

efficient private estates, flooded the markets of Europe. The money received for this grain made possible the importation of many European products that made daily life much easier for the average Russian. The Russian standard of living, low by West European standards, was steadily rising. There were not enough schools, but the number was steadily increasing. Some of the most solid apartment houses in Moscow and Leningrad, far better constructed than the typical Soviet housing project, bear dates between 1905 and 1914.

So there is every reason to assume that during a period of forty years Russia under a noncommunist political and economic system would have gone ahead and achieved most, if not all, the economic progress for which the existing regime likes to claim exclusive credit. There is also every probability that this progress would have been achieved without certain accompaniments for which the Soviet regime bears exclusive responsibility: famine, slave labor camps, and a prodigious discrepancy between what the people produce and what they receive. This discrepancy is explained partly by the obsession of the Soviet leaders with militarist development, partly by the prodigious losses and waste motion which are inevitable when

a bumbling, fumbling bureaucracy tries to replace the normal functioning of the free market with arbitrary decrees regulating production, wages, and prices.

Consider the Facts

A few indisputable facts and figures show how fantastic is the suggestion that, within any future in sight, the Soviet Union will provide better living for more people than the United States does at the present time. One-eighth of the American population, working on farms with modern machinery and improved agricultural methods, produces enough to feed the whole country and even to pile up unmanageable surpluses, along with exports for foreign markets. Over half the Soviet population, employed in agriculture, produces a distinctly skimpy diet for the Soviet people — a limited privileged upper class excepted.

The United States normally produces about six million passenger cars a year and has gone as high as eight million. The Soviet Union's record output of motor vehicles, in 1957, was 495,000, but most of these were trucks. There were only 114,000 passenger cars. So the motorcar advantage of the United States is about fifty to one. Most Soviet cars are reserved for the needs of the state and party bureaucrats.

The holiday on the road is a commonplace for vast numbers of Americans, including a great many workers and farmers. And this type of holiday is being enjoyed more and more in Western Europe. But it is virtually unknown in the Soviet Union. Visitors to Russia who have motored from the frontier to Moscow or from Moscow to the Crimea are impressed by the absence of traffic on the roads. The arrival of a car, especially a car of foreign make, in a Soviet village arouses excitement and interest comparable with the circus coming to town.

The United States reported over 60 million telephones in operation at the beginning of last year; the last official figure for the Soviet Union was 861,000, only a little over the average annual number of new installations in the United States. One of the first discoveries of the visitor in Moscow is that there is no generally accessible telephone book.

It is not only in comparison with the United States that the Soviet Union comes off badly, on the showing of its own figures, in Khrushchev's chosen field of competition: economic well-being. The Federal Republic of Germany, a speck on the map compared with the Soviet Union, is much poorer in natural resources and was flat on its back ten years ago, as a re-

sult of war bombing and negative occupation policies. But Germany in recent years has been turning out, by comparison with the Soviet Union, more than twice as many automobiles, three times as many cameras, almost three times as many motorcycles, and more watches and television sets. And what West Germany actually put up in housing in 1957 was very close to what the Soviet Union planned to build, although the Soviet population is four times the German, and the Soviet need in housing is almost indescribable.

Giving People What They Want

A dictatorship, able to conscript labor and concentrate all national resources on a single objective, can always put over a crash program for building pyramids, auto highways, sputniks, or whatever may be the immediate desired objective. But only a free economy can give its people a high standard of living. Such a standard of living never has and never will come about as a result of state planning and allotment and allocation, of fixed wages and prices and state directed labor.

For a plausible definition of a high standard of living is giving people what they want. And this can only be done when a large number of producers, big and small, are dependent for profit and