges nor obstacles to a Soviet man. All Soviet people have equal rights and at the same time are in duty bound to work according to their abilities, and are paid according to the work done.

For whom do Soviet workers, peasants, or intellectuals work? It is with a sense of pride that every Soviet citizen can reply, and say that he is working for himself, for his family, and for the welfare of society as a whole. It cannot be otherwise, for under socialism each man's place of employment is the property of the people as a whole. . . .

The abolition of private property and the transfer of all the wealth of society to the people as a whole as publicly-owned property means not only that each individual is freed from exploitation and oppression, but also the emancipation of all society from the anarchy of production, economic crises and other ruinous phenomena inherent in the capitalist system.

Some Western sociologists like to depict the unorganised, chaotic nature of the capitalist economy as almost the supreme manifestation of freedom. But it is common knowledge that "private enterprise" has long been a fiction, not only because so much wealth is required to take advantage of that freedom—wealth which no man can earn by his own labour—but also because the monopolies that now dominate almost all branches of the capitalist economy prevent any freedom of enterprise.

The scientific organisation of the socialist economy on the basis of over-all plans for the national economy has opened up great prospects for the development of the productive forces, the advancement of science and technology, and the continuous growth of social wealth and consequently of the well-being of all. . . .

Under socialism, the whole of society has become free in the deepest and fullest sense of the word; consequently each member of society enjoys genuine freedom—freedom for all cannot but mean freedom for each. It cannot be otherwise, for a genuinely civilised society can have no aims other than those of the individuals that go to make up that society. It is only by serving each man and giving effect to his aspirations that society justifies its purpose. Socialist society is that sort of society, because it has created conditions in which each individual enjoys unlimited opportunities for the development of his abilities and the satisfaction of his ever-growing needs. These conditions include, above all, the guaranteed right to work and leisure, free education and medical aid, the steady reduction of working hours and the wide development of housing and cultural development. . . .

Freed from dependence on the will and whims of private owners, Soviet workers have legal and other guarantees of employment. The Soviet citizen does not have to accept just any kind of work to support himself and his family. "Situations vacant" notices for jobs of all kinds are to be seen outside factories and elsewhere. . . .

## Vocational Training and Leisure Time

One of the most important conditions for the free development of the individual that socialism provides is the opportunity for all to acquire a skill or profession in accordance with their interests and inclinations. Our system of education and vocational training, free and therefore accessible to all, is in the forefront of the Soviet state's attention. The desire to acquire knowledge and improve qualifications and education in every way is encouraged. . . . Study and the improvement of the cultural level of the masses is not only highly beneficial to society as a whole, it is also a most important means of raising the political consciousness and activity of each individual, whose creative possibilities and fields of interest are broadened in consequence. . . .

There is also another rung in the ladder of freedom—the ever greater leisure provided by the reduction of working hours. Man's life is not limited to work alone: he needs rest and leisure for self-education and recreation. . . .

Technological advances and higher labour productivity make it possible for socialist society constantly to reduce working hours. Within the next ten years Soviet factory and office workers will go over to a six-hour day—five hours in mines and occupations injurious to health. Then during the following ten years working hours will be still further reduced, and the Soviet Union will become a country with the shortest, most productive and best paid working day in the world. Workers will have considerably more free time for rest, studies, sport, cultural activities and travelling. This reduction in working hours will be accompanied by a rise in standards of living. Thus, science and engineering, which under socialism are directed towards peaceful and creative ends, become a most important factor contributing to emancipation of the individual, to his physical and intellectual development.

Free labour is a source of joy and pleasure. The life of Soviet people is steeped in this atmosphere. The worker who engages in emulation with his comrades and at the same time helps them, the innovator who introduces an efficiency proposal and helps to secure its wide application in production, the inventor of new machines which help boost productivity and make work easier—all these are genuinely creative individuals in the new and genuinely

free communist world. Freedom from want in socialist society means not only economic, material freedom, but also spiritual freedom, since it emancipates man from oppressive fears and worries, and is a source of optimism and enthusiasm. . . .

## The Kingdom of Freedom

The Soviet Communist Party's new Programme sets an historic aim—that of . . . securing the complete satisfaction of the material and cultural needs of each man and woman.

With the achievement of the aims set by the Soviet Communist Party's Programme as regards the improvement of the material welfare of the people, the Soviet Union will make considerable strides towards the implementation of the communist principle of distribution according to need. The transition to distribution according to need will mean emancipation, it will signify each man's complete liberation from all material cares, and equal opportunities for all to devote their powers and abilities to creative labour.

On the basis of advanced science and technology, the maximum productivity of labour, an abundance of all kinds of foodstuffs, and the elimination of any distinctions between mental and physical labour, between life in towns and in the countryside, man in communist society will be fully emancipated from slavish dependence on the caprices of Nature. Communism will, in fact, mean a tremendous leap from the "kingdom of necessity" into the "kingdom of freedom", in which the individual will have unlimited opportunities to display his abilities and talents in any field.

This society of freedom has already set out upon its triumphant march. Its outline can be distinctly traced in Soviet life today.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union has solemnly proclaimed that the present generation of Soviet people will live under communism!