

A STUDY

The System Of Education

—Md. Masud-ul-Karim—

In this third instalment of the article, the author examines the education system in the USSR.

In the USSR almost three-fourths of the population were illiterate only 60 years ago. And among women there was 88 per cent illiteracy. Four out of every five children of school age had no opportunity to study at school. But since the October Revolution of 1917, a great expansion has occurred in receiving education on all fronts. It formulated the programme to teach everyone to read and write and to labour. Within an unprecedentedly short period the land of Soviets became a country of complete literacy. Now books, text books and reference books are inexpensive. Schooling from the primary to the highest level is free; and education is compulsory and accessible to everybody for ten years. Every third citizen in the USSR is studying. In 1939 eighty-two per thousand workers and a university or secondary school education, while this figure grew 386 in 1959. In 1967 one out of two workers had a secondary school or a university education. The educational level of collective farmers remains somewhat lower than that of the workers. The gap between the educational levels of workers and farmers is narrowing.

The Soviet Union has a huge network of educational establishments. These include the eight and ten year secondary schools, vocational technical schools (professional schools) special secondary schools, evening schools for workers and rural youth, say evening schools, ins

titutes, universities, and their numerous branches. Besides, there are music and art schools, correspondence technical schools and teachers' colleges. Each Union Republic has an Academy of Sciences, universities and colleges with various forms of training. All the schools are state-run except a few colleges belonging to the co-operatives and public organizations. The Soviet Union has 4790 vocational schools, 790 universities and institutes, 1,100 correspondence and evening universities and faculties (divisions) attached to institutes and universities. Besides, the Soviet Union has nearly 4000 technical schools and special secondary schools.

Education in the USSR plans to cater for children from secondary school to the completion of a university or institute course. Secondary schooling covers ten years, vocational technical schools three years (two years in an agricultural school) and special secondary schools two to four years and university or higher educational institutes four to six years course. Secondary schools take children at the age of 6 with a ten year course which is designed as a single whole without overlapping in subjects. Secondary education is provided either in general secondary schools or polytechnical schools. Children may attend na

tional schools where instruction is given in the native language and Russian is studied as a separate subject.

In USSR there are two basic types of establishments of higher education, the university and the institute. The universities teach principal theoretical subjects and the institutes teach special subjects. The duration of courses varies from four to six years. Students are accepted between the ages 17 and 35 if they have completed a secondary (general or technicum) course. The four year university course is dedicated to basic and general study for the first two years and, the last two years for specialization. In order to become an engineer, a scientist or a designer, one must first complete the ten year secondary school and education then the institute course. Those who have finished eight year school education can learn in the vocational technical schools. Graduates of these schools can go on to obtain a higher education, and for this they must pass the examinations required for receiving the school-leaving certificate. And they can enter any university or institute, where they will be even more readily admitted than the graduates of ten-year secondary schools. Curricula are divided into three sections: So

cial-political (Marxism-Leninism), 6 to 8 per cent general theoretical subjects, 25 to 30 per cent and special subjects about 62 to 70 per cent of the time.

School health services form part of the organization of education. Medical work is integrated with health teaching in the classroom and the more informal learning that takes place in the pupils' clubs and youth organizations.

The Soviet Union is now beginning to adapt now school programmes to make school curricula correspond to the latest achievements of science, culture, and art. Everything unnecessary, trivial, and out dated is eliminated from the school curriculum. The school is called upon to cultivate in the pupils love for homeland, a desire to serve the people to defend the gains of the revolution, and to fight for the happiness of the working people. Students are made to be self-critical and to think independently and are imparted moral education. Not a single line or word does advocate violence and cruelty or encourages living at the expense of others. All books for the growing generation exalt the ideas of love for man, peace, freedom, and justice. The school helps the pupils to find their place in life. For this, arrangements are made for the pupils to meet people of various professions to visit plants, attend lectures, and hold friendly discussions with their teachers. In the evenings there are plays about

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the "most romantic" "most noble most heroic professions". The same purpose is served by scientific societies, clubs, academic contests and numerous competitions. Institutions of higher learning continue to cultivate in them social consciousness, a sense of personal responsibility for public affairs. All textbooks must be permeated with the ideas of humanism and instruction in special subjects should be accompanied by studies in humanities to enable the students to acquire a scientific world outlook and to desire to work for social progress and combat ignorance, nationalistic conceit, and narrow-mindedness.

Democratization continues in the administration of institutions of higher learning. Students take an active part in planning educational programmes. Representatives of student organizations participate in the work of learned councils and admission commissions. Student commissions also grant scholarships. Student organizations play an important part in job appointments of graduates. The faculties of a number of state universities and institutes have special student commissions dealing with the improvement of educational programmes. Young men and women not only study but also take part in running their universities or institutes on an equal footing with the administration.

Individualism is encouraged among the students. Meritorious students have opportunities of ample grants, stipends and scholarships and other benefits.

Teaching is regarded as a great noble and responsible task in the Soviet Union. Those who have devoted their lives to teaching enjoy many privileges. Teachers receive comfortable living quarters located near their schools. A teacher now earns as much as an engineer. This makes it possible to attract more competent and talented people to the teaching profession. Special institutes and departments in teachers' colleges and universities provide further up-to-date training of teachers. Together with the parents, the teacher moulds the personality of the pupils. Soviet people have respect for teachers. In Siberian type special schools pupils meet outstanding scientists, with whom they discuss and debate as equals.

The right to work is guaranteed by the USSR Constitution and the graduates are free from the problem of unemployment. The institutes and university graduates do not have to look for jobs, the jobs await them. Moreover they are provided with living quarters upon completing their studies.