

Education in Russia

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THE visitor to Russia finds it difficult to distinguish between accomplishment and aspiration. Things are happening so fast that the plans of today bring results of tomorrow, and it is easy to confuse one with the other. Education is a good illustration of this situation. I was told that illiteracy had been liquidated and that every one living in Leningrad could read and write. At the beginning of the World War 61 per cent of the Russian people were illiterate, and it was hard to believe that so much could be accomplished in a brief period of twenty years.

The vast educational program in Russia, however, does give promise not only of eliminating illiteracy, but of raising the general intelligence of the people to a high level. The *Moscow Daily News* reported while I was in Russia that twelve billion rubles had been allotted to education this year, and that twenty-eight million children were enrolled in the grade schools. Ten million men and women were studying in adult schools. Seven million more workers were taking courses in vocational schools; and two million were enrolled in the universities, colleges, and technical schools. If these figures are reasonably accurate, this is an astonishing accomplishment.

The attitude of the Russian Government toward education is reflected in a statement made by Stalin at a Youth Conference a year or two ago: "To construct, it is necessary to know, to master science, and to know, it is necessary to study. Study persistently and patiently. Learn from all—both from enemies and from friends, especially from enemies. Learn with clenched teeth, without fearing that the enemy will laugh at us, at our ignorance, at our backwardness. Before us is a fortress. This fortress is called science, with its numerous branches of knowledge. We must take this fortress at all cost."

This forceful statement reflects the determination as well as the objectives of the educational program in Russia today.

The new Constitution, which has been drafted by the Central Executive Committee of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and which is to be presented for consideration to the All-Union Congress of Soviets on November 25, 1936, lists among the basic rights of every citizen the right to education.

Chapter X, Article 121, says: "This right is ensured by universal compulsory elementary education, free of charge, including higher education, by the system of state stipends for the overwhelming majority of students in higher schools, instruction in schools in the native language, and organization of free industrial, technical and agronomic education for the toilers at the factories, state farms, machine and tractor stations and collective farms."

That the right to education should be recognized along with the right to work, to rest, and to material security in old age

Soviet Russia is attacking the problem of education vigorously, but sadly misses the intellectual class that was 'eliminated' after the revolution. Significant social trends in Russia are discussed with unusual clarity in this article.

is significant and indicates the seriousness with which the Russian Government is facing its responsibility to the people.

In this connection it should be observed that the new Constitution, which is certain to be adopted, is one of the most remarkable documents of its kind ever promulgated by any people. Its provisions are so much at variance with the past practices of the Soviet Government that it is hard to believe the Russian Government contemplates giving complete effectiveness to it at the present time.

But what is the visible evidence to support the pronouncements and legal proposals for education in Russia? It is only fair to state that there is substantial reason to believe that progress is being made. I saw a number of new school buildings in Moscow that are architecturally attractive, spacious, and appear to be modern in their appointments. I was told that seventy-two new school buildings were erected in Moscow in 1935.

While the schools were closed for the summer vacation when I was there, preparation was already being made for the new school year which began in September. I visited the University of Moscow where I found a number of people rearranging books in the library and new equipment was being installed in several of the laboratories. New steel stacks were being built for the vast public library

which contains approximately five million volumes. The Public Library of Leningrad, an imposing structure in the center of the city, is the second or third largest library in the world and contains a priceless collection of Egyptian papyri, incunabula, and manuscripts. Incidentally, Voltaire's private library is there.

The vastness of the educational resources of the Soviet capital is indicated by the number of educational institutions, libraries, museums, and scientific societies. There are seven universities, eleven libraries, six art galleries, twenty-two scientific museums, and twenty-eight scientific societies. There are not so many in Leningrad, but probably nearly as many people are served by them. The University of Leningrad is more extensive than the University of Moscow. It occupies twelve buildings which formerly housed the ministries under the regime of the Czar. The Academy of the Sciences in Leningrad is the largest scientific institution in the Soviet Union. Seventy-five scientific bodies and over eight thousand members are identified with it.

Physical education comprises an important aspect of education in Russia. There are fifty stadiums, some of which accommodate from fifteen to sixty thousand spectators, and large physical culture centers in four of the "parks of culture and rest" where sixty thousand men and women can exercise at one time. I visited one of these so-called "parks of culture and rest" and found it crowded with people engaged in all kinds of physical exercise. There is a physical culture school for the training of teachers to direct this work. The young people show the effect of this training, for they appear physically strong and vigorous.

One hears much about culture in Russia. Art, music, dramatics, and literature are encouraged. The art museums are crowded daily by peasant groups who are in charge of competent guides. The people love music, and the musical halls and operas are crowded each evening. The Russian theaters are attracting world wide attention. The Children's Theater in Moscow, exclusively for children from ten to sixteen years of age, is one of the unique institutions in Moscow.

An enormous number of books are being published and many daily newspapers are available. While most of these are printed in the Russian language, many of them are in foreign languages, including English. It is quite obvious that the spread of propaganda is one of the purposes of these publications. They contain little foreign news and what is published is selected carefully and designed to magnify the virtues of the Russian Government. But all these cultural influences are stimulating the people to seek an education as a means of better preparing them to enjoy the new advantages that have come to them.

(TURN TO PAGE 48, PLEASE)

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EDUCATION IN RUSSIA

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32)

The visitor comes away from Russia feeling that a great effort is being made to produce a better social order for the people. The appearance of sadness, however, on the face of almost every one indicates that the better things of life are being secured at a great price. It is apparent that the hunger for bread is a little less real than the hunger for knowledge.

It is one of the great tragedies of the world that thousands of intellectuals were killed or driven into exile during the Revolution whose only crime was that they could not accept the creed of communism. These men are greatly needed now to assist in the work of education. As sanity is being restored out of the hysteria of revolution, old methods of instruction and subject-matter of curricula are being restored. But a new generation of intellectuals must be produced before great accomplishment can be realized. When that time comes, Russian communism will have made many concessions to the economic order which it has attempted to supplant. In fact, this process is going on rapidly today.

One of the things that must impress every visitor to Russia is the fact that the policies of government are rapidly changing. This is reflected in the new Constitution as well as in actual practice. The educational agencies are still completely dominated by the state, but even Stalin seems to have recognized that greater freedom of expression and independence of judgment are essential to educational progress. In pronouncements and public declarations he has encouraged a greater spirit of liberalism in thought and action.

But with all the educational and cultural resources that are available, or that are being made available, Russia has a long way to go before learning can be made the effective agency of the new social order. As the visitor is being shown the educational facilities, he wonders whether or not, after all, they are being utilized in the most effective way.

It is my belief that up to the present time the training of technicians by empirical methods has overshadowed every other objective in the educational program. Circumstances probably have made this necessary; but as life becomes more normal, effectiveness will be given to other aspects of education.

Most visitors to Russia are greatly impressed with the material progress that is being made, but I was primarily impressed with the educational progress. A nation that undertakes to raise the intelligence of one hundred and seventy million people, most of whom are peasants scattered over one-sixth of the earth's surface, challenges admiration. If the educational program is liberalized, the time will come when enlightenment and knowledge will make deep inroads upon fallacies in governmental theory. The ability of the country to make its vast educational program effective is the contingency upon which the future of the country rests.



A PLEA FOR LIBERALISM

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35)

ualism and collectivism represent two opposing tendencies in human society. Students must be trained to think critically.

"I remind you in conclusion," he said, "that a university has no platform to advocate and no creed to profess save that of the dissemination of knowledge and an abiding belief that the truth will make men free.

"Educators everywhere understand that revelation comes through knowledge and enlarges the mental horizon; while propaganda closes the mind of the individual to critical judgment, arouses prejudice, and stimulates passion. It is this conception of his task that causes the educator to safeguard jealously freedom of expression and to teach the truth with all the zeal of the missionary."



CHANGES IN FACULTY

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34)

Dr. Horace Peterson, graduate of Cornell, to fill temporarily the position left vacant by illness of Dr. C. C. Rister, professor of history.

Dr. Carl Ritzman, formerly instructor of Northwestern agriculture school, Crookston, Minn., as instructor in speech, taking the place of Floyd K. Riley, University debate coach who accepted a position as speech professor at Baker university, Baldwin, Kan.

Henry Emmett Gross, formerly with the Shell Petroleum company, to succeed Irwin F. Bingham as assistant professor of petroleum engineering. Mr. Bingham resigned to take a position with the Universal Atlas Cement company, Waco, Texas. Mr. Gross is a graduate of the Missouri School of Mining and Metallurgy, Rolla, Mo., and has an M.S. degree from the University of Illinois.

Dr. Milton Hopkins, who received a Ph.D. from Harvard in June, 1936, as assistant professor of botany.

C. C. Smith, as special instructor in botany; Frances Hunt, '29as, assistant in journalism; Henri Minsky, assistant in violin, and Jean Sugden, '31M.A., assistant in English.

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