

One does not have to be a great seer to understand what happened: as in the past, the local and regional draft programmes were drawn up in offices, and are not consistent with the population's real needs.

At the Tyumen' Regional Party Committee, they agreed with us and explained the situation quite simply: this time around, the party organizations gave the Soviets complete independence, refusing to stand in for them, as had been the practice, and it would seem that the local Soviets reduce the real work to paper shuffling. At the same Regional Committee, we were quoted a different, unofficial (they did the calculations nevertheless) figure: the region will need approximately one million new apartments by the end of the year 2000.

But both locally and in the regional organizations, we heard the following view: "In the final analysis, all these figures are just a formality. We will build as many as are required."

This confidence is not plucked out of thin air. For two years now, priority has been given in the region, not in words but in actions, to housing and buildings for community use. In that time, the rate of construction of new housing has increased by 25%, of pre-school institutions - by 54%, of schools - by 40%, of hospitals and polyclinics - by a factor of 1.5-2.5. We found even more convincing arguments in the USSR State Statistics Committee's reference report for the first six months of this year. In terms of new provision of housing and day-care places, Tyumen' has overtaken, and by a substantial amount, Moscow, which was the traditional leader by those indicators.