

SUMMARY

Regional Changes in Party Allegiance

by Onni Rantala

It seems that the static regions of the political map are becoming less frequent, while the unstable zones are increasing in numbers. As politics grow increasingly national in scope and the differences between the political parties become less acute, political 'climates' tend to lose their predominant significance and changes in party allegiance from one election to the next become more common, and, hence, also merit more attention than hitherto.

The factors having a bearing upon local changes in party allegiance include the following, among others: industrialization of the region, changes in the structure of agriculture and in landownership, rapid economic growth in backward regions, unemployment, migration, leading personalities, the organizational and propagandistic activity of the political parties, and, to some extent, the leading newspaper within the region.

In regions where the majority of the people are adherents of one or two parties, the changes taking place from election to election are relatively small, compared with those occurring in electoral districts where several parties compete on an equal footing. In regions where the way of life has a rural tinge and in sparsely populated areas the changes in political opinions take place more slowly than in towns and other urban centres, as the changes within the former are retarded by tradition, social and political homogeneity and a relative lack of influences and incentives. Regional isolation makes for stability in the party allegiance patterns for similar reasons.

Interpersonal contacts and centres of population play an important part in the diffusion of ideas and opinions. Political influences travel along the same pathways — railways, highways, river valleys and watercourses — that even in general serve as the channels through which information and customs spread from the coastal regions to the interior of the country, from big cities to smaller urban centres, and so on.

A political party usually loses its supporters or increases their numbers only gradually. The cases where the political colour of a region changes in a short while are extremely rare. As a rule, a period covering two consecutive elections is necessary for a new orientation to get a foothold in the region. Within regions with an established 'political climate' an even longer period may be necessary; say, a period sufficiently long for a new generation to enter into the stage.

Survey of Economic Planning in the Soviet Union

By Tuomo K. Silaste

Before the second world war the only country in Europe with a planned economy was the Soviet Union. By the end of 1949 revolutionary, political and social changes in eight other European countries had brought about their transformation into economies based on the Soviet model and the setting up of economic planning systems. In these countries the government has assumed responsibility for the detailed management of virtually the whole of the economic system. Yugoslavia represent so-called market socialism and its system of economic planning and management differs from the systems in the others.

In the Soviet Union for almost four decades the concept of economic planning has been that of a centrally directed and comprehensive system of management of the economy in the pursuit of a complex of related long-run political, social and economic objectives. The ultimate aim is the creation of communism, an economic and social order radically different from both capitalism and the transitional stage of socialism. From this unity of aim springs the conviction that one of the prime duties of government is to select and carry out a strategy of economic development which will lay the material and technical basis for communism. Consequently, economic planning is viewed as the means by which the economic and social transformation of society is effected.

Economic development during the period of transition is held to be governed by certain economic laws of socialism, among the most important of which is the objective, socialist economic law of planned, proportionate economic development. This law requires the observance in planning of a determinate relationship between the rates of growth of producers' goods and consumers' goods: the actual degree of priority accorded to the former in the plan is an economic regularity which can vary over time with changes in economic circumstances. Until such times as the 'material and technical basis' of communism is assured, the rate of growth of output of producers' goods (Group A) should exceed that of consumers' goods (Group B); industrial production should grow faster than agricultural output. Between 1913 and 1960 the respective shares of groups A and B in total Soviet industrial production changed from 33.3 per cent to 72.5 per cent, and from 67.7 per cent to 27.5 per cent.

For the Soviet Union the tasks of planning (in Russian, *Zadachi*) which may but need not change at various stages of economic development are: an uninterrupted growth in the general level of consumption; avoidance of disproportions in economic development, and their rapid correction should occur; the rational regional distribution of productive capacity; the creation of adequate economic reserves as a condition for assuring consistently high rates of development the strengthening of the defence capacity.

The development of the institutions of economic planning and management in the Soviet Union fall into three main phases:

- 1) The supreme Council of National Economy, known by its Russian initial letters as VSNKh. It was created in 1917 and finally abolished altogether 1932.

2) In 1932, three industrial People's Commissariats, Ministries were created: heavy, light and timber industries. The all-time maximum was reached in 1946—48, when they (industrial and construction ministries alone numbered) were thirty-two. The situation in 1956 may be summarized as follows: under the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union there existed two major central planning agencies — the State Planning Commission (Gosplan) concerned with long-term planning and the State Economic Commission (Gosekonomkomissia) responsible for short-term plans. Various other functional bodies were directly subordinated to the Council of Ministers.

3) The 1957 reforms broadly replaced the ministerial system of planning and management by a territorial system. The industrial ministries were abolished, and 106 regional economic councils (sovnarkhozy) were given control over nearly all major industrial and construction enterprises in their areas, minor local enterprises remaining under local management. — The change of system is illustrated in charts 1, 2 and 3.

In any plan-building process, no matter what the administrative level, the following elements can be distinguished: certain objectives have to be achieved; certain limitations have to be observed; the most efficient solution has to be chosen.

In plan formulation the principal method used for obtaining consistency between plan requirements and available resources is that of balances showing, on a national scale, both requirements and availabilities in terms of value, of material goods, or of the labour force. This system of national economic balances, which links the material and value relationships of the plans and encompasses the whole of the development process, consists of four main types of national balance: national income balances, material balances, global social product balances, and consolidated factor (manpower and fixed capital) balances.
