TITLE: DEPUTY PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL SOVIETS: WHO GOVERNS?

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Executive Summary

Deputy Participation in the Local Soviets: Who Governs?

by

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To what extent can deputies to local soviets in the USSR influence decisions affecting the communities they represent?

Although most deputies have only limited opportunities to participate in decision making, they are not entirely without influence. They can and do affect decisions through the right of formal inquiry which they possess under Soviet law, through informal meetings with other party and state officials, and through participation in the soviet's standing committees responsible for particular areas of concern. Admittedly, active participation is not widespread. Yet the important point is that it does take place. Since it can be demonstrated that in some cases Soviet citizens do participate meaningfully in their local government, it is possible that they can do so anywhere in the Soviet Union and that such practices may become more widespread. Continual expansion of meaningful popular participation in local Soviet government could establish an important prerequisite for the emergence of a "civic culture" in the Soviet political system and, with it, systemic support based on consensus rather than coercion.
These conclusions derive from a study of Soviet local government, based on field research in Moscow which included attendance at meetings of local soviets and interviews with deputies. The full results of the study, to be published in book form, address the overall question of whether Soviet citizens can effectively participate in their local government. The present report focuses on one part of the study's findings, regarding the role of the deputy as a decision-maker, that is, his work in council.

In drawing conclusions about what deputies can do to ensure that local government is responsive to the concerns of their constituents, the research suggests that the role of many deputies in making decisions continues to be that of a spectator or, at best, a spear-carrier for those few deputies who occupy center stage—the members of the executive committee (ispolkom). Nowhere is this relationship clearer than in the sessions of the local soviet, which are precisely the forums where the deputies are supposed to "examine and decide the most important questions" that fall within their jurisdiction. Even Soviet sources acknowledge that in practice it is the ispolkom that decides what the agenda of the sessions of the local soviet will be, who will take part in the presentations, and to a large extent what will be contained in them. The participation of the rest of the deputies is limited to voting unanimously for whatever resolutions are put before them.

It would be inaccurate to conclude, however, that deputies—even among the "rank and file"—are wholly without input into
what their local governments do. In the first place, deputies may exercise the right of formal inquiry (deputatskii zapros) to bring attention to an issue that they feel is being ignored or improperly dealt with by those in executive or administrative positions. Even the threat of a zapros may be enough to get a recalcitrant administrator to take action. Secondly, it seems that many issues of importance in a deputy's district are resolved informally in meetings between the deputy, interceding on behalf of his constituents, and a department head or executive officer. In this respect, the role of the deputy in council resembles that of an ombudsman. It is here, or in meetings of the executive committee if necessary, that any differences of opinion will be aired. Finally, the standing committees also provide deputies with an opportunity to speak their minds regarding public policy, at least in those areas considered within the committee's jurisdiction. The case study presented in the body of this report suggests that some deputies do take advantage of that opportunity.

While there is some evidence to suggest that Soviet citizens can and do effectively participate in their local governments, no claim has been made that such practices are widespread. On the contrary, genuine political participation seems to be the exception, not the rule. It is probably true that most Soviet citizens, most of the time, are only observing the forms of participation, going through the motions of taking action. However, in assessing possibilities, the important point is not
how often such participation takes place, but that it takes place at all.

Besides its substantive findings, this study offers an approach to the analysis of local Soviet government which is somewhat different from the model that prevails in much of the Western literature. Instead of understanding the dynamics of local decision-making as an exchange between the distinct organizational units involved (the soviet, its executive committee, and the local party), an elite analysis is offered which takes into account the overlapping memberships of these three bodies. Using this perspective, local decision-making is shown to involve three categories of deputies: the elites (5%), the specialists (20-30%), and the rank and file. Such an approach is felt to provide a more accurate basis for assessing "Who Governs?" in local Soviet government.

- Summary prepared by staff of National Council for Soviet and East European Research
The fourteenth (and last) session of the Lenin city borough soviet for the 18th term (sozyv) was held on a cold and snowy Dec. 26, 1984 at the Yunost' Hotel located not far from the Lenin Stadium in Moscow. Since only deputies and those with invitations are allowed to attend sessions of the soviet, there was some delay at the entrance to the hotel while people rummaged through their heavy clothing seeking proper identification the presentation of which was requested—politely, but firmly—by an older woman standing just inside the door. The session itself took place in a large, brightly-lit, modern auditorium to which I was accompanied by the deputy who had arranged my invitation. Since we arrived just as the meeting was to begin, most of the 250 or so deputies and other invited guests were already seated. On the stage, behind a cloth-covered table, sat members of the executive committee and a few others who had been invited to
address the session, about 20 in all. A lighted podium with a microphone stood to the left.

The meeting was opened at exactly 3:00 p.m. by the president of the executive committee. The first item of business was to elect the presiding officers for the session, a male president and a female secretary, both already seated at the center of the stage. The chief presiding officer then read the draft agenda—translated below along with the amount of time scheduled for each issue—and asked if there were other items which the deputies wished to add. There being none, the first speaker, a business-like woman in her late thirties who was the head of the planning commission and a member of the ispolkom, delivered the report (doklad) of the executive committee on how well the Lenin borough had fulfilled the economic plan for 1984 and about the basic indices and goals of the plan for 1985.

AGENDA

14th Session of the Lenin District Soviet of the 18th Term.

1. On the plan for economic and social development of the Lenin borough for 1985 and on the course of fulfillment of the plan for economic and social development for 1984.


3. Information on the work of territorial groups no. 3 and no. 6.
4. On fulfilling the decision of the 7th session of the 18th term "Report (otchyot) on the work of Department of Roads and Public Works", and the critical remarks expressed by deputies in the discussion of this issue.

Regulations and Procedures for the Work of the Session

- to the speaker
  (dokladchik) on item #1 - up to 40 mins.
- to the speaker on item #2 - up to 20 mins.
- to the speaker on item #3 - up to 10 mins.
- to the speaker on item #4 - up to 10 mins.
- to the co-reports (sodoklady)
  on items #1 and #2 - up to 15 mins.
- to the co-reports on item #3 - up to 10 mins.
- to those participating in the debate - up to 10 mins.

There will be a break after 1 1/2 hours of work.

By Western standards, the presentation of what was, after all, the main item of business on the agenda seemed scripted and dry, even ritualistic. Following what appears to be a standard format, the speaker began by praising how much had been accomplished by the soviet in 1984. Seemingly endless statistics were offered to show that various economic goals had been fulfilled or overfulfilled. This was followed by a lengthy list of shortcomings: the industrial enterprises located in the borough had not met their quotas in certain sectors; the assortment, quality and availability of goods fell below the peoples' demands; labor productivity in the construction and repair organizations was still inadequate; serious problems remained in the work of the borough's food and vegetable distribution agency, and so forth.
Finally a list of the ispolkom's proposals for economic and social development in 1985 was read. The whole process took nearly all of the 40 minutes set aside for the speaker, who managed to invoke the name of CPSU General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko no fewer than eight times. Since most of those in the audience, including presumably all of the deputies, were supposed to have received the 10 page draft decision of the executive committee beforehand, such an exercise seemed redundant unless it was assumed that few, if any, had bothered to read it.

The reading of the ispolkom's report on the economic plan was followed by another report, this one on the budget. It was read by the head of the financial department, a woman in her mid-fifties. While similar in format, this report had the virtue of being half as long and so took only the 20 minutes set aside for it by the chairman. These two executive committee reports (doklady) were followed by six co-reports (sodoklady), each lasting about five to ten minutes. Co-reports provide a chance for representatives of standing committees (which are made up only of deputies) to evaluate the preceding reports as they affected the areas in which their standing committees exercised oversight. Co-reports were given, for example, by the chairmen of the standing committees on budget and finance, on industry and transportation, on construction, on housing, on everyday services, and on
trade. Although co-reports potentially represent an opportunity for deputies to put their concerns and differences of opinion with the ispolkom on the record, tradition seems to dictate the presentation of public consensus: any real grievances are aired and resolved beforehand. The co-reports presented at this session were at most mildly critical exhortations to do better, aimed as much at the deputies as at the ispolkom.

The presentation of the co-reports was followed by a break during which many deputies retired to the buffet for refreshments, including plenty of coffee and tea, or talked among themselves; the number returning from the break was somewhat diminished. Those who stayed heard the liveliest speech of the day, grandiloquently delivered by the borough party first secretary. A vigorous man of about 60, the secretary was a confident public speaker whose sense of timing was adroitly mixed with touches of humour. His theme also was the economic and social plan for 1985. According to him, "the economic situation cannot be considered normal, one may better say absurd...we demand that the ispolkom do more to improve these affairs...to fulfill and overfulfill the plan." Nor did he fail to provide the remedy: "greater discipline, greater organization, greater responsibility." Substantively his remarks added up to an enthusiast's pep talk, a lecture by a stern, but caring father to his wayward son.
Addressing the reawakened audience, the presiding officer informed them that seven people had spoken and asked if any others were scheduled to do so. Told there were none, he invited questions (voprosy) from deputies who had requested in writing to speak. Two individuals did so. One was a woman who thought that more money should be allocated to health care than was the case in the budget. At this, a single member of the audience applauded enthusiastically, one of the rare instances of spontaneity during the whole session. The other speaker offered two propositions, one concerning labor discipline and one asking a minor revision in the budget figures. Both were approved unanimously. "Any other propositions from the deputies?" Hearing none, a vote was called on the two decisions (resheniiia) which had been "debated": the economic plan and the budget for 1985. Not unexpectedly, the vote was also unanimous.

The third and fourth items on the agenda were dealt with by the deputies expeditiously. The fourth item was a report (otchyot) by the ispolkom on how it had improved its work on highway construction in the light of critical remarks made at an earlier session of the soviet and is self-explanatory. The third item, however, deserves a fuller explanation. Deputy groups consist of 15 or 20 deputies representing contiguous districts. Since the problems faced by these districts are often overlapping, the deputies' ability to
respond to the needs of their constituents may be improved if they act collectively. Spokesmen for territorial deputy groups no. 3 and no. 6 reported holding a total of about 50 such "conferences" (zasedanii) during their two and a half year terms, in the course of which they examined more than 70 issues related to public works, housing, food and everyday services, and education.

It became obvious from the speeches of these two deputies, however, that the purpose of the deputies' groups is to implement the decisions and policies of the soviet as much as it is to communicate citizen concerns to it. Thus, they spoke of organizing volunteer work brigades to repair old housing, or checking up on whether appropriate services were being provided, of organizing socialist competitions, of using the housing fund to prepare for winter, and so forth. The draft resolution, adopted unanimously and without comment by the soviet, left little room for doubt about what was expected of the deputy groups: 3

To raise the responsibility of each deputy in his work, to mobilize the population of the district in fulfilling the decisions of the 26th CPSU Congress and the Plenums of the Central Committee of CPSU, and to fulfill the adopted measures aimed at turning the district into a 'model' district.

From the point of view of deputy initiated participation, the most interesting event occurred at the end of the
Following the nomination and unanimous election of the new chief of the borough's People's Control Committee, the presiding officer recognized one of the deputies from the standing committee on education who wished to introduce a deputy inquiry (deputatskii zapros). Although not on the agenda, such an inquiry has an official character and requires a response from the appropriate executive authority. In this case, the deputy was a teacher at the largest school in the district, a plump, pleasant-looking, middle-aged woman, but clearly determined to make her case. She noted the age of the school building, its need of repair, and that it was a danger to the children. Repairs, she said, had been promised in the 1985 plan, but postponed. This was unacceptable. On behalf of the standing committee, and of school #59 of the Lenin city-borough school district, she demanded an explanation. The response: the executive committee will examine the inquiry and make its answer public at the next session. With this, the soviet concluded its business.

Sessions of the Local Soviets

Allowing for differences due to regional peculiarities and the level of local government, the basic format used by the Lenin city borough was repeated at more than 300,000 sessions of the local soviets which were held in 1984 (see table 1). For a Western observer familiar with the open contentiousness and vigorous criticism that often accompanies the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Soviet</th>
<th>no. of soviets conducting sessions</th>
<th>no. of sessions held in 1984</th>
<th>ave. no. of sessions per soviet</th>
<th>no. of sessions required by law</th>
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<tr>
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<td>129</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomous Region</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okrug</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>645</td>
<td>3,249</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>3,819</td>
<td>22,703</td>
<td>5.9*</td>
<td>4-6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>42,117</td>
<td>248,839</td>
<td>5.9*</td>
<td>4-6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>51,976</strong></td>
<td><strong>301,673</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>4-6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Constitutions of the RSFSR, Kazakhstan, Azerbaidzhan, and Moldavia require settlement and village soviets to meet not less than 6 times per year while the remaining 11 republics require not less than 4 sessions annually. Certain remote northern and eastern districts of the RSFSR are permitted fewer.

conduct of business in American municipal government, the session of a soviet would seem a tame affair indeed, a carefully choreographed presentation of tedious speeches and unanimous votes precluding sharp public disagreement and inviting indifference. Yet, according to Soviet law it is precisely at the sessions that deputies "resolve the most important issues within their jurisdiction" on the basis of "open, business-like discussion". Contemporary Soviet legal theorists and specialists frequently quote the 1957 CPSU resolution attacking the conduct of sessions in the Stalinist period as establishing a model for how sessions should be conducted today. Accordingly,

"Sessions must not be held for purposes of show or for bestowing ceremonies, formal approval on measures worked out beforehand, but for businesslike discussion and the resolution of real (aktualnykh) problems in the life of the area, region, city and district... At the sessions a situation should be created which ensures the broad development of criticism and self-criticism so that deputies may thoroughly, and without haste, discuss the questions before them, to express their opinions and proposals, to put inquiries to the executive organs and economic managers and to receive from them exhaustive answers."

Yet it is clear that almost thirty years after this was written, the divergence between theory and practice remains great. There is abundant evidence in both the scholarly literature and party resolutions to substantiate the persistence
of formalism in the work of the soviets; it is not only Westerners who find them so.\textsuperscript{6} It is true that one factor contributing to the absence of more spontaneous debate among the deputies is their large number: opening the floor to 250 participants without limits would invite chaos and paralyze the soviet in the conduct of its business. But the unwieldy number of deputies is not the main problem. The most important reason for the staged quality of most sessions is the continued dominance of the executive committee over them, itself a legacy of the past. Few have confronted this practice more bluntly than N.G. Starovoitov. In an article published in Nov. 1985, he wrote:\textsuperscript{7}

The essential shortcomings remain window-dressing (paradnost'), formalism and the pursuit of quantitative rather than qualitative indicators. More than once the Central Committee has pointed out the need to achieve democracy, to suppress bureaucratic 'overorganization' and formalism in relation to the conduct of sessions both in the Supreme Soviets and in many local soviets. Nonetheless, the conservative part of the local apparat is unwilling to part with the habits of the past, is afraid of criticism by the deputies and frequently dominates the representative organs, the deputies. In practice, the executive and administrative organs decide which questions will be introduced, who to invite to the sessions, and the list of speakers; they prepare the majority of reports and draft decisions, and often they prepare both the presentations and their contents. (Emphasis added.)
How Deputies Can Participate in the Sessions

Despite the formal, ritualistic character of the sessions, and despite the controlling hand of the ispolkom in their preparation and conduct, there are ways in which the deputies can participate in the work of the sessions and influence the decisions affecting their constituents. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that the opportunities for the deputy to make an input into this process have grown in recent years. There are three stages in which these opportunities present themselves: before, during, and after the sessions. These will be examined in turn.

The key to controlling the work of any legislative body rests with those who define its agenda. In the case of sessions of the local soviets, the decision about when to call a session, where to hold it, what items will be discussed, and who will present these items is made at a meeting of the executive committee. Increasingly, the items to be placed on the agenda are decided in accordance with an annual plan drawn up by the Organizational-Instructional Department of the ispolkom which solicits suggestions from the standing committees, and from other administrative departments about what should be included. The ispolkom then discusses the recommendations of this department about what is feasible and presents a "plan of work" to the deputies for their approval at the first session of the year.
Nonetheless, article 12 of the Law of the Status of Deputies guarantees deputies the right to introduce items into the agenda from the floor if they wish. In practice this is done very rarely. According to Bezuglov, this is because the other deputies should be "psychologically prepared" for taking part in the discussion of issues and that it would be difficult to thoroughly consider a question which had not been prepared beforehand.\textsuperscript{10} Does this mean that deputies can play little or no role in agenda-setting? Not necessarily, for as Bezuglov goes on to point out, the normal practice is for deputies to request items be included beforehand.\textsuperscript{11} How frequently this occurs is difficult to say. Almost all the deputies interviewed by the author however, indicated that this was the procedure which they used, lending some credence to Bezuglov's contention. A comparison of the annual plan of the Lenin city-borough with its actual agendas suggest some degree of flexibility, although changes in the schedule of items to be discussed may have been purely for administrative reasons.\textsuperscript{12}

The number of items on an agenda is not fixed, although two or three is recommended as the norm to insure adequate discussion.\textsuperscript{13} The number has been steadily increasing. The average number of agenda items per session in Belorussia for example, grew from 3.0 in 1974 to 4.6 in 1980.\textsuperscript{14} While the national average is not as high, indicating that there may be
considerable regional variation for this variable, it too has grown steadily (see table 2). The problem this poses, as A.T. Leizerov notes in the Belorussian case, is that since the length of most sessions has not increased the amount of time devoted to each item has decreased. For this reason, and to facilitate broader participation in the discussions, Leizerov has urged that the length of sessions be increased, while N.G. Starovoitov has argued for a return to the practices of earlier years when sessions were held more frequently.
Table 2

Average Number of Issues Per Session in USSR and Belorussia, Selected Years, by Level of Soviet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USSR</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Regions, Okrugs</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Borough's in cities</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Village</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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<td>3.4</td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Belorussia

| 1976  | 3.3   | 5.6             | 4.1      | 3.7  | n.a.                | 3.7        | 3.2     |
| 1980  | 4.6   | 6.1             | 5.8      | 5.1  | n.a.                | 4.5        | 4.8     |

Once a determination has been made about which items will go on the agenda, the issues themselves must be prepared, information gathered, and decisions drafted. For this, a special ad hoc committee may be formed comprised of deputies, administrators, or specialists who have a particular interest or ability pertaining to the subject under discussion; it is normally chaired by an officer of the ispol-kom. In recent years, two methods have been used to broaden the participation not only of deputies, but of the public in general. The first of these is through the use of questionnaires to solicit public input on what the problems in the district are. A.T. Leizerov describes in some detail an experiment of this sort in a rural district in Belorussia in 1978 where both deputies and their constituents were asked to evaluate the work of the district's executive committee. 333 propositions were forthcoming: 127 from deputies; 41 from the ispolkoms of village soviets; and 165 from the electorate.

A variation of this approach is to publish the reports on agenda items or the draft decisions themselves in the local press and invite public comment. Successful examples of this procedure are readily found in the literature on the soviets. Deputies are also encouraged to hold meetings with their constituents to discuss certain kinds of draft legislation prior to the session at which it will be consid-
ered. It appears, however, that such efforts to solicit greater public interest occur less frequently than specialists on the soviet would wish. According to data from Belorussia, agendas for the sessions are often not published, and even if they are, there is no information about where to send comments or criticism. Without even such basic information, public participation in the preparation of sessions becomes extremely difficult. At least for the present, it appears that attempts to involve deputies and their constituents in agenda setting and decision drafting are not ineffective when they are tried, but that the enthusiasm for such methods is greater among those writing about the soviets than among the members of the ispolkom who run them.

The preceding discussion underscores one of the major factors inhibiting greater involvement of the deputies in the shaping of government decisions: the availability of information. Art. 11 of the Law on the Status of the Deputies obligates executive committees to provide deputies with all the "materials necessary" for their participation in the sessions. Republican legislation requires that such information be available from between 7-10 days prior to the session. In practice, however, these norms are frequently violated; often deputies receive draft resolutions and copies of the reports only when they arrive for the session. Without having had a chance to consider these documents beforehand,
deputies learn about what they are approving only by listening to the speeches.

The opportunities for deputies to comment on or to criticize the decisions are limited not only by the timeliness and quantity of information available, but by the lack of content as well. Michael Urban found in his research on the information given to deputies that it contained much statistical information revealing little, while at the same time it managed to tell the deputy very little about what is really being done, or about who was doing it. In his words, "it would be difficult to claim that ordinary deputies are supplied with information sufficient to gain much knowledge of the operations of their individual soviet or of its executive committee." While it is legally possible for deputies to require information, it is not clear that this takes place in practice very often.

In turning from the preparation for sessions to their actual conduct, a good place to begin is by establishing who attends. Deputies are required by law to attend each session of the soviet unless they have informed the ispolkom that they must be absent, and it seems that most deputies meet this obligation. A study of 5 district soviets in Belorussia in the early nineteen-seventies revealed a rate of attendance ranging between 83% and 93% with only marginal differences
when broken down by the usual social and demographic indicators.26

Aside from deputies, however, attendance is by invitation only. Unlike American practice, the meetings of elected representatives conducting public business are not open to the public-at-large who elected them. Moreover, those who are invited are asked to do so only because there is some business being taken up which directly concerns them. Thus, the overwhelming majority of these guests are the leaders of enterprises, specialists, and non-elected administrative personnel from the soviet itself.27

In practice, many of those invited are scheduled to give reports, although the portion of non-deputies speaking at the sessions has declined in recent years at least for the city and district soviets. According to Leizerov's study of Minsk oblast, non-deputy participants in the sessions of the district soviets in 1965 comprised 35% of those speaking, but this figure had declined to 12% by 1977. For city soviets over the same period the proportion had dropped from 28% to less than 2%.28 While Leizerov views this development favorably because it increases the relative degree of deputy participation, he, along with Bezuglov, is also a leading proponent of opening up the session to greater attendance and even participation by the general public. A certain number of
tickets to attend the sessions, they argue, should be made available to anyone who wants them from either the ispolkom or at the constituent's place of work.\textsuperscript{29}

How can deputies participate in the session itself? As indicated by the description of the session of the Lenin city borough soviet given above in many respects, the role of the deputies is rather passive. They listen to the reports (doklady) of the administrative and executive organs and various topics and to the co-reports (sodoklady) of the appropriate standing committee representatives, which are supposed to be critical but usually aren't, and then unanimously approve these, just as they have agreed without dissent to the organizational issues on which they were asked to vote earlier. Deputies have the right to amend the agenda in any way they wish, but they almost never do. The fact that this apparent compulsion for control, this need to arrange everything beforehand, leads to boredom and indifference is not lost on Soviet specialists in local government, as the comments N.G. Starovoitov quoted earlier make clear. Bezuglov and others have urged "sessions without reports" or conducting of sessions at factories or residences (vyezdnye sessii) as a way to stimulate greater activity by the deputies.\textsuperscript{30}

The deputies are not entirely without opportunities for input, however. Following the formal reports and coreports,
time is usually set aside for deputies to present statements (vystupleniia). Requests to do so may be made orally or in writing to the presiding officer; speakers are then listed in the order that their requests are received. Using this procedure, deputies may introduce amendments to the draft decision being considered which are then voted on by the soviet. The degree to which deputies participate in the "debates" in this fashion is indicated in table 3. As the data show, the number of deputies per session doing so has grown somewhat in recent years.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Government</th>
<th>no. of sessions</th>
<th>no. of deputies participating</th>
<th>% of all deputies</th>
<th>Average no. of deputies participating per session</th>
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<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>6,414</td>
<td>8,024</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>496</td>
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<td>10,739</td>
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<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>312,249</td>
<td>301,673</td>
<td>1,470,695</td>
<td>1,590,267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The number of sessions required annually was reduced following the adoption of 1977 Constitution.

An additional way in which deputies can inject themselves into the discussion is to put questions (zadavat' voprosy) to those making reports. This can be done in oral or written form. In the villages questions are more likely to be asked and answered orally. Because the size of these soviets is smaller and the level of familiarity greater, a good deal more open give and take seems to be possible in the rural areas. In urban areas, questions may be answered immediately or be collected and read at the end of the session. Henry Morton described how more than 30 questions were handled in this fashion at the session he observed in 1964. According to Morton, it was the moment of greatest interest to the deputies, but for the chairman of the executive committee, "It was apparent that he relished this function least". Presumably, the cause for the chair's discomfort and the deputies' interest is that having to answer questions on the record may constrain an executive officer who later tries to avoid his public commitment, or at least provide some ammunition to those who may wish to criticize him if he does.

Finally, deputies may take advantage of the session to introduce proposals and comments (zamechaniia) ostensibly related to the item being discussed but which may raise matters of concern to their constituents or to some other community problem. This right was formally granted to depu-
ties by article 15 of the 1972 Law on the Status of Deputies which also requires a response from the officials to whom they are directed within a specified period of time. Again, such proposals may be made orally or in writing, although practice seems to dictate that they be written, at least in the urban soviets. This gives the editorial commission (redaktsionnaia komissiia) formed at each session to review amendments to the draft legislation, a chance to determine whether the proposals and comments are germane to the issue being discussed. If they are, they may be introduced at once. If they are not, they are referred to the Organizational-Instructional Department of the ispolkom which then decides who will be responsible for dealing with the deputy's problem. In the absence of empirical data, it is difficult to say how well this procedure works in practice. However, since most such proposals presumably deal with practical considerations it seems reasonable to assume that most are processed. In the case of controversial proposals or critical comments this procedure also provides a way for them to be resolved "off-stage".

The picture which Soviet leaders would like to project of deputy participation in the work of the sessions is one in which the great majority of deputies, regardless of social background or demographic characteristics, are equally active. The statistics in table 3 are cited to sustain that
image. Yet there is ample evidence to indicate that this is not the case, and that many deputies take part in the sessions very rarely, if at all. A study conducted by the Institute of State and Law in Armenia revealed that one-third of the deputies had never spoken at a session, while another third had spoken only once or twice. In 11 district and city soviets of Minsk oblast in Belorussia in the 14th term (1973-75), 27% of the deputies never participated, while another 62% did so only once.

It is also clear that a relatively small percentage of the deputies, perhaps 15-20%, tend to dominate the proceedings and to be disproportionately active. Who are they? As one familiar with empirical analyses of political participation in Western democracies might expect, data from the Armenian, Latvian, and Belorussian Republics suggest that middle-aged men with higher levels of education, especially if they are employed as specialists or as leaders in government and industry, are more likely to participate than those who are not. Data from the RSFSR, Estonia and Latvia indicate that 70-80% are people with official positions, including enterprise managers. The conclusion which emerges from these studies suggests that there are two identifiable groups of deputies: a very active minority who have the skills, and motivation to become highly active participants (sometimes referred to derisively as "staff orators"), and a mostly pas-
sive majority who remain silent observers out of nervousness or indifference. 39

Still, there is evidence that the social composition of those participating in the sessions has broadened over the past two decades, more nearly reflecting the social composition of the deputies themselves. According to longitudinal data published by A.T. Leizerov based on his continuing research into deputy activities in the Minsk oblast of Belarus since 1965 there have been "positive changes" with respect to gender, age, occupation, and education. 40 In the Minsk district soviet the portion of female deputies taking part in the debates grew from 11.1% in the 10th term (1965-67) to 45.1% in the 16th term (1977-80); in village soviets for the same period, the percentage increased from 18.8% to 38.4%. With respect to age, in the district soviets of the Minsk oblast, the percentage of deputies 18-30 years old who spoke at the session went from 19.2% in the 14th term (1973-75) to 26.5% in the 16th term (1977-80) a development which Leizerov attributes to improved training (ucheba) given the new deputies. Occupationally, in the district soviets the number of workers and peasants entering the debates rose from 8.3% in the 12th term (1969-71) to 36.1% in the 16th term (1977-80), while the portion of economic administrators and specialists declined in the same period from 42.0% to 30.6%. It is difficult to determine how generalizable Leiz-
Evro's findings are for other parts of the USSR. If they are, and if the number of those participating in the debates continues to grow as the data presented in table 3 indicated, then the patterns of deputy participation which prevailed in the past would appear to be changing.

One other way deputies can participate in the sessions, and one which has received considerable attention in recent years, is the use of the deputy's right of inquiry (deputats-kii zapros). The use of this right is distinguished both in form and content from the deputy's ability to put questions (zadavat' voprosy) during the debate. A zapros is directed at a specific individual, either an administrator in the government, or officials in economic enterprises within the soviet's jurisdiction. This individual is obligated to respond and the soviet as a whole must adopt a decision on the adequacy of their response. Moreover, also unlike a simple question (vopros), the right of inquiry is normally invoked when the named individuals have failed to perform their duties properly. According to one textbook,

It is resorted to as an extreme measure, that is, when deputies have been unable to achieve the elimination of serious omissions and shortcomings and the liquidation of backsliding by other means, and the necessity of bringing these matters to the attention of the soviet cannot be put off.
Although R.K. Davydov and other scholars maintain that de facto use of the zapros as an instrument of deputy control over administration at the local level was in evidence as early as the late nineteen-forties, there is no mention of it in the laws on local government until after the CPSU CC resolution on the local soviets of Jan. 22, 1957. It first becomes part of national legislation on the soviets only with the adoption of the 1972 Law on the Status of Deputies where it received its fullest legal elaboration to date in article 15.

A zapros may be introduced by a single deputy, or by several deputies acting together. Since 1983, the right to use the zapros has also been given to the standing committees, a practice strongly advocated by R.K. Davydov. In all cases, only deputies from the soviet in which the zapros is introduced have the right to do so. Inquiries may be expressed orally or in writing, at the session itself or prior to it. If the zapros is prepared beforehand - a practice endorsed by many legal scholars on the grounds that the quality of both the inquiry and the answer will be improved - then it must be read at the session by the presiding officer and include the identity of the official and the deputy proposing it along with the specifics of the complaint formed as a question.
Zaprosy are discussed separately, usually at the end of the session. A zapros may not be refused by those to whom it is addressed, unless it falls outside of the soviet's jurisdiction. Unless the official has had the opportunity to prepare an answer beforehand, a time limit is established for when he or she must provide one, usually by the next session. The required decision by the soviet may simply take the form of "taking the answer under advisement." Frequently, however, action on the answer is specified as well as the assignment of someone to verify that it is carried out. The statistical summary of the use of the zapros in the Sverdlovsk oblast' in 1983 gives some idea of how these procedures work out in practice and what they are used for. (See table 4.)
Table 4

The Use of the Right of Inquiry (Zapros) in the Sverdlovsk Oblast' in 1983 (in %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>City Soviets</th>
<th>District Soviet</th>
<th>All Soviets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Who Introduced?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a single deputy</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a group of deputies</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a standing commission</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- several commissions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a deputy group</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Time of introduction:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- before the session</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- at the session</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- unknown</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To whom addressed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- executive committee</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- non-government executives</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recorded in the minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the inquiry</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- answer to the inquiry</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Specified in the decision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- obligations (zadachi)</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- time limit</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- who must fulfill</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- who must verify</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Subject matter of the inquiry:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- industry, construction, transport</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- agriculture</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- trade, food, everyday services</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- housing, public works</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- education, culture, sport</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- health</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- voter mandates (zakazy izbiratelei)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How often do deputies make use of their right of inquiry? As the figures given in Table 5 indicate, the zapros is used relatively rarely. Even in 1984, it was employed on the average only 2–3 times in a year depending on the level of the soviet. Soviet specialists on local government often decry the infrequency with which the right of inquiry is used arguing that it represents an underutilized potential for strengthening the influence of the deputy over the work of the soviets and for stimulating the activity of deputy and administrator alike. Yet it is clear that many deputies are either ill-prepared to use the zapros or are reluctant to engage in a confrontation with the executive members whose good will they must cultivate to accomplish anything for their constituents. Since the responsibility for the training of new deputies rests with the ispolkom itself, a lack of enthusiasm for developing this particular skill would be understandable. One result of inadequate training is that many, perhaps most, deputies don't know the difference between a "question" (vopros) and an "inquiry" (zapros). In one survey carried out in Pskov, V.I. Vasilev found that of 190 deputies surveyed, 45 said they had used a zapros during the current term of office; the records showed only 3 zaprosy had been introduced in the same period.
### Table 5
The Use of the Right of Deputy Inquiry (Zapros) 1968-1984, by Level of Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Inquiries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region, Okrug</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>4,593</td>
<td>5,653</td>
<td>5,786</td>
<td>8,448</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>2,946</td>
<td>3,872</td>
<td>4,767</td>
<td>6,131</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Borough</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>1,804</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>4,589</td>
<td>6,093</td>
<td>6,908</td>
<td>8,810</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>43,924</td>
<td>57,596</td>
<td>65,165</td>
<td>82,295</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>56,711</td>
<td>74,245</td>
<td>83,772</td>
<td>107,849</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:**
Nevertheless, it is also clear from the data in Table 5 that the rate of use of the zapros grew steadily in the 15 years between 1968 and 1983. Although this growth leveled off somewhat in the last years of Brezhnev's tenure as party General Secretary. Notable in particular is the sharp increase in the use of the right of inquiry in 1984 compared to 1983. One reason for this can be found in the speech of the CPSU General Secretary, K.A. Chernenko, to the Central Committee on April 10, 1984 in which he noted that "in recent years for all the soviets, on the average only one zapros for every 30 deputies was introduced. This figure speaks for itself, and speaks poorly."51

Following this speech and the CPSU Resolution which was adopted at this plenary session, there was a dramatic increase in the use of the zapros. At first glance, this would seem encouraging to those who sought such a development. On closer examination however, much of this increase may have been due to local executive committee chairmen seeking to improve their record by "overfulfilling their quota" for zaprosy. In an article published in Sovety narodnoykh deputatov in May, 1985 an investigating reporter found that in one rural soviet the zapros was being used at almost every session although it had been used only once in 1983. It turned out, however, that the "zaprosy" were really informational questions without critical content on which a vote had
been taken, thus achieving the form though not the purpose of an inquiry. 52

While data on the social composition of deputies using the zapros is scarce, there is some evidence to indicate that, as with those participating in the debates, middle-aged men with higher education, and in white collar positions tend to be more active. As is also true in the case of the debates, however, the data indicate that there have been changes since 1965 in the direction of greater participation by women, deputies under 30, and manual workers. In Belorussia in the 16th term (1977-80), 53% of those using the zapros in the district soviets of the Minsk oblast were women; in the village soviets it was 41% (the average was 25% in 1969-71). 30% of those exercising the right of inquiry in the same districts in this period were under 30 years of age, roughly equal to their numerical representation in the soviets as a whole (and an increase of 12% from 1971-73); in the villages it was 18%. 53

In comparing the use of the zapros with other forms of participation in the sessions, A.T. Leizerov argues that the zapros is a good way to involve those deputies who would otherwise be passive. On the basis of evidence from Latvia, as well as Belorussia, he demonstrates that the relative rate of participation of women, the young, the manually employed
and the less educated is greater for those using the zapros than for those entering the debates. This is so, he suggests, because less experience is needed to introduce a zapros and because its effects are more clearly visible. If Leizerov's findings are generalizable elsewhere in the USSR, and the use of the zapros continues to grow, it represents a potentially effective mechanism for broadening the base of deputy participation in the work of the soviet.

In conformity with Lenin's reading of Marx's description of the Paris Commune, the sessional work of the deputy does not end with the closing of the session: deputies are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the decisions they have taken, a task sometimes referred to as "kontrol" or "poverka" though these terms can be used in other contexts as well. The implementation of decisions can be divided into three stages: propaganda, instruction, and verification. In the first, the deputies are to inform the citizens of what the soviet has decided. This is done in face-to-face meetings with constituents and through the mass media. Then, the work of implementation must be organized, schedules drawn up and instructions given. The main responsibility for doing this belongs to the ispolkom, but the deputy is expected to take part or at least cooperate. Finally, the deputy is supposed to help make sure these instructions are properly carried out, reporting to the
executive committee any failure to do so. While opportunities for deputies to shape the way in which decisions are implemented probably arise in practice, this phase of the work of the soviet is clearly dominated by the executive committee. The deputy's function seems to be more to mobilize the population to do what these organs want than to see that the interests of those they represent are not overlooked.

The Standing Committees

While the opportunities for most deputies to participate directly in the work of the sessions are limited, both Western and Soviet analysts have suggested that the deputy can play a far more active role in the work of the standing committees (postoiannye komissii). In theory, these committees ensure the deputies' control over the work of executive agencies between sessions of the soviet. The scholarly literature commonly assigns them three specific functions in this regard: to prepare and review draft legislation; to exercise oversight (kontrol) with respect to administrative agencies and economic enterprises; and to help the ispolkom implement governmental decisions. Although any decisions or recommendations emanating from the standing committees are purely advisory, the economic and administrative agencies to which they are directed are obligated by statute to examine them and to respond in a month's time. Formally, the standing committees are created by the soviet and are sup-
posed to be answerable only to it; they are not considered "auxiliary" (vspomogatel'nye) organs of the executive committee. The latter may request, but not command their assistance. 60

The composition of the standing committees is also supposed to reflect their independence from the executive committee. With the exception of rural soviets in Estonia only deputies may be elected to membership; the election of deputies who sit on the ispolkom is forbidden. 61 In reality, the formation of the standing committees and the assignment of deputies to them are controlled by the ispolkom; its recommendations to the soviets are routinely ratified by this body at its first session. Moreover, in many republics the law allows department heads, economic managers, members of the People's Control Committee, judges, and prosecutors to sit on and even chair standing committees which are supposed to oversee their work. In the 9 city and 22 district soviets of the Minsk oblast in 1977-80, for example, 80 department heads were elected to standing committees, 44 of them to committees whose function it was to oversee their departments – 10 as chairmen, 14 as vice chairmen, and 27 as secretaries. 138 out of the 166 prosecutors and 115 out of 119 judges elected to standing committees in this period served on the committees for "Socialist Legality and the Preservation of Public Order." 62 Some Soviet specialists see nothing wrong with
this and would even go so far as to allow executive committee members to be elected to standing committees, although not as officers of committees which must review their work. Most, however, would probably agree with Leizerov who recommends legislation to prohibit the election of members of administrative agencies to those standing committees whose task it is to make sure they perform well.

One of the major factors making the standing committees a more likely arena for deputy participation in the work of the soviet is their smaller size. Unlike the sessions where the average attendance above the village level is over a hundred, the average size of a standing committee in 1985 was between 5 and 6, ranging from about 13 per committee at the oblast level to between 4 and 5 at the village level (see table 6). While each standing committee is thus small enough to encourage even nervous deputies to speak up, the system as a whole encompasses a large number of deputies: in 1985 nearly 2 million deputies were members of one or another standing committee, about 80% of all deputies. In addition, deputies are assisted in their work by an aktiv composed of volunteers with a particular interest in the issues before the committee. In 1984, the aktiv numbered more than 2.5 million, an average of between 7 and 8 per committee (table 6). Although the average number of standing committees per soviet has remained steady at 6-7 since 1976, the number of
deputies and *aktiv* per committee has declined somewhat. Figures for the *aktiv* were not published in 1985 suggesting they have declined even further.
### Table 6
The Number and Size of Local Soviet Standing Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary Figures</th>
<th>no. of standing committees</th>
<th>Average no. of standing committees per soviet</th>
<th>no. of deputies on standing committees</th>
<th>% of all deputies</th>
<th>average no. of deputies per standing committee</th>
<th>no. of aktiv (in thousands)</th>
<th>aktiv per standing committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>330,270</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1,990,780</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2,660.</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>333,547</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1,833,223</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2,620.</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>336,927</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1,844,123</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2,572.</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985*</td>
<td>334,501</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>1,845,554</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These data are from the first sessions following the Feb. 24, 1985 elections.

The areas for which the standing committees are responsible are for the most part functionally parallel to the administrative departments of the soviet. Certain standing committees are required by law, although this differs by republic. The 1983 RSFSR Statute on standing committees, for example, specifies only a Credential (mandatnaia) Committee, a Planning and Budget Committee, and a Committee on Socialist Legality and Public Order, with other commissions formed in accordance with the needs of the soviet. The 1976 Kazakh statute as amended in 1980 provides for these, but also for committees on youth, on the environment, and on women. The rank-ordered data provided in table 7 indicates how frequently the different types of standing committees are found in Soviet local government. The fact that the average number of deputies per committee tends to rise in inverse proportion to the number of committees suggests that those standing committees which appear less frequently are found only at the higher levels of government.
Table 7

The Number and Size of Standing Committees by Type of Committee, 1985
(Rank-ordered by number of committees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Soviet</th>
<th>No. of standing committees</th>
<th>% of Soviets with standing committee</th>
<th>No. of deputies in committee</th>
<th>Average no. of deputies per committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Credentials</td>
<td>52,040</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>181,518</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Planning and Budget</td>
<td>52,032</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>250,584</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Socialist Legality and Public Order</td>
<td>51,030</td>
<td>98.1%</td>
<td>265,393</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Agriculture</td>
<td>43,681</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
<td>242,356</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Culture</td>
<td>24,130</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>130,005</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trade, Food and Commodities</td>
<td>21,801</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>137,525</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Education</td>
<td>19,343</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>116,508</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Housing, Public Words</td>
<td>17,030</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>115,934</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Health, Social Security, Sports</td>
<td>16,805</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>111,394</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Youth Affairs</td>
<td>11,375</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>80,482</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Industry</td>
<td>6,175</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>54,020</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Public Services</td>
<td>5,732</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>43,006</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Environment</td>
<td>3,598</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>31,066</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Construction</td>
<td>3,355</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>32,253</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Transportation</td>
<td>3,009</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>26,570</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Women, Maternity, Children</td>
<td>2,326</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>17,488</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Energy</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>4,028</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Other</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>5,430</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals                                       | 334,501                    | 100.0%                               | 1,845,554                   | 5.5                                  |

*There were 52,041 local soviets as of Feb. 24, 1985.

The large number of people involved in the work of the standing committees and the fact that the committees parallel the functions of the administrative agencies led some legal specialists in the early nineteen-sixties to recommend that administration be transferred to them.\textsuperscript{67} Such proposals were consistent with Lenin's view of the soviets as "working corporations" in which citizens would voluntarily implement the decisions they made. The idea received official support in the 1961 \textit{Party Program} which proclaimed that "an increasing number of questions which now come under the jurisdiction of the departments and sections of executive bodies must be gradually referred to the standing committees of the local soviets for decision."\textsuperscript{68} Experiments along these lines, however, were disappointing; citizen-amateurs proved to be inadequate substitutes for professionally trained administrators. Only in the rural soviets and in the soviets of small cities where there are no branches of administration do the standing committees appear to play a significant role in the implementation of governmental decisions.\textsuperscript{69} While the idea has not been abandoned, the consensus now seems to be that it was premature and must take into account the amount of time, as well as the intellectual and financial resources available to the committees.\textsuperscript{70} Significantly, the 1985 \textit{CPSU Draft Program} omits any reference to the transfer of administrative authority to the standing committees.
A Standing Committee at Work

The Standing Committee on Socialist Legality and the Preservation of Public Order of the Lenin city borough soviet was one of 15 committees elected by the deputies at the first session of the 18th term which began June 20, 1982 and ended with elections to the 19th term on Feb. 24, 1985. Along with the standing committees on Youth Affairs, Planning and Budget, and Credentials it is one of four required by the city borough's regulations. In what follows, a closer look at the work of this standing committee during the 18th term is offered based on interviews with 10 of its 13 members, the author's attendance at its meeting of Dec. 11, 1984, and various documentary materials on the committee's work, including agendas. While the overall quality of the work of this committee is above-average as will be shown, other secondary sources and interviews with specialists indicate that it is far from unique. This case study then provides some basis for evaluating the work of standing committees in general.

The composition of the Standing Committee on Socialist Legality reflects an effort to achieve some demographic representativeness while ensuring a balance between those with some specialized background and those who have none. In 1984, the committee included seven males and six females ranging in age from 22 to 63 and averaging 41; six of the thirteen were party members. While three of the thirteen
specialized in Law at Moscow State University and four held locally important party or state positions, there was also a telephone operator, a metal worker, an inspector in a bread factory, a fabric designer and a ticket-taker for the Metro. The aktiv of the Standing Committee on Socialist Legality numbered eleven: five Moscow State University graduate students in law, three undergraduate law students and a teacher of law at the same institution, a notary from another borough, and a research worker from the scientific institute of the Ministry for Internal Affairs.

Following the local soviet elections of Feb. 24, 1985 nine of the thirteen members were new. The composition of the Standing Committee, however, changed little: the balance between males and females remained the same, as did that between "specialists" and "non-specialists". Eight of the thirteen committee members belonged to the communist party instead of six. Their average age was 40, ranging between 20 and 59. Significantly, of the four who remained from one term to the next, all could be considered "specialists": one was head of the Department of Internal Affairs, another taught law at Moscow State University, another was the party committee secretary at GUM, and the fourth was referred to only as the "head of a department." The picture which emerges from this compositional analysis suggests that D. Richard Little's division of members of the USSR Supreme
Soviet's standing committees into "permanents" and "transients" also holds true at the local levels of Soviet government. 71

Interestingly, the patterns of participation in the work of the Standing Committee do not seem related to which deputies stayed on the committee at the time of transition, although none of the "non-specialists" remained from the previous term. The levels of participation by the "non-specialists" varied considerably. Some were conscientious in the performance of their duties and not only attended meetings regularly but took part in the preparation and presentation of materials; others attended only rarely. Among the "specialists", participation also varied, although all appear to have attended regularly. Of the four who were reappointed to this committee at the first session after the Feb. 24, 1985 elections, however, only one - the secretary - exhibited a consistently high level of participation. The very active president of the Standing Committee on Socialist Legality in the previous term - a prominent law professor at Moscow State University and a veteran of several terms - was replaced as president by the Dean of the Law Faculty of that University in order to take up an appointed position in the Moscow city soviet.
How does this standing committee work in practice? The nineteenth meeting of the Standing Committee on Socialist Legality since its term began almost 2 1/2 years earlier, took place on Dec. 11, 1984, in what appeared to be a mansion left from the prerevolutionary period and which currently served as the municipal building of the Lenin city borough soviet. Upon entering, I was escorted up a wide marble staircase with shallow steps and into a hallway lined with doorways to what must have once been bedrooms and reception halls, but which now housed the offices of the city borough's ispolkom. The meeting itself was held in one of these, the office of the Organizational and Instructional Department, the purpose of which is to assist the work of the deputies.

When I arrived, there were nine deputies seated around a conference table and four invited participants who sat in chairs which lined the walls of the room. The room itself was not large, though it had a high ceiling, and contained a desk, filing cabinets, and bookcases with information for the public on the workings of the soviet. At the end of the table sat the President of the Standing Committee, a mantelpiece from another era at his back. The ubiquitous image of Lenin looked sternly down at the proceedings from an oyster colored wall.
The meeting had begun at 4:30 p.m., an hour before my arrival. I was informed that this would be the case because the first items on the agenda required a discussion of specific criminal charges, and confidential testimony was being heard. According to what was written in the agenda, the standing committee was to consider a report, "On the work of the district's law enforcement agencies for the prevention of bribery, embezzlement, and speculation in trade and public food establishments, in enterprises providing everyday services and in bases (bazakh) distributing fruits and vegetables." I later learned that this item represented the culmination of work begun some months earlier. It seems that on the basis of a large volume of citizen complaints, the borough's ispolkom had requested a joint session of three standing committees (on trade, on public food and on legality) and asked them to investigate the truth of the charges. The particular task taken on by the Standing Committee on Socialist Legality was to determine whether contracts were being fulfilled and whether the heads of the legal services departments of the enterprises involved had performed their duties properly. The deputies had formed "deputy posts" which conducted spot checks on the businesses in question, reporting the results of their respective standing committees. Apparently, a number of criminal charges were ultimately forthcoming and the head of the legal services department at the food distribution base had been relieved of his
duties. At the meeting of Dec. 11, 1984 members discussed not only these issues but examined draft legislation intended to avoid such problems in the future, legislation which was to be considered at the next meeting of the ispolkom and, presumably, sent on to the soviet for ratification.

The second item on the agenda was related to the first and concerned the work of the legal services department of the vegetable and fruit association (об'единение) of the region. Two reports were scheduled. The first was by a member of the актив, a law school graduate student, who had been asked to check out the qualifications of the department's personnel and whether proper procedures were being followed. After carefully emphasizing that his job was not to investigate whether crimes had been committed, he indicated that "from a juridical point of view," things had pretty much returned to normal. After his report, the new head of legal services, a young woman, was invited to respond. After noting somewhat anxiously that this was her first appearance before a standing committee, she said that she agreed with the gist of the previous report: things had been bad, but the work with cadres was improving and a new bookkeeper had been hired.

The floor was then opened to questions and fairly lively exchange ensued. Several deputies wanted more information on
the criminal proceedings. How many people were involved? What is the prosecutor doing now? When the reply came that this was the concern of the police and not of the legal services department, one deputy reminded the speaker that "It concerns everyone." Other questions. What preventive propaganda measures (profilaktika) are being taken? What is being done by the People's Control Committee? Have violations of labor discipline been eradicated? Finally an older deputy gave his report. It was quite critical. He had conducted a "raid" on Oct. 22 and found that the contract with the collective farms had not been met with respect to quality control and that negative balances had been found in the accounts. Despite these shortcomings, however, the work of the new head of legal services deserved praise. The reports were accepted with thanks by the presiding officer.

For the third item, those invited in connection with the previous issue left and two others came in. They represented Znanie, a public information agency specializing in the propagandization of scientific knowledge. Approximately a year earlier the Standing Committee had discussed ways in which to improve the public's familiarity with legal issues. In particular, it had made recommendations in this regard to Znanie. The deputy reporting on whether these recommendations had been followed reviewed the committee's earlier decision and concluded that in her opinion the tasks outlined
in it had been met. She proposed that the matter "be taken from control" of the standing committee, a phrase indicating that officially no further action was needed, and that she had prepared a resolution to this effect. Two other deputies who had assisted her in verifying the outcome by conducting a "raid" on an editorial session of Znanie read brief concurring statements which they had prepared. The Znanie representative was invited to respond. She agreed with most of the suggestions and then launched into a rather lengthy defense of their work. Essentially, the issue before the committee was, or had become, non-controversial and after a few desultory questions and a brief sharp exchange between two of the deputies ("how would you have conducted this work?"), the resolution was passed without dissent.

The last two items on the agenda were dealt with relatively briefly. One concerned an assignment (porucheniiia) which the standing committee had received from the ispolkom. It concerned a fifteen-page complaint sent to the ispolkom by an instructor in a driving school. The instructor had not been trained to do this job and was now being replaced by those who were. He claimed that his rights had been violated; the ispolkom asked the standing committee to determine if this was so. The deputy reporting concluded that the complaint was not supported by the facts adding, however, that
"there are definite shortcomings in the legal upbringing of the youth at this kollektiv."

For the final piece of business, the President of the committee distributed copies of a short questionnaire he had designed to study how deputies of the soviet used their right to address issues to both the ispolkom and to the managers of enterprises in their district. He proposed asking the ispolkom to administer it at the next session of the soviet. Comment was encouraged and became quite lively; the proposal was strongly supported. Its business concluded, the standing committee adjourned at about 7:30 p.m. Afterwards, the President confided to me that his real purpose in preparing the questionnaire was "political": to get this touchy issue out into the open and onto the agenda of the ispolkom. This was an acceptable, even incontestable way to do it.

On the basis of this description, what can be said about how well the standing committees function as a means by which deputies can take part in the work of the soviet? Using the same facts, different analysts may draw different conclusions. It is possible that my presence altered the conduct of the committee's business, although in my opinion, the effect was negligible. To some extent, the Standing Committee performed the functions for which it was intended. It did play a role in shaping draft legislation on a matter of
concern to the community: the proper distribution of food and goods. It certainly was active in exerting oversight with respect to the management of local enterprises and the work of a major public service organization, Znanie. In both cases, spot checks (poverki or raids) were used to determine whether the soviet's decisions were being carried out. Finally, the support functions which standing committees are supposed to provide were readily discernible in the efforts of the Committee to improve legal propaganda and in helping the ispolkom in dealing with citizen complaints. From the point of view of deputy participation in the work of the local soviet, the levels of deputy activity and interaction were clearly much higher than they were at the session which the author attended. The deputies were more openly critical; their differences of opinion more freely expressed. If the author's presence did have any effect, it probably was to introduce an element of restraint in what might otherwise have been an even more lively exchange.

Problems Facing the Standing Committees

The description of how one standing committee in a Moscow city borough conducts its work demonstrates what is possible: to some extent, standing committees can provide deputies an opportunity to participate actively in the tasks of local government, not only in implementing decisions but in shaping them as well. But how representative is this case
study of the operations of other local soviet standing committees? On this score, there is reason for doubt. The Lenin city borough soviet's Standing Committee on Socialist Legality and the Preservation of Public Order met an average of 7.6 times a year; the national average in 1984 was 4.14. According to the deputies the committee gave annual reports to the soviet on their work (otchety), regularly prepared reports on issues (sodaklady) for the sessions, and frequently rendered recommendations to the ispolkom on draft decisions and governmental operations. This is not always the case elsewhere (table 7). The fact that the committee was chaired by a senior specialist in the Law Faculty at Moscow State University surely contributed to the committee's above average performance.

As the data reported in table 7 demonstrate, most standing committees fall short of this model. By several key indicators, the participation of the standing committees in the work of the soviet is quite low. In 1984, the committees averaged less than one report (doklad/sodoklad) to the sessions of their soviets a year. Although their preparation of issues for meetings of the executive committee was nearly three times greater, the average was still less than 3 per year. In the same year, only 40% of the committees gave an annual report (otchet) on their work. Perhaps even more striking and clearly in contrast to the high expectations of
the early nineteen-sixties, the activity of standing commit-
tees in these areas has not only failed to increase but in
some cases has actually declined, at least over the past
decade.
Table 8

Participation by Standing Committees in the Work of the Soviet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary Statistics</th>
<th>no. of standing committees giving reports on issues to session (dokad/sodoklad)</th>
<th>% of standing committees giving such reports at sessions</th>
<th>annual average of such reports prepared for meetings of ispolkom per committee</th>
<th>no. of issues prepared for ispolkom per committee</th>
<th>average no. of issues prepared for ispolkom per committee</th>
<th>% of standing committees reporting annually on their work (otchet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>377,916</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>893,676</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>334,035</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>856,611</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>304,870</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>868,422</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>328,656</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>895,819</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By level of government, 1984</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic/Krai</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>3,893</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>19,507</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>108,838</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>13,417</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>66,072</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Borough</td>
<td>3,811</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>23,680</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement</td>
<td>25,996</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>77,651</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>265,031</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>615,685</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>43.9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How can these findings be explained? Why is the apparent potential of the standing committees for active participation in the work of the soviet not more fully realized? The answers to these questions can be found in the relationship that exists between the ispolkom and the standing committee. In addition to showing what an active committee can do, the case study of the Lenin city borough Standing Committee on Social Legality also revealed that to a large extent a standing committee must rely on and interact with its executive committee if it is to succeed in accomplishing its objectives. Theoretically, the interdependence of the two bodies works to their mutual advantage. In a recent work on the subject, V.I. Novoselov described five forms which this interdependence should take: "coordination" of committee activities by the ispolkom, the participation of the committees in the activity of the ispolkom, the assistance given by the ispolkom to the committees in carrying out their functions, the ispolkom's role in training new committee members, and material and clerical support given to the committees. 73 Novoselov's account emphasizes the independence and initiative of the standing committees. He offers examples to show what deputies have done when their recommendations went unheeded by an indifferent ispolkom. "Coordination" he insists, "does not give executive committees the right to lead the work of the standing committees." 74
Undoubtedly, such a harmonious interaction of equals sometimes occurs, but there are at least two major reasons why this prescription is often not fulfilled in practice. The first has to do with the composition of the standing committees. Data from Leizerov's study of standing committees in the 22 district and 9 city soviets of the Minsk region in Belorussia for the 16th term reveals that 68% of the deputies in the first case and 71% of them in the second had no experience or expertise corresponding to the functional area of the committee on which they served. These figures declined to 36% and 37% respectively when only the leadership of the committees was considered. Although the level of expertise available to the committees has risen in recent years, it varies greatly by type of committee (from 79% of the members of Planning and Budget Committees to 12% of those on the Committees to Preserve the Environment). Moreover, the lack of expertise is compounded by the high rate of turnover of members of the standing committee. Leizerov's data show that 85% of the members of committees at the district level, 84% of those at the city level and 96% of those at the village level were replaced after the elections to the 16th term (1977-80). The corresponding figures for leaders was 65%, 62%, and 72%.

From the data it would seem clear that in most cases whatever experience and knowledge the members of the standing
committees gain during their term of office is lost at the next election. Nevertheless, some Soviet specialists see high levels of renewal as beneficial because they bring new people with fresh insight into the "schools of administration" which Lenin suggested the committees should be. 76 Others, Leizerov perhaps foremost among them, strongly recommend that those deputies reelected to the soviet be assigned to the same standing committees on which they previously served. 77 Indeed, unless this at least is done, it is hard to see how the standing committees can possibly begin to assert their weight in what is now a hopelessly unequal distribution of abilities.

The second reason why the relationship between the ispolkom and the standing committees is bound to be unequal has to do with time. The officers and staff of the executive committees not only have an advantage in experience and expertise, in most cases they are full-time employees. Members of the standing committees, on the other hand, meet about four times a year for a few hours at each meeting and receive no time off for doing so. To deal with this problem some scholars have suggested longer or more frequent meetings of the committees, 78 others recommend relieving the members from other forms of public service. 79 Granting released time from work, however, appears to go against Lenin's
injunction that deputies perform their governmental service while continuing their jobs.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that for rank and file members of a standing committee the costs of participation relative to the benefits are high. They must master a good deal of information in a short time not only about a subject with which they are often unfamiliar, but with political procedures which are also new to them. They must do this on their own time, time already limited by other public and personal obligations. Moreover, at the end of their 2 1/2 year term, even those conscientious enough to persevere in their efforts will almost certainly be replaced. What is remarkable in the case study described earlier is not that a few of the deputies participated very rarely in the work of the standing committee, but that others became as involved as they did. It is little wonder if the balance of power between the ispolkom and the standing committees is weighted in favor of the former.

Conclusions: Who Governs?

The Soviet political system is typically presented in Western texts as comprised of three main structures: the organs of the communist party, the system of legislative councils and the bureaucracy directed at the top by the Council of Ministers. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the
courts, and other actors in the political process almost invariably receive less attention.\textsuperscript{80} In assessing the relative contributions of these bodies in functional terms, the party is generally accorded the place of first importance in the formulation of public policy; the function of the agencies of government is to implement it. It is conventional for these descriptions to treat the legislative bodies as having little or no significance. As one textbook puts it: "while the formal authority of these bodies is great, little real power is wielded by them."\textsuperscript{81} This mode of analysis applied at the lower levels of the Soviet system leads to the conclusion that local legislatures are dominated by their executive committees, and that the executive committees are told what to do by the local party organization. In such a view, the political influence of the deputy relative to the members of the ispolkom and the party is minimal at best.

How well does such a conclusion describe the political process at the local level in the Soviet Union? What is the relative contribution of these three bodies to local government? In what follows the relationship of the deputy and the ispolkom will be examined first. Then the role of the party in local politics will be analyzed. This paper will conclude with a proposal for reconceptualizing local Soviet politics with respect to the question of who governs.
The skepticism of Western analysts regarding the role of the deputies in decision-making is not hard to understand. On paper, the importance of the deputies in "resolving all questions of local significance" is paramount; the executive committee is elected by them and subordinated to them. The members of the ispolkom must account for their actions before the deputies.\textsuperscript{82} But, in reality, the relationship between the deputies and the ispolkom is one-sided in favor of the executive agencies. The dominance of the ispolkom over the workings of local government is even acknowledged by Soviet specialists, as the passage by N.G. Starovoitov cited earlier indicates. The reasons for this dominance deserve further attention.

Much of the ispolkom's advantage derives from its status as the government between sessions of the soviet. Both the executive committee and the administrative agencies during this period have the right to make legally binding decisions. Most of them fall into the category of administrative decision-making and do not need confirmation at a subsequent session of the soviet. Even where such action is required, for example, in the case of personnel changes, there are too many deputies meeting too infrequently to allow for effective discussion. Most if not all such questions will have been arranged beforehand. Those which do get to the soviet are
decided unanimously after formal and often perfunctory "debate".

Furthermore, as a result of the system of "dual subordination", there is a whole class of decisions for which the executive and administrative agencies are responsible but which are delegated to them by superior ministries. Over these, the local deputies have little or no control. Although the question of whether or not the authority of the executive committee is independent of the soviet is debated by Soviet scholars, both practice and theory seem to indicate that it is. Ideally, the standing committees act to ensure that executive committees carry out the deputies' will between sessions, but as the earlier discussion on standing committees demonstrated, they lack the legal authority, the time, and the expertise to control the ispolkom effectively. Both in practice and in law it is more often the ispolkom that tells the deputies what to do.

A second reason for the inequality of the relationship between the soviets and their executive committees has to do with their composition. The composition of the soviets reflects an effort to include a fairly broad and representative cross-section of the population in local government, but not so with their executive committees. These bodies are typically made up of middle aged men with a higher education
in the case of presidents, overwhelmingly so. Between 8 and 9 of every 10 members of the ispolkom belong to the party. Only one in three of those on the ispolkom is replaced at each election and for officers the rate is much lower (less than 15%). The high proportion of middle-aged party members with higher levels of education and low rates of turnover is also characteristic of the administrative leadership, if the Lenin city-borough soviet is any indication.

Moreover, within the executive committees, there also appears to be an unwritten distinction between those who are officers and those who are not. For example, of the 13 member ispolkom of the Lenin city borough soviet, all but two were party members, all but two had higher education, all were in their forties and fifties, and of the four women, one was secretary. In the transition from the 18th to the 19th term, all six of the "rank and file" members were replaced, but among the seven officers (including five vice-presidents) there were only three new faces; the president and secretary did not change. Taken together, the evidence strongly suggests that the executive committees constitute something of an elite group, those possessing the skills and experience needed to make complex decisions. The likelihood that within this elite an even smaller group exerts disproportionate
influence over the decision-making process also appears strong.

Finally, the ispolkom dominates by virtue of its control over the organization of local governmental activity. Such control is especially important with regard to personnel. While the soviet as a whole retains the right to discuss and confirm appointments to administrative agencies, advisory commissions and standing committees, in practice this is done unanimously and routinely by the deputies on the basis of the nominations put before them by the ispolkom. Interviews with Soviet deputies and specialists indicate that even this formality is occasionally violated. In addition, the ispolkom oversees the preparation of the agenda, initiates draft legislation, apparently reviews the reports by the standing committees on its proposals before the sessions, approves who will be invited to attend sessions and standing committee meetings, and controls the flow of information to the deputies, especially as it pertains to the budget. For all these reasons, the dominance of the ispolkom over the proceedings of the soviet has resulted in what N.G. Starovoitov calls a "psychological barrier" to greater deputy participation in decision-making. In the unusually candid article he authored in 1985, he wrote:

Even now it is possible to encounter workers in the party and state apparatus who
reason thus: 'Why call a session of the soviet? Get the ispolkom together and let's decide.' In this way they resolve a great many issues including even the important matters— not at sessions of the soviets, but by a rather narrow board (kollegiia), sometimes secretly.

One proposal to redress the existing imbalance between the soviets and their executive committees is to elect a presidium which would represent the interests of the deputies between their sessions and serve their needs directly. The exact form and functions of such a body have been a matter of considerable debate among Soviet specialists. Thus far, the proposal has achieved only limited acceptance: the 1980 Law on the rights of oblast soviets allows the formation of such a presidium in area and regional soviets with populations over 1.5 million if permission is obtained from the appropriate Supreme Soviet. Even then, although such a presidium can make "operative decisions" on issues of current concern, the regional level ispolkom retains the right to reverse such a decision. An alternative proposal is to establish a sort of separate staff or even a standing committee which would be independent of the ispolkom and which would service the deputies. As one deputy suggested to the author, this might help to "weaken the otherwise almost absolute dependency of the soviet on the discretion and actions of the ispolkom and its apparatus in organizing their work."
If the members of the ispolkom play the starring role on the local political stage, then it is the local party organization which functions as director. The party established its primacy in the first years of Soviet power; its right to make policy for Soviet society rests on its claim to be the sole legitimate representative of the interests of the working class. The *locus classicus* of party-state relations is the March 22, 1919 resolution of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) entitled "On the Organizational Question". While clearly asserting the supremacy of the party in all matters of policy, the document is not without a certain ambiguity. On one hand, party members are enjoined to "establish complete control in the contemporary state organizations that are the soviets", but on the other, "the party strives to direct the work of the soviets, not replace them" (emphasis original). Furthermore, they are to do so "within the framework of the Soviet Constitution", a phrase which 58 years later was written into the final version (though not the original) of article 6 of the 1977 Constitution acknowledging the "leading and guiding" role of the CPSU in the Soviet political system. Soviet specialists are adamant in interpreting this to mean that the organs of government and not those of the party make legislative decisions, that a clear boundary (*razgranichenie*) exists between the functions of the party and the state which bars the substitution (*podmena*) of the authority of the party for that of the
A new handbook for deputies states this position clearly:

The article of the Constitution which states that all party organizations act 'within the framework of the USSR Constitution' means that first, party organizations may not and should not substitute for (podmenniat') the organs of government; and second, they do not have the right to act contrary to the Constitution and to legislation based on it. The central party organs may, of course recognize the necessity of introducing needed changes and amendments and issue directives to this effect to the communist - deputies of the Supreme Soviets, but until the law is changed or revoked they are obliged to abide by it.

Despite the assertions that a "boundary" exists between the functions of the organs of the party and the state, there is little doubt that in practice the party controls what the soviets do. While they are careful to refer to it as "leadership", even standard Soviet treatments of this relationship accord to the party a predominant influence over the formulation and implementation of policy. In the words of the Handbook, "not one important political or organizational question is resolved by the state organs without the leading directives (ukazanii) of the Communist Party". This is supposed to mean that local government decisions will reflect the policy directions as established by the CPSU at its Congresses, Central Committee plenary sessions and at other meetings of the party leadership. In practice, however, such directives clearly carry a sense of political, if not legal
obligation for those in the government who must carry them out. It should hardly be surprising then that the leadership of the local soviet makes sure its decisions conform to those of the local party organization. Although this crosses the theoretical boundary between the state and the party so insistently maintained by Soviet legal scholars, there is evidence that it happens. As one recent study of city soviets concluded: "Unfortunately, sometimes the decisions of the city soviets repeat almost word for word the resolution of the corresponding party organs."\textsuperscript{94}

In addition to dominating the making of policy, the party determines who will run the government. The recruitment, nomination, and training of the deputies, their executive officers, and the members of the administrative agencies are within the "nomenklatura" of the party, and no appointments to or removal from these offices takes place without at least the tacit approval of the local party organization.\textsuperscript{95} While it is true that there is no requirement that those in government be party members, the more important the position, the more likely they will be. Moreover, control over candidate selection guarantees that those who are not members share the point of view of those who are. Thus, although a majority of the deputies (57.2\%) elected in 1985 were not party members, 42.8\% were. An additional 22.3\% belonged to the Komsomol. The remaining 35\% who had no official party
affiliation were almost certainly acceptable to the party, since the nomination process would have screened out any who were not. Within the executive committees elected in 1985, 71% of the members belonged to the party, while another 8% were in the Komsomol. However, even this understates the party's presence because in the soviets above the rural level party members account for at least 85% of the executive committees, Komsomol members another 5%. Among ispolkom presidents, almost all are party members, and members of the corresponding party committee at that. Conversely, the first secretary of the party committee usually is a member of the ispolkom. Finally, as the data for department heads in the Lenin city borough soviet would seem to suggest the overwhelming majority of administrators are party members of long-standing also.

Control of local government personnel ensures that the party's policy preferences will be correctly communicated and that those holding key positions will be communists. Indeed, party members in the different agencies of local government are enjoined to form "party groups" through which they see to it that the work of the soviet will be coordinated with the wishes of the corresponding party organization. Party groups are formed by those who are party members among the deputies as a whole, in the ispolkom, and in the standing committee. Among the professional administrators the party's
work is coordinated by primary party cells which are organized at the place of work — in this case, the bureaucracy — where there are at least three party members. According to the rules of the CPSU, the party groups are subordinated only to their corresponding party organization and are not answerable to the party groups in the soviets at higher levels of the hierarchy.

The members of the different party groups are expected to hold meetings as the need arises. Such meetings will normally be chaired by the secretary of the corresponding party organization and will discuss the appointment of personnel, the work of individual deputies, and how well the soviet is doing in carrying out the policy directives of the party. Since the party secretary normally sits on the ispolkom and a solid majority of its members belong to the party group, it can be safely assumed that there is virtually no chance that an executive committee will act contrary to the desires of the local party organization.

The relationship between the party and state described above has led one leading Western observer of local Soviet politics, Ronald J. Hill, to conclude that as long as the party continues to dominate the workings of the soviets (podmena), "it is hard to see how a confident and effective system of local government, commanding the respect of those
who work within it and of the broad mass of citizens, can develop." Soviet legal scholars like Lukianov, Shakhnazarov, Barabashev and others would reject such a contention on the grounds noted earlier that a boundary exists between "leading" and "governing"; for them as long as the party doesn't actually make laws or administer them, this distinction is maintained and the problem of "podmena" does not arise. In reality, this is a legal fiction. Hill is quite right when he suggests that any such distinction is blurred in practice. As the preceding analysis has shown, local soviet deputies are certainly aware of what the local party organization wants the soviet to do and perceive that they have a moral and political obligation to do it. Since the agencies of local government responsible for the preparation and execution of what the soviet does are controlled by party members, there is almost no likelihood that they will do otherwise.

The view of the relative contributions to local politics by the party, the executive agencies and the deputies presented at the beginning of this section is understandable. On the basis of the analysis presented here it is reasonable to conclude that the party makes policy, that the ispolkom makes decisions which ensure the implementation of these policies, and that the deputies do what they are told. Such a conclusion, however, oversimplifies the realities of Soviet
grassroots politics. For one thing, it ignores the fact that all members of the executive committee are themselves deputies, and that leading members of the local party are often members of the executive committee. While it may be true that their importance in the formulation and implementation of policy is not derived from their status as deputies, it is incorrect to say that deputies play little or no role. This is more than a semantic distinction. To analyze local Soviet government by dividing it neatly into what the party does, what the executive and administrative agencies do, and what the deputies do is artificial and ignores the multifunctionality of local soviet agencies as well as their overlapping memberships.

A rather different perspective develops if one looks at local soviet politics in terms of who participates and how. In his analysis of citizen participation in Romania based on interviews with 250 deputies in four regional districts, Daniel N. Nelson suggested that deputies can be divided into 3 categories: elites, the needed, and fillers. Based on the research presented in this paper a similar typology can be offered for Soviet deputies. At the top there is an elite consisting of professionals in the party and state organs; at the highest levels they may be one and the same person. This group would include the officers of the ispolkom who have held their position for more than one term, the heads of
administrative agencies, and the members of the local party committee who are actively involved in the work of the soviets as chairman of standing committees, as members of the ispolkom, or as deputies. Collectively numbering less than five percent of the deputies, these individuals - mostly well-educated men of middle age - are the decision-makers in local soviet politics.

The second group is made up of specialists, deputies who are influential by virtue of their expertise or experience and who remain as deputies for more than one term because they are useful, in some cases essential, to the efficient functioning of local government. They are not employed by either the party or the state as are the members of the elite, but hold full-time positions in enterprises or organizations formally outside of the political system. Frequently found leading standing committees or as member of their aktiv, these individuals may become involved in local government to protect or advance the particular interests of the organization employing them. They account for perhaps another 20-30% of the deputies.

Finally, there is the rank and file member of the soviet whose service as a deputy constitutes a one-term 2 1/2 year education in the "schools of administration" as Lenin called local government. Lacking position, specialist resources,
and perhaps, motivation, they frequently function as an audience for the actions of more influential deputies.

The attempt to understand Soviet politics through the use of elite analysis is certainly not novel. However, the view that local government in the Soviet Union is dominated by a small group of party professionals who monopolize the political process while denying any real influence to those elected to represent the popular will needs to be modified. In the first place, mobility within the system is possible. For the politically ambitious, a good performance in the role of deputy may attract favorable attention from those in the party seeking new recruits or deciding who to promote; conversely a bad performance will damage one's service record. Secondly, even the rank and file are not wholly without opportunities to influence policy. Of the various ways examined in this paper the two which seem most promising are the use of the right of inquiry (zapros) and the deputy's participation in the work of the standing committees. Thirdly, the deputy does have the ability to obtain attention for constituency problems and to resolve them successfully. As noted earlier, perhaps 50% of the executive committee meetings are taken up with "individual" matters. When asked whether they would bring constituent problems to the attention of the soviet at its session the deputies interviewed by the author almost always responded that they would
resolve them not at the session, but with the help of their executive committee, reportedly with a high rate of success.

With respect to the issue of podmena discussed earlier, the view of the local political process offered here suggests that the interaction between the party and state is more complex than it is often presented in Western analyses. Given the overlapping memberships which exist in the leadership of the two bodies and the problems inherent in defining what is policy and what is administration, it becomes difficult to say clearly which organ does what. It hardly makes sense to say that the party "supplants" the authority of the soviet when they are led by the same people. The argument about whether the party dominates the state also underestimates the political differences between party members. Finally, for most issues resolved by local government, the need for party authority simply does not arise. Only when there are jurisdictional disputes between governmental and non-governmental agencies, or within the bureaucracy, would the party committee be likely to get directly involved.107

In the end, "who governs?" In his landmark study of municipal politics in the city of New Haven, Robert Dahl made this question the title as well as the subject of his book. In answering it, he concluded that in the formulation of public policy, "most citizens use their political resources
scarcely at all," that they were citizens without politics. Real decision-making power lay in the hands of those he termed the "professionals". Without minimizing the differences between the two systems, it is not inappropriate to end this discussion of local Soviet government by quoting from Dahl's description of those who dominated the decision-making process in New Haven. Referring to those "professionals" both in and out of public office, Dahl wrote: 108

The political system of New Haven is characterized by the presence of two sharply contrasting groups of citizens. The great body of citizens use their political resources at a low level; a tiny body of professionals within the political stratum use their political resources at a high level. Most citizens acquire little skill in politics; professionals acquire a great deal. Most citizens exert little direct and immediate influence on the decisions of public officials; professionals exert much more. Most citizens have political resources they do not employ to gain influence over the decisions of public officials; consequently there is a great gap between their actual and potential influence. The professionals alone narrow the gap; they do so by using their political resources to the full and by using them with a high degree of efficiency.

2Morton reports more than 30 written questions being read and briefly answered by the chairman of the ispolkom in the Leningrad borough case. Henry W. Morton, "The Leningrad District of Moscow", p. 214. A similar procedure was followed at the previous session of the Lenin borough soviet.


4Art. 11 of the Law on the Status of Deputies, "O statuse narodnykh deputatov v SSSR" (as amended) Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR (1979), #17, item 277.


6See V.I. Vasilev, for example, in Kommentarii k zakonu, p. 102 and G.V. Barabashev and K.F. Sheremet, Sovetskoe stroitel'stvo, 2nd ed. (Mos: Iurid. Lit., 1981), pp. 222-227. These practices have also been criticized officially. See for instance "O praktike provedeniiia sessii Sovietov narodnykh deputatov v Uzbekskoi SSR" Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR (1979), #37, item 607, and the speech of K.U. Chernenko to the April 10, 1984 Plenum of the Central Committee (Mos: Politizdat, 1984), p. 8.


This procedure is not uncommon in American political practice. The agenda of the municipality in which the author was a legislator for eight years was usually determined by the Chairman of the Board in consultation with the Managing Director three days before the meeting. If any board member wished an item included, he usually did so prior to this by contacting the chair, although the option of introducing an item at the meeting itself was always available when the chair invited commissioners to raise issues from past sessions or under "new business".


Examples of such activity are discussed in M.P. Shchetinina, Deputat na sessii Soveta, pp. 21-25; A.T. Leizerov, Demokraticheskie formy deiatel'nosti mestnykh Sovetov, pp. 8, 12-13; A.A. Bezuglov, Deputat v Sovete, p. 13; I.A. Azovkin, Mestnye Sovety v sisteme organov vlasti (Mos: 1971), p. 237.

Although scholars have encouraged greater public participation along these lines the consensus seems to be that it doesn't happen very often. See, for example, A.A. Bezuglov (ed.), Sovetsko stroitel'stvo (1985), p. 327.

A.T. Leizerov, Konstitutsionnyi printsip, pp. 80-82.
22 V.I. Vasilev discussion in Kommentarii k zakonu, pp. 103-107.


25 See Kommentarii k zakonu, pp. 172-173 and 210-214.


27 A.T. Leizerov, Konstitutsionnyi printsip, pp. 91-93 provides data from several district soviets in Belorussia for 1975-1979.


31 The data presented in table 3 show that a much higher percentage of the deputies in the village soviets participate than in the cities and regions. See also V.I. Vasilev, in Kommentarii k zakonu, p. 115. The greater informality of political life in the village soviets was expressed to the author by several of the Soviet scholars he interviewed in the Fall of 1984 including V.I. Vasilev, A.A. Bezuglov, and G.V. Barabashev.


33 A.A. Bezuglov (ed.), Sovetskoе stroitel’stvo, pp. 341-343; V.I. Vasilev in Kommentarii k zakonu, pp. 124-128.

34 A hypothetical example of how it is supposed to work can be found in A.A. Bezuglov, Deputat v Sovete, pp. 21-22.


36 A.T. Leizerov, Demokratischieske formy, p. 46.
This conclusion, along with data based on the minutes of meetings and other official documents examined from 1965-1975 in Belorussia is found in A.T. Leizerov, Demokraticheskie formy, pp. 36-46. The summary conclusion offered here is found on p. 42.


The reluctance of many deputies to participate as a result of nervousness or indifference is described by M.P. Shchetinina, Deputat na sessii Soveta, p. 28 and A.A. Bezuglov, Deputat v sovete, pp. 19-20.

All data given below is from A.T. Leizerov, "Issledovanie effektivnosti sessionnoi deiatel'nosti", p. 60.

A.A. Bezuglov (ed.), Sovetskoe stroitel'stvo, p. 344.


Despite the pleas of scholars for a more thorough legal regulation of the procedures for using the zapros, as of this writing there is no all-union or republican statute which does so. A recent attempt to draft one which could be used as a model by local soviets was published by the Sverdlovsk Legal Institute. V.A. Kriazhkov and A.I. Potapov, Deputatskii zapros: metodicheskie rekomendatsii (Sverdlovsk, Turidcheskii Institut, 1985), pp. 12-14.


This is strongly emphasized in A.A. Bezuglov and A.T. Leizerov, Deputatskii zapros (Mos: Iurid. Lit., 1980), p. 13.

See, for example, A.A. Bezuglov and A.T. Leizerov, Deputatskii zapros, p. 31. The same authors indicate that oral inquiries occur only very rarely at any level of soviet other than the village, p. 13.
These procedures are discussed by V.I. Vasilev, in Kommentarii k zakonu, pp. 120-124.


This is also Leizerov's conclusion based on his analysis of national data and data from Belorussia between 1977 and 81. See A.T. Leizerov, "Issledovanie effektivnosti sessionnoi deiatel'nosti", p. 56.

Materialy plenuma Tsk. KPSS (Mos: Politizdat, 1984), pp. 11-12.


A.T. Leizerov, "Issledovanie effektivnosti sessionnoi deiatel'nosti", p. 58.


Probably the most thorough discussion to date of "Kontrol" and the literature on it, is by N.F. Selivon, Kontrol'naia funktsiia mestnykh Sovetov narodnykh deputatov (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1980). See esp. ch. 2. See also, B.N. Gabrichidze, "Konstitucionnye osnovy kontrol'noi deiatel'nosti Sovietov" SGIP, #7 (1981), pp. 3-11.

The approach comes from the textbook edited by A.A. Bezuglov, Sovietskoe stroitel'noe, pp. 353-359.


G.V. Barabashev, K.F. Sheremet, Sovietskoe stroitel'noe, pp. 236-239.

Legislation on the standing committees differs among the republics but this requirement appears to hold generally. A "Statute on the Standing Committees" of the RSFSR was adopted only in 1983 (see Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR, #10, item 318, article 23). Most other republics had already adopted statutes on the standing committees. Belorussia has


64 A.T. Leizerov "Effektivnost' poriadka", p. 75.

65 Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR (1983), #10, item 318, article 9-12.


69 G.V. Barabashev, K.F. Sheremet, Sovetskoe stroitel'stvo, p. 252.

70 See, for example, I.M. Chekharin, Postoiannye komissii v sisteme organov mestnyh Sovetov (Mos: Iurid. Lit., 1972), p. 15.


72 Calculated from Nekotorye voprosy... v 1984 godu, p. 26.

73 A.I. Novoselov, Ispolkom i postoiannye komissii Soveta, p. 13ff.
74 A.I. Novselov, Ispolkom i postojannye komissii Soveta, p. 23.

75 The data in this section came from A.T. Leizerov, "Effektivnost' poriadka", pp. 70-73.

76 See, for example, A.A. Bezuglov, Deputat v Sovete, p. 30.

77 A.T. Leizerov, "Effektivnost' poriadka", p. 73; see also, by the same author, Demokraticheskie formy, pp. 95-97.

78 A.T. Leizerov, Demokraticheskie formy, p. 105; see also Ronald J. Hill's review of the literature in Soviet Politics, Political Science and Reform, pp. 78-82.


83 See discussion in G.V. Barabashev, K.F. Sheremet, Sovetskoe stroitel'stvo, pp. 324-325.

84 The right of the ispolkom to give the deputies assignments (poruchenia) to carry out is the subject of some dispute. A consensus seems to support it. Ispolnitel'nyi komitet mestnogo Soveta narodnykh deputatov (Mos: Iurid. Lit., 1983), pp. 224-225. On the inequality of the balance between the ispolkom and the standing committees see this same source (p. 199) and A.T. Leizerov, Demokraticheskie formy, p. 85.


86 Two discussions of the literature on this proposal are: Ronald J. Hill, Soviet Politics, Political Science, and Reform, pp. 82-84 and Ispolnitel'nyi komitet mestnogo Soveta, pp. 199-200.