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# SOVIET STUDENTS

BY S. KAFTANOV

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# SOVIET STUDENTS


By S. KAFTANOV

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER  
EDUCATION OF THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S  
COMMISSARS OF THE U.S.S.R.

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ARTIST: H. KLERING

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N 1938 there were 716 universities, colleges and other institutions of higher education in the Soviet Union, with a student body of 601,000. This is more than the number of students attending the colleges and universities of twenty-three European countries combined, including France, Germany, England, Italy and Poland, with Japan to boot.

There are institutions of higher education in every one of the Union and Autonomous Republics and Regions of the Soviet Union. Kirghizia, which did not have a single institution of higher education before the Revolution, now has 4, Turkmen-

istan has 5, Tajikistan has 5, and Kazakhstan has 19. And all these educational establishments can boast of modern laboratories, class rooms and lecture halls and the last word in school equipment.

Before the Revolution, the colleges and universities of tsarist Russia were attended by 112,000 students, of whom 35 per cent were children of the nobility or government officials, 10.3 per cent were children of the clergy, 11 per cent were children of big business men and merchants, and 14.5 per cent were children of rich peasants. Thus 70.8 per cent of the student body were children of the ruling classes, children of the wealthy. The high cost of tuition, besides the other class and race limitations imposed, made it impossible for the working people to give their children a higher education.

The Soviet Government gave all citizens of the U.S.S.R. access to schools of higher learning. The doors of the colleges and universities of the U.S.S.R. are open to all who have graduated secondary school. There



Assistant Professor Polevitsky explaining the construction of a new multiple-plow model to his students (Timiryazev Agricultural Academy, Moscow)

are absolutely no national, race, social or property limitations in Soviet educational institutions. Women have an equal right with men to enter any institution of higher education in the U.S.S.R. In the Soviet Union, 43 per cent of the college and university students are women.

The sums assigned by the Soviet Government for furthering higher education are increasing with every year. Thus, for example, government expenditures for the higher institutions of education increased from 986,000,000 rubles in 1934 to 2,190,000,000 rubles in 1938.

Despite the enormous increase in the number of institutions of higher education and in the student body, the rapid development of the national economy of the U.S.S.R. demands ever greater numbers of trained people in all fields of knowledge.

The higher educational institutions of the U.S.S.R. turn out experts in 178 branches of science, technology and the arts. Among the 716 Soviet higher educational institutions, 119 are industrial institutes, 29 are

transport and communications institutes, 84 are agricultural colleges, 71 are medical schools, 27 are economic institutes, 11 are law schools, 24 are general universities, 211 are pedagogical and teachers' training institutes, music conservatories, institutes of literature, theatrical and art colleges, institutes of architecture, and so on.

In addition to the higher educational institutions of the regular type, an entirely new kind of higher school has been established in the U.S.S.R.—academies attached to a given branch of industry, transport, agriculture, trade, and so on. These academies, which are under the jurisdiction of the corresponding People's Commissariats, are attended by the executive personnel of factories, as, for instance, directors, assistant directors and shop superintendents, by leading workers of Soviet establishments, who have had wide practical experience, as well as by Stakhanovite workers, who have developed new and improved methods of work. A three or four year course at the academy gives the student a general edu-



The Industrial Academy in Ivanovo



cation and at the same time a specialized training, so that upon graduation he is a highly skilled specialist.

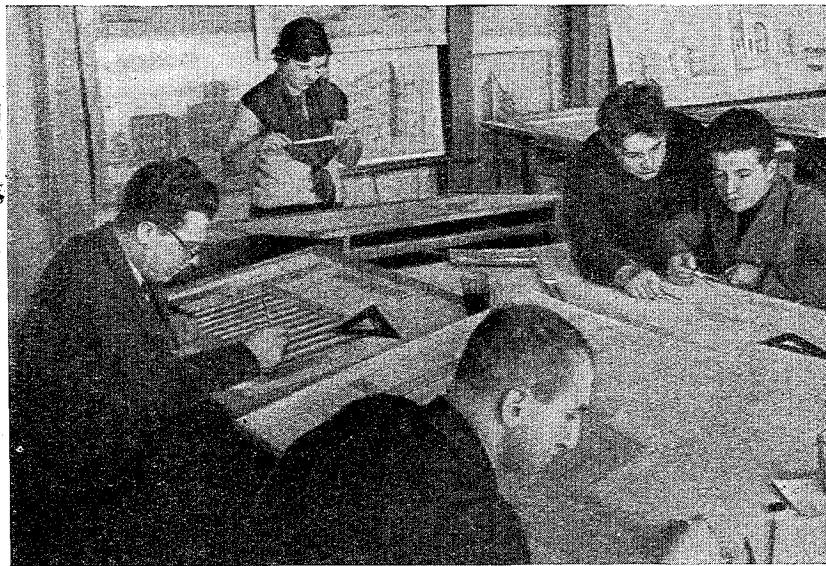
Alexei Stakhanov, the famous Donbas coal miner, is now studying in the Stalin Industrial Academy in Moscow. Busygin, forgerman in the Gorky Automobile Plant, the weaver Evdokia Vinogradova, the Moscow Subway construction worker, Tatyana Fyodorova, and many other outstanding workers of the Soviet Union are also attending industrial academies. The initiator of the Stakhanov movement in agriculture, collective farmer Maria Demchenko, is now studying in the Kiev Agricultural Academy. Other leading Stakhanovites in agriculture have also entered agricultural academies, including Pasha Kovardak, Konstantin Borin and Pasha Angelina. All these people are mastering theoretical knowledge in order to improve and enrich their extensive practical experience.

The students who attend these academies do not lose contact with their former places of work. All these industrial academies

provide for practice work twice a year. Thus, for instance, Stakhanov, Busygin and Borin, who are students in industrial academies, were able to establish new production records in their former places of employment during their practice periods.

As a rule, the students who graduate from these academies fill executive posts. Thus, the initiator of the Stakhanov movement in light industry, Nikolai Smetanin, who worked in the Skorokhod Shoe Factory and studied in the Kirov Industrial Academy in Leningrad, is now the Assistant People's Commissar of Light Industry. The initiator of the Stakhanov movement on the railroads, Pyotr Krivonoss, has been appointed general manager of the Southern Donetz Railroad Line. Musinsky, an outstanding Stakhanovite in the saw-mill industry, was elected vice-chairman of the Archangel Regional Executive Committee.

What are known as factory colleges are very widespread in the U.S.S.R. These higher technical institutions of education are established by the factories and are



Students in the school of civil engineering of the Minsk Polytechnical Institute working on their theses

attended by workers, foremen and other employees of the given factory after working hours. Highly skilled specialists of the various departments of the factory deliver lectures and supervise the practical work of the students. Like all other educational institutions in the U.S.S.R., these factory colleges have up-to-date laboratories and class rooms and well-stocked libraries. Practice work is done in the shops and departments of the given factory. In this way, workers who go through several years of training in these colleges while continuing their regular work in the factory become highly skilled specialists—engineers and technicians—although many of them entered the factory college as ordinary workers. Among these factory colleges, the Institute of the Stalin Works in Leningrad enjoys particular renown. This factory college has trained hundreds of first-rate specialists in the few years of its existence.

Correspondence courses of higher education have also done a great deal to train the skilled people that the country requires.

These courses are taken free of charge and in their spare time by foremen, technicians and other workers and factory employees who have had a secondary school education.

There are over 200,000 people taking the correspondence courses of higher education in the U.S.S.R. People who have taken these courses have the equivalent of a college or university education.

In accordance with Article 121 of the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. tuition in Soviet schools, including colleges and universities, is free. Moreover, 88 per cent of the student body in the higher educational institutions receive government allowances. Allowances range from 130 rubles monthly for the first year to 200 rubles a month for the last year. This corresponds to the average monthly wage of an unskilled worker. Students attending academies of the People's Commissariats receive allowances ranging from 450 to 700 rubles a month, which corresponds to the average monthly earnings of a highly skilled worker. Nor

does the government confine its concern for the student body to these allowances. All students who require living quarters are provided with them by the government, which expends tens of millions of rubles annually on the construction and upkeep of student dormitories. In large cities, there are entire districts of student dormitories, so-called "student towns," built at state expense. There are several such student towns in Moscow, with a fairly large population.

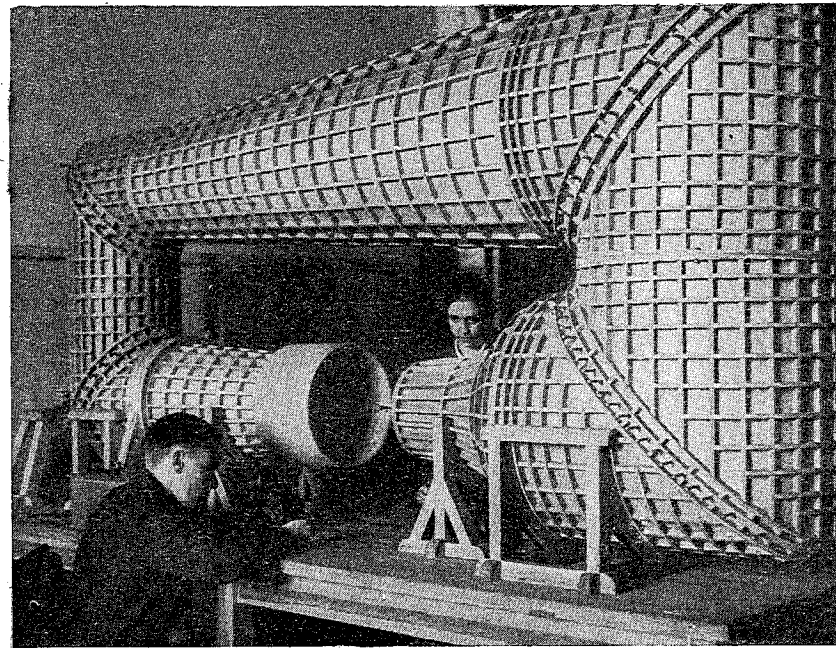
Attached to these dormitories are public dining halls, laundries, barber-shops, etc., of whose services the students avail themselves at reduced prices.

Students are entitled to free medical service and treatment.

Besides the expenditures on dormitories, the government also spends large sums annually on cultural services for the students, sports, vacations for students, etc. Almost every large higher educational institution has its own club and athletic field for students, maintained at the expense of the state and

the trade unions. Students who were working in some enterprise before entering an institution of higher education retain their trade union standing and are merely transferred to the trade union which includes the workers of the particular profession or trade taught in the given college or institution. Young people entering an institution of higher education directly from a secondary school can also join the trade union of their respective colleges. The trade unions furnish the students with free tickets to theaters and concerts or with tickets at reduced rates.

During vacations (Soviet students have vacations twice a year—two months in summer and two weeks in the winter) the students may spend their time in rest homes or take cures in sanatoriums at the expense of the trade unions. Many students spend their vacations in touring the various regions of the vast territory of the Soviet Union in order to get to know their country better, to become acquainted with its beauty and natural wealth. In such cases



Students in the aerodynamics laboratory of the school of applied mathematics of the Moscow State University

the state also assists the students, allowing them considerable reductions in fare, experienced guides, reduced rates for food in tourist camps, etc.

The many-sided attention accorded students by the state makes it possible for them to devote their entire attention, abilities and energy to study.

Students devote themselves to their studies in the Soviet institutions of higher education in a way that differs radically from the way students studied in the corresponding establishments of tsarist Russia. The material security of the students, the high standards of the teaching staff, the fact that the students are furnished with school supplies and literature create all the conditions making for exceptionally fruitful work on the part of the students.

In the old colleges of Russia, a type known to everyone was the "perpetual student"—materially insecure, constantly chasing after any sort of petty earnings, dragging out an existence of semi-starvation and, of course, without any possibil-

ities of studying normally. Year after year this "perpetual student" would remain in the same class and in the end would often drop out of school altogether, without completing his course.

In the colleges of the U.S.S.R., where the students are provided with everything they require by the state, there are, of course, no such types as "perpetual students," nor can such a type exist in the Soviet institutions of higher education. The Soviet student considers it a point of honor to study to the best of his abilities and to graduate within the set period. It is a very rare occurrence for a Soviet student to remain behind in a class for a second semester, and in that case it is usually the result of some special reason such as illness.

Socialist competition is very widespread in the Soviet institutions of higher education, just as it is in the factories. Groups of students vie with one another, as do entire classes, departments and even universities, to become honor-roll students, to

assist comrades who are behind in their studies, etc.

The faculty also voluntarily undertakes to do its best to achieve honor-roll students.

The mutual relations between the students and the professors in Soviet institutions of higher education are also altogether different from what they were before the Revolution. In the old days the majority of professors and instructors were hardly interested, if at all, in how the students studied, in why a student was not making progress, in whether the students understood and assimilated their lectures, or whether they required additional assistance from them, etc. In the Soviet institutions of higher education the student body and the faculty constitute a single family. Both the one and the other are equally interested in having the student receive from the school the maximum that it can give, so that upon graduating the student is a fully equipped Soviet specialist.

The students and the faculty are interconnected by more than the actual class-

room work. Usually the professors and instructors participate in the various student meetings, and often spend their vacations or holidays together with the students. Such unity of the student body and the faculty can only serve to improve the work of educating and training the student, who sees in the professor and instructor his senior comrades.

Another distinctive feature of the Soviet institutions of higher education is its close and indissoluble bond with industry, which is manifested in various ways, primarily in the well-organized industrial training of the students through practice work. Every technical and agricultural institution of higher education sends its students for practice work from two and a half to three and a half months a year. The students in technical schools undergo a comprehensive practical training, during which time they become acquainted in general with the branch of industry in which they will work upon graduation. Then in their practice work they receive a more specialized

training, and learn what there is to know about a specific machine and its fixtures. Finally, in their senior year, they work as engineers during their practice work, often fulfilling the duties of assistant shop manager.

Upon completing his industrial practice work, the student is obliged to submit a report to his professor summarizing his practice work, and receives a mark for the work he has done. If he does not submit a report, or if the report is not considered satisfactory, he is obliged to repeat his industrial practice work.

The students are sent to the best enterprises of the given branch of industry for their practice work, enterprises having first-class equipment and working in accordance with the last word in technique.

The student receives general academic and methodological guidance in his practice work from the faculty of the corresponding department. In the factory his practical work is done under the supervision of the best and most highly skilled specialists of the given enterprise.



The theses and work of the students are closely bound up with the practical tasks of the economic development of the country. Many theses submitted by graduating students are put to practical use, and thus are not only purely academic work, but at the same time practical working plans. Upon graduating, the authors of such theses usually participate in their application.

On the other hand, the laboratories and classrooms of the institutions of higher education often solve various problems which are put before them by industry and agriculture. In this way also the students are brought in contact with their future practical activities.

The scientific research work carried on in the colleges is an extremely important factor in the life of the Soviet institutions of higher education. The scientific staffs and faculties of these institutions number over 40,000, including 5,000 professors and 11,500 assistant professors. The working day of the scientific pedagogical staff of the institutions of higher education is five

hours, half of which time is spent on scientific research work.

Every department of the Soviet institutions of higher education has its post-graduate students. There are altogether over 10,000 graduate students in the U.S.S.R. In 1938 alone, 6,000 people entered post-graduate courses in the U.S.S.R. After a three years' course the graduate student presents a thesis which he must defend, and then receives an academic degree. Post-graduate courses are usually taken by students who graduate an institution of higher education with honors.

In the scientific research work that is carried on in the institutions of higher education, problems raised by industry and agriculture are solved. Thus, for instance, graduate students of the Moscow Institute of Non-Ferrous Metals are doing successful work in the field of new alloys. The school of underground structures of the Moscow Institute of Railroad Engineers is assisting in the construction of the Moscow Subway.

A very important part in the life of Soviet institutions of higher education is played by the social organizations of the students—Communist Party, Young Communist League and trade union. The student trade union committees existing in every institution of higher education take an active part in the academic life of the higher schools. They interest themselves in the studies of the students, eliminate any cause that prevents one or another student from studying properly, keep an eye on the practice work, devote attention to the material requirements of the students, help them to spend their vacations in a way that would be both interesting and beneficial, etc.

In 1939, 183,000 new students will enter the universities and colleges of the U.S.S.R.

The colleges and social organizations begin their campaign to enroll new students early.

The Moscow Polytechnical Museum arranges consultations for young people who graduate from secondary schools, concern-

ing their choice of a profession. These young people have informal talks with professors and academicians, teachers and instructors in the higher schools, who tell the former about their institutions. Such meetings have become a regular tradition for the Moscow school children.

Article 118 of the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. declares: "Citizens of the U.S.S.R. have the right to work." In accordance with this, every graduate of an institution of higher education is ensured of work in his field. Six months before completing his senior year, the student already knows where he will work, what pay he will receive, and what his duties will be. The state determines beforehand, according to plan, where the graduate is to work. Of course, this in no way means that the graduate is obliged to work in the given enterprise. It is simply one of the elements of planning—the method that is most widely spread in the work of all Soviet establishments. The young specialist concludes a voluntary contract with the corresponding organization

or enterprise upon his graduation. When he enters the factory or establishment, the young specialist enters a medium that is near to him. No one is afraid of competition from him, everyone strives to assist him to get the hang of his work as rapidly as possible. In 1938, 93,000 students graduated colleges in the U.S.S.R. Every one of these has received work in his specialty.

During the Third Five-Year Plan period higher education will develop to an even greater extent. The number of students is planned to increase from 601,000 in 1938 to 650,000 in 1942.

Higher education in the U.S.S.R. is spreading and developing together with the growth and development of the entire economic and cultural life of the country.