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Universities in the U.S.S.R

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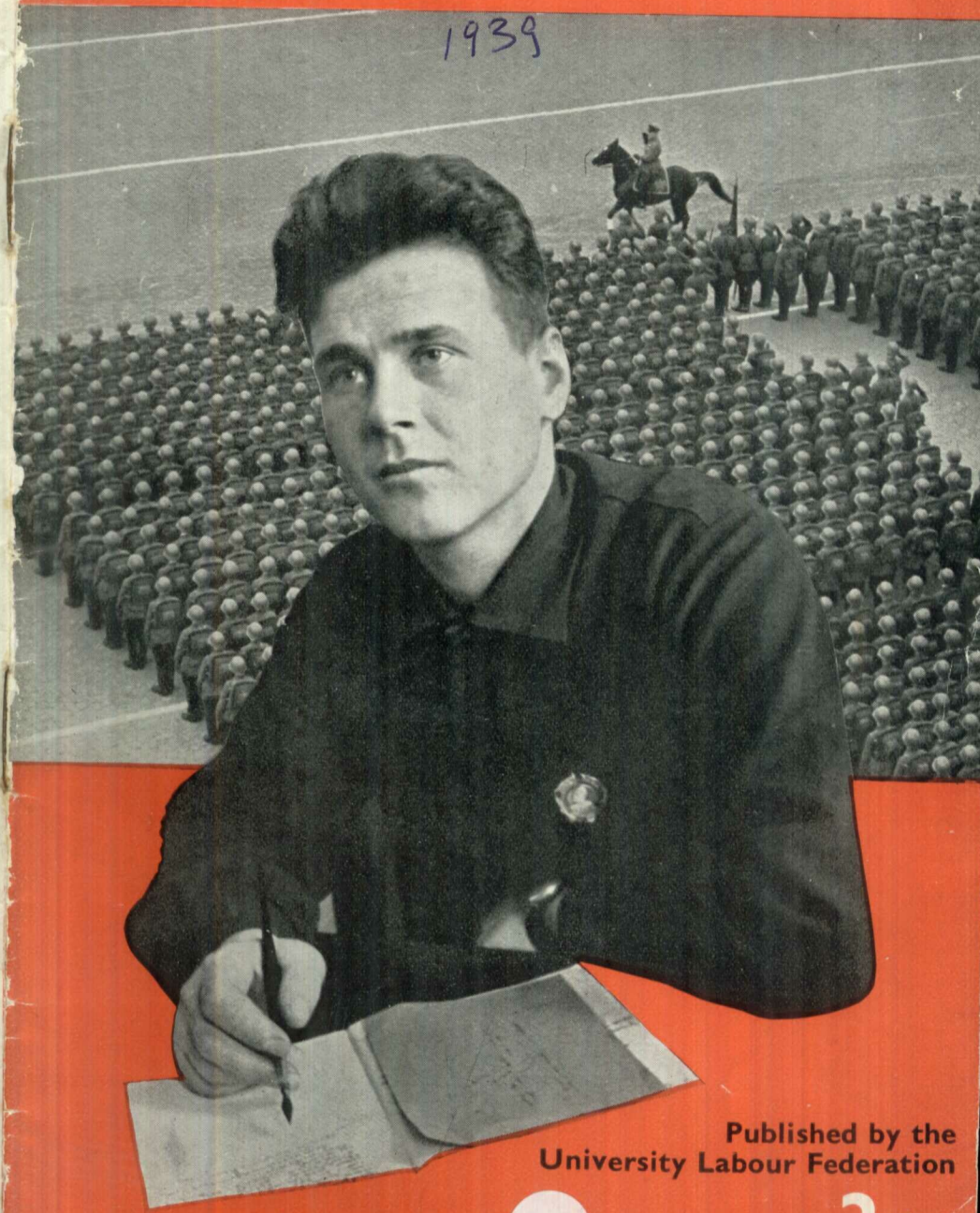

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UNIVERSITIES IN THE U.S.S.R.

Preface

The success and efficiency of the Red Army has resulted in great interest being shown by the British public in all aspects of Soviet life and practice, and has led to a demand for fuller knowledge of, and further information on other achievements of Socialism. Even in cases where the social advances made by the Soviet Union have been recognised, there is naturally interest in how, and in what way, these are being affected by the war. In the sphere of higher education the Soviet Union has made astonishing progress, and has much to offer the rest of humanity. It is hoped that this pamphlet will be of some value, both in bringing these achievements to the notice of the British people, and in establishing firm and lasting relations between the British and Soviet Universities, which will lead to a mutual appreciation and understanding of the respective problems facing the students and people of both countries; an understanding which in its turn will be no small contribution to the fight against Fascism, the greatest enemy of intellectual and cultural progress.

What is Happening to Soviet Universities in the War?

Already we have the answer to this question in the messages that have been received from various groups of students in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Universities are carrying on. Carrying on, but naturally not exactly as before. In every occupation Soviet people are working with unsparing energy, doubling and redoubling their output, improving their technique, and raising the quality of their work. The students are doing likewise ; they are working with renewed determination and using every available spare moment to help in the fight against Fascism. During their vacation they helped in the fields and in the forests, but at the beginning of term they have returned to the Universities, for they realise, as they have always realised, that there they have important work to do. A Soviet student in peace time did not spend time in speculating if his university career was fitting him for some useful job in the future, for he was completely confident that if it were not, then he would not be at the University. In war time, too, the Soviet student is fully aware that by continuing to study, to extend knowledge and higher education, he is building up one of the finest achievements of Socialism, one of the many achievements which the Red Army is fighting to maintain. Lina Stern, member of the Soviet Academy of Science, clearly expressed this when she addressed the students at the Second Moscow Medical Institute: —

" Mankind has taken up arms so that millions of young people like yourselves might be able to continue studying and acquire knowledge and culture, and so that your fathers, brothers and sisters might be saved from the Fascist slavery which threatens them. Years will pass and you will be proud to recall that you lived in the days of the great patriotic war. With even greater pride you will recall that you took part in it, for each one of us working in the rear is helping at the front.

" I know that your hearts are burning with the desire to be right in the thick of it. That is a noble desire, but you have a different task to perform. You must study—go on studying in defiance of the enemy who is endeavouring to spread confusion in our ranks with wings of death. We must study in spite of everything. Study twice and three times as hard as in previous years. When you leave these

walls with a diploma in your hands, our skies will be clear and the air in Europe will be free. Fascism will have been destroyed."

Yet while realising that their first task is to work hard and to equip themselves as thoroughly and as rapidly as possible for the future work, Soviet students are doing all that is possible and compatible with this, to help in the war effort. The men have joined the People's Volunteer Force and the girls are working in the hospitals and ambulance brigades. There is no discrimination, and professors and lecturers as well as the students take their turn at fire-watching, and other forms of " National Service," so that the University makes a corporate contribution to the national effort. They have their acknowledged place in socialist society in war as in peace time.

Universities as Part of Developing Socialist Society.

The ease with which the Soviet universities have been integrated into the national war effort, whilst maintaining their function of preserving the academic achievements of the country, is readily understandable to those who know something of the aims of Socialism. These are not merely to give people economic security and material well-being, but also the ability to enjoy, and contribute to, all that is best in the intellectual and cultural inheritance of mankind. In the Soviet Union, therefore, during the past twenty-three years, there has been, together with the rapid expansion of industry and agriculture, an enormous cultural revolution, demanding an ever-increasing number of teachers, scientific workers and specialists of all kinds. The Five Year Plans have catered for education, just as they have catered for industry or for transport ; cultural, scientific and intellectual achievements have gone hand in hand with material advances. Statistics showing the number of tons of steel, or the number of poods of grain above the 1913 figure, are staggering ; but statistics showing the increase in schools, libraries, or the number of literate people are even more staggering. These twenty-three years have shown what startling intellectual progress can be made, progress which the rest of the world has had barely time to appreciate, once the abilities of the whole population are used, and there is a conscious appreciation of aim. Thus Lunarcharsky, the first commissar for education, expressed these ideas when he said, " The finest conquest of Communism will be a renaissance of art and science—this is the

most sublime objective of human evolution. Marx told us that the only goal worthy of humanity is the greatest possible enrichment of human faculties."

With this as the aim for the whole country, neither the lavish amount of care, money and attention given to education, nor the keen appreciation by the rest of the population that intellectuals and students are fulfilling a very important and responsible function, and are carrying on with an extremely vital national service, is surprising.

The Road to Life Lies Open.

From birth a Soviet child is given every possible encouragement. A society which has as one of its maxims: " From each according to his ability," will certainly see to it that the " ability " of every individual is fully developed. Further, when there is an ever-increasing demand for teachers, doctors, scientists, writers, artists, musicians, actors, engineers, journalists, ballet dancers, etc., there is no need for barriers of birth, sex or economic position, to limit the training of such people ; but every encouragement is given to see that every child who may or may not have these potentialities, is given the opportunity to develop them. From creche to kindergarten, and kindergarten to school the welfare of every child is cared for by the Soviet Government. Whether he is born in the mountains of the Caucasus, the tundra of the north, or in the heart of Kharkov or Stalingrad, every Soviet child is guaranteed a full education, completely free of charge, up to the age of twelve, and by 1942 (war conditions permitting), up to the age of fifteen, a position already achieved in the urban districts. Thus from the situation in which Russia came nineteenth in order of countries for world illiteracy, a position has been reached which makes illiteracy impossible. But that is the bare minimum that exists in every single republic in the Union, in most places conditions are very much better, and the aim of having " Complete Schools "—that is, compulsory education up to the age of eighteen—has been achieved.

Apart from the most remote rural regions, therefore, there exists an equal opportunity to every Soviet child to achieve entrance to the University, for entrance depends upon merit alone. Ability and hard work provide the " open sesame " in the Soviet Union, and not the power of the purse, nor the position of the parent. Just as it is no accident that Marshal Timoshenko, son of a poor peasant, now

occupies the leading position in the Red Army ; so it is quite natural to find, in the educational sphere, leading professors, musicians and actors, who have come from similar homes. In capitalist countries it is often boasted that any newspaper boy has the opportunity to become Prime Minister ; yet it is a rare occurrence, in fact. In the Soviet Union where there is real and not sham equality of opportunity, the workers and peasants, the largest sections of the population, provide the largest number of leading men.

In Tsarist Russia the students were almost entirely drawn from the upper classes, the sons of noblemen, officials and large land owners.

Even more significant is the representation in the Soviet Universities of the non-Russian peoples, the inhabitants of the former Tsarists colonies, who previously had very poor educational opportunities and whose numbers in the Universities were severely limited. To-day in Moscow University 32.5% of the students are members of 48 different non-Russian nationalities, but it is in the backward regions themselves that achievements that appear almost miraculous have taken place. All of these nationalities, some of which were so backward in 1918 that they had no written alphabet, now have Universities and University institutes. Byelo-Russia, for example, which previously had no University, now has 22, Azerbaijan has 13, Uzbekistan 30, Turkmenistan 5, and even the dry steppe-land of the nomads in Kirghizia has 4. Georgia, a country with a very ancient culture, had only 300 students in 1918, and now has 21,800. The Ukraine alone has more institutes of higher education than the whole of Germany. All the new territories which have recently joined the Soviet Union have undergone similar changes. In one year 1,288 new schools were opened in Western Byelo-Russia, and 969 in Western Ukraine, while training colleges and new Universities have been started. Equally striking changes have taken place in the Baltic States, where for the first time, thousands of young people have the opportunity of a University education. New Universities are created and old ones transformed. During the period of Soviet rule, 1,600 students were studying at Riga University at Lvov, where formerly persecution of Jews and Ukrainians was a regular feature, and ghetto benches existed in the class-rooms, students of all nationalities were allowed equal rights, and the previous " profound and spontaneous anti-semitism " suddenly melted away. After years of poverty and depression the youth of these lands have been given new hope. It is not surprising, therefore, to read of hundreds of would-

be students of Rumania who packed their belongings and made for the Soviet border when Bessarabia entered the Soviet Union, and who have been besieging the rector of Chernovitsy University with demands for entrance. This is the living reality lying behind article 123 of the Soviet Constitution, which states:

> "Equality of rights of citizens of the U.S.S.R. irrespective of their nationality or race, in all spheres of economic, State, cultural, social and political life, is an indefeasible law."

To-day 20% of the students come from collective farms, 43% from workers' families, and 28% are children of office workers and technicians. (Cf. the English figures of under 23% students of Oxford and Cambridge coming from elementary schools). Yet wealth is not the only thing that leads to inequality; every British student knows that there is considerable sex inequality in this country, for example, the limit of 500 women students at Cambridge. In the Soviet Union, where the economic and social basis for this inequality has been removed, in every case the women have exactly the same advantages and treatment as the men. 47% of the students in the U.S.S.R. are women (compared with 25% women students in this country), and they are distributed amongst all faculties, 42% in economics and law, 47% in teaching, as high as 68% in medicine, and even 29% in the industrial faculties. Already 34% of University-trained specialists are women, and there are 60,000 women doctors and 100,000 women engineers and technicians in large-scale industry. There are 12,500 women scientific workers, and there is nothing to prevent women occupying the highest posts, as in Moscow University, where the scientific deputy-director is a woman; or entering occupations previously regarded as a masculine monopoly, such as engineering or aviation. Many of the engineers on the Moscow Underground Railway were women, and twelve women occupy the position of People's Commissar.

Is Education Still Free?

Critics of the Soviet Union have recently been very voluble about so-called "retrograde steps," which have been taken there in connection with education, presumably referring to the new decrees which came into force on September 1st, 1940. These, so the critics say, who were formerly so reticent about the fees paid at Soviet schools and

Universities, abandon the principle of free education. It is true that now a fee is charged at the University, and for the last two years of secondary education for all those students who fall below the average of two-thirds excellent, and one-third good in their work. Thus all the more intelligent students, the students who will benefit most from a University education, do not pay any fees but receive, as before, State stipends as salaries. Now, however, that a higher standard of living has been reached, and wages have been increased, it is considered fair that those receiving special benefits from higher education should contribute directly a small amount, between 8 to 10% of the total, to the enormous cost of carrying out the vast programme of educational development. Equality of educational opportunity as laid down in the Stalin constitution exists in the Soviet Union as it did before the publication of these decrees; there is no harm in demanding a small fee for education, just as there is no harm in demanding a small fee for a loaf of bread, provided the people have enough money to pay the fee and that the only means of promotion in school, and from school to University, is through the end-of-year examinations. The effects of this enormous step can be seen from the example of the Moscow State Conservatoire, where two students only from a total of 850 dropped out.

A Few Statistics.

The rapid expansion of education under Socialism can be seen from the statistics of the number of students and of Universities to-day as compared with Tsarist days. Then there were 91 Universities and 112,000 students in the whole country, whilst the latest figures show that there are 716 Universities and institutions of higher learning, with a total of 657,000 students, a considerably larger number than the collective total of students in other European countries in peace time. In addition there are 2,572 technical schools not giving University education, with 751,000 students. What this has meant for one town alone can be given from Leningrad, where between the years 1924 and 1939 there were 21 Universities and higher institutes built. In the years 1934-1938, State expenditure on the Universities increased from 986 to 2,190 million roubles per year, and the vast sum of 26,612 million roubles, representing 12.3 per cent. of the budget is being spent on the whole of education to-day. Yet this does not say that the Soviet Union has achieved its goal in the educational sphere.

It has fulfilled, and more than fulfilled its plan (Cf. estimated students for 1942, 650,000), with the present figure of 657,000, an increase of 13 per cent. on last year ; but an ever more ambitious plan unfolds as the last one is completed, and in a socialist society there is the certainty that each plan will be carried out. Thus (unless the war completely interferes with the proper functioning of schools and colleges) it is almost certain that country will have the services of the 540,000 teachers in 1943, which were planned for in 1939.

Types of University Institution.

Universities are not all of the same type in the U.S.S.R. There are:

(1) 30 Universities as such, situated in the principal cities, and each comprising a large number of faculties.

(2) Higher educational institutes or V.U.Z., giving education of university standard, but only in one faculty.

(3) The specialised Industrial Academies, giving practical and theoretical training of university standards to workers from industry.

(4) Other specialised institutes for teachers, agriculture, physical training, etc.

In addition there are correspondence courses organised by the Universities, by means of which at the present time 300,000 workers and collective farmers are studying for diplomas. Great attention is paid to the education and technical training of the skilled workers, and since September, 1940, there has been considerable expansion of the Industrial and Factory Training Schools in response to the growing demand for skilled labour from the mining, metal-working and railway industries. This training is free, and the trainees live at the expense of the Government for their two-years training course. By December, 1940, over 600 Industrial Schools, over 100 Railway Schools and over 800 Factory Training Schools had begun to work, and 4,065 million roubles will be devoted to this branch of education in 1941. The total number of higher educational institutions in the Soviet Union is between seven hundred and fifty and eight hundred. In addition to those already mentioned, there are agricultural colleges, law schools, medical schools, economic institutes, teachers' training institutes, and music, art, architecture, literature and theatrical schools.

In the Soviet Union, however, adult education is not confined to the Universities, and facilities are provided for workers to continue with their education in their leisure time. This does not only mean that these workers have the opportunity to see excellent performances of the best plays, hear fine concerts, and read as freely as possible in the factory or collective farm library, but also that special courses are organised for them, for which they are often allowed time off work. General technical training is given through the Technicums and professional schools, but preparatory courses for entrance to the University are also given in the " Rabfacs," or workers faculties. Although these are not included under higher education, they make a definite contribution to the intellectual life of the country, a country which is determined that those who wish to learn shall not be denied the opportunities, a country whose population have well been described as a " nation of students."

Who Controls Education ?

Although education naturally comes under the planning commission for the whole Union, and care is taken that the backward regions are given the means of rapidly improving, the major control is left to the People's Commissariats in the different Constituent Republics, as it is felt that the problems vary too widely to be dealt with by an All-Union Commissariat. There is, however, an All-Union Committee on Higher Education, which is directly attached to the Council of People's Commissars, and whose activities cover all Universities, higher educational and specialised institutes. The functions of this committee are general supervision over the development of the Soviet Universities ; confirmation of professorial and tutorial appointments ; the fixing of the number of students in different Universities and faculties, and the endorsement of University programmes, textbooks and courses ; the appointment and removal of University directors, heads of faculties, etc. ; the provision of refresher courses for University staff.

Working under this committee is the Supreme Attestational Committee for awarding degrees, and also departments to deal with the various types of specialised institutions, such as the Railway Institutes, Theatrical Schools, etc. These are also linked to the People's Commissariats associated with their respective subjects, for Railways, Health or whatever they are concerned with. The Committee for

Higher Education also supervises the specialised industrial academies, although these are more directly controlled by the State industrial organisations for which they train specialists.

Each University is under the control of a Rector, chosen for his or her outstanding ability, with assistants (co-rectors or deputy directors), responsible for the administrative and scientific sides. There are no barriers of sex, race or colour in the selection of the candidates for these posts. The rector is assisted by an All-University council composed of representatives of each faculty council and of the students. Each faculty council is composed of the dean of the faculty, the professors and the elected representatives of the students, and it is the place where particular problems relating to the running of courses, method of teaching, new kinds of practical work and other similar questions are discussed. It is through this council that the students can make suggestions for improving the curricula or changing the method of teaching. This is made easier as the attitude of the Soviet lecturers and professors is that they are all students, with some (the lecturers and professors) a little further advanced than others. By means of this faculty council the student is closely linked with the All-University Council, and has, therefore, considerable influence on the decisions which are taken there, a position somewhat similar to, although not identical with, the factory worker and the factory committee.

Education in the Soviet University.

The aim of all courses at a Soviet University, even the most specialised, is to produce people who have a good all-round knowledge of political and social functions, and who are thus competent to play a full part in developing Socialist Society. Economics, The History of the Communist Party, the Building of the Soviet Union, and philosophy (the study of historical and dialectical materialism) are included in the programme of study of all faculties. Further, irrespective of specialisation, for the first four years of their course, students must devote from two to three hours a week to the study of a foreign language, and must pass a final examination in this before being allowed to proceed to a special subject in their final year. At the end of this period a student is expected to read specialised literature freely and be able to converse easily in the language chosen. In the first two years lectures and seminars are given in Marxism-Leninism

as well as in political economy. In the Arts Faculty special attention is devoted to dialectical materialism, and there are courses arranged in economics and philosophy. From this it must not be thought that the students have ready-made opinions thrust upon them, nor confine their attention to the situation in their own country. The party of students who visited Moscow in 1939 were amazed at the detailed knowledge and grasp, which the Soviet students had, of the internal affairs and history of this country, and were often at a loss to answer questions ranging from details about Shakespeare's life, Christian philosophy, and the teaching of Science, to problems about modern art, films and present-day politics.

The high proportion of time devoted by the Soviet students to these general studies will appear strange to the British student, who spends three years acquiring a mass of detailed knowledge in his own subject or part-subject, and usually remains ignorant of anything beyond his own particular field. Soviet Universities aim, however, not only at turning out trained technicians and efficient specialists, but individuals who have a wide knowledge of the world, and the society in which they are to work, who will assume full responsibility of living in a democratic community, and consciously direct their work to fulfilling the aims of the Soviet Government and furthering the cause of Socialism. The narrow sectionalism resulting in erudite scholarship, but little more, which exists in our own Universities, is non-existent. In its place, there is a constant interchange between the faculties, and specialisation only takes place when the general principles and philosophy underlying the development of society have been grasped.

The method of teaching aims at making the student capable of independent thought, and although fifty per cent. of the time is occupied by lectures the remainder is devoted to seminars and discussion circles which run parallel with a course of lectures, and deal with the special problems raised in the latter. In lectures, too, however students are expected to make certain contributions, and are often called upon to prepare some specific part of the subject concerned.

The ordinary diploma course covers five years. As in this country, the year is divided into three terms, with a long vacation of two months in the summer, and 10 days vacation separating the other two terms. In the first year attendance at lectures, seminars and practical work is compulsory, and in the first year these average six

hours a day. In later years lectures are voluntary, and progressively more time is devoted to individual study and to " production practice," that is, work in the laboratories, hospitals, schools, factories, theatres, or scientific institutes according to which subject the student is studying. This practical work forms an integral part of the student's training, and from the third year occupies between 30 and 40% of his time. The university faculty is responsible for the educational control of this work, and draws up the plan of work, in connection with the works management of the concern to which the students are being sent. A tutor or lecturer is present in the workshop while the students are carrying out their " production practice," and discussion takes place on the theoretical questions arising out of the practical work done. In this way the students are kept in constant touch with the occupation for which they are training themselves, are able to estimate their own weaknesses, and understand from experience the necessity for grasping certain theoretical points.

Although discipline is strict, and the students are expected to work hard, there is an attitude of informality between students and staff which is completely unknown in our own Universities. Students freely and often consult their professors and lecturers about questions which are troubling them, and often contracts are entered into by students and staff, whereby the latter agree to improve the quality and efficiency of their teaching, and the students to raise the standard of their work—a feature worth emulating in this country. The bridging of this social gulf between staff and students has been made easier by the fact that average age of the professors and lecturers is very much lower than in Gt. Britain.

Examinations, Degrees and Research.

As University education is aimed at developing the initiative and ability of the individual student and thoroughly equipping him for some important position, less weight is attached to final examinations, and more to the progress made throughout the whole period of training than in our own country. Tests are held twice a year in three or four subjects, and unsatisfactory students, who are unable to reach the required standard are sent down before they waste too much of their own or their lecturers' time. Hence the low proportion of failures at the end of the course. Many of these tests are conducted orally, taking the form of a more formal interview than usual between student and tutor. The State examination taken at the end of the

final year has two grades—" Excellent " and " Good." Before finally graduating the student must publicly defend a thesis on some aspect of his subject, and to which most of his final year is devoted. The ordinary student does not receive a special degree, but a diploma stating his particular qualifications and speciality.

Degrees are given for independent research, and there is one corresponding to our M.A. and another of Doctor of Sciences. Research studentships or " Aspirantships " last for a fixed period of three years, at the rate of 400 roubles per month, with an additional 200 roubles for those who do part-time lecturing. In the 1941 budget the expenditure on research was 1,651 million roubles, and there are about 15,000 research workers in the Soviet Universities. Research is co-ordinated, organised and distributed by a special committee working in contact with the different Peoples' Commissariats, which state the problems which have to be studied. Thus as far as it is possible research work is planned, and no facilities are lacking for the student who wishes to follow this course. In order to become a candidate of Science, the Aspirant has to defend a thesis before the other members of his faculty. The status of lecturer is then conferred on the candidate, who can then do tutorial work or carry out further research. The Doctor's degree is given for original research and carries with it the status of Professor. The principle of promoting young people boldly to important positions is followed here as in other spheres of Soviet life. Just as the promotion of Marshal Timoshenko to Commissar for Defence, whilst relatively young compared with generals from other countries, is here considered exceptional, so the youthfulness of many of the leading Soviet professors would probably cause much surprise in this country. At Moscow University, S. Sobolev, Professor of Mathematics, is 29 years old, Fyodorov, Professor of Geography is 28, and G. Alexandrov, Professor of History and Philosophy, is 29. (1939 figures.) Yet this should not be mistaken for concluding that these positions are valued lightly in the Soviet Union. Research workers and University teachers are treated with the highest respect by all, as can be shown immediately by glancing at the recent list of Stalin prize-winners.

Careers and Employment.

But what of the other students who do not qualify for these academic positions ? Have they then to spend time and worry in find-

ing themselves a job ? Are they faced with the problem well-known to students in this country, of taking some mundane occupation for which they have not been trained, or of spending even more time on further specialised training, having discovered that their time at the University has not really equipped them for any useful position ? From what has been said earlier, in relation to the course followed by the student while at a University, it must be clear that such a position is impossible. In contrast to this country, where graduate unemployment and mis-employment has been a problem for some years, in the Soviet Union there is a situation in which there is an ever-increasing demand and unlimited scope for every type of trained personnel. The available specialists are, therefore, carefully looked after and assigned to positions where they are in most urgent demand.

At school, information is available on all the varied careers open to Soviet youth. At the beginning of each University year all freshers are given a talk by the Professors as to the nature of the course and the various possibilities of employment. As the first two years at a University are devoted mainly to general education, the student has some time in which to think about the future, and is helped by the staff to decide upon the final branch of work in which he intends to specialise. The particular qualifications of each student are noted by the tutors and lecturers, and the final decision is only reached after considerable discussion between the student, the staff, and the People's Commissar for the particular branch of work for which the student has been studying. For the last few years the student works consciously to fit himself for a particular occupation, and six months before graduating he knows where he will be working, and is thus able to acquaint himself with the peculiar features and problems of the school, factory, farm or laboratory in question.

It is impossible to enumerate all the many possibilities that lie before the Soviet students when they are choosing their future. Wide vistas of opportunity are provided in almost every subject ; flats, theatres, rest homes, etc., for the architect to design ; roads, railways, bridges, new plants, and new aeroplanes for the engineer to build ; millions of children requiring longer and longer years of education for the teachers ; experimental crops to be tried out by the agricultural student. In every subject almost boundless possibilities exist for each and every student. Nor have years of uninteresting work to pass before he is considered old enough to assume responsible positions. Ability and talent, and not age, are the qualifications for such jobs.

Thus in 1938, on leaving the University 2,127 young specialists were sent to leading work, and were given posts as directors and head engineers in factories and plants, directors of State farms, schools, hospitals and laboratories. The fact that 284 of the deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. are under 30 years old shows still further possibilities which lie before a student who has made full use of his time at the University.

Student Life and Recreation.

Most of the students live in communal hostels, for which they pay a fixed rate of 7% of their stipend (this compares with the normal Soviet procedure that rent shall not be more than 10% of the workers' salary). This figure includes furniture, laundry, heating, lighting, etc. Attached to the living quarters and to the Universities are dining rooms and canteens, where meals of excellent quality are given at reduced prices, clinics, barbers' shops, book shops, post-offices, laundries, boot repair shops, baths, showers, creches, libraries and clubrooms. These latter include reading and rest rooms, billiard rooms, chess rooms as well as theatres and concert halls. In many towns University Cities have been built where thousands of students live in a single community.

The health of the students is very carefully looked after by the State. Like the rest of the population, they receive all medical attention and hospital treatment entirely free. Students are given a medical examination on entry and receive further medical and dental treatment as required. Every University has its own rest-homes and sanatoria for students and staff, expenditure on which in 1937 was 23,000,000 roubles. Many students spend at least a month of the summer vacation in such rest homes (in 1938 over 60,000 students visited such rest-homes, and about 6,000 received medical attention in sanatoria). In addition there are one-day rest-homes, where thousands of students relax on their weekly free day. Student travel is assisted throughout the length and breadth of the Soviet Union, both in the form of scientific expeditions and for holidays. In 1938, the various Trade Unions spent about a million roubles in providing such holidays for students. Moscow students took part in an archæological expedition of that year which made excavations in Novgorod, which resulted in the discovery of an XIth-century pipe-line, 600 years older than any pipe-line previously discovered.

Students have also participated in explorations to the Arctic and the Caucasus mountains.

Sports and physical culture are highly encouraged in Soviet Universities. For the first two years of the diploma physical training forms an integral part of the course, and recent decrees state that the physical training courses have been intensified. Entry to all sports is free, and equipment is provided and expenses paid from the University budget. In addition to the more ordinary sports of swimming, tennis, football and skating, there are more unusual sports which are popular with Soviet students such as flying, gliding, parachute jumping and shooting. World famous sportsmen have come from Soviet Universities.

Further opportunities for recreation are given by the numerous student clubs, choirs, dramatic groups, literature societies, etc. Many Universities have their own cinema, and are able to have special film shows, and most Universities have their own theatre, where leading companies are able to perform.

Before the German invasion, students whilst at the Universities were exempted from military training. Teachers in rural areas and specialists in industry were completely exempt, as they are too valuable to be spared for the armed forces. However, there is a widespread popular movement for voluntary military education through the Society for Chemical and Aerial Defence, which has units in all Universities and Institutes, and most students compete for the "Voroshilov Shooter" badge. Now, however, nearly all the students are members of the People's Volunteer Corps.

Marriage.

A feature of Soviet Universities which always impresses the visitor is the large number of students who are married. Economic security while they are at the University and in the future, means that the majority of young couples marry when they are about twenty years old, in the middle of the University career. Married quarters are provided for the students, and women students who become mothers are allowed an extra year in which to complete their course. The students' Trade Unions provide family allowances in addition to stipends, creches and nursery schools for children of staff and students are also provided. In this way the minimum of personal

worry and anxiety is allowed to interfere with the academic training of the individual student.

Student Organisation.

As in no sense, neither politically nor culturally, nor professionally, are the students considered as a class apart, it is natural to find their chief organisations are in the Trade Unions, which include all workers in the profession for which they are studying—engineering, mining, teaching, agriculture, etc. There is, for example, the Trade Union for Educational Workers, which has as members everyone employed in schools, including cleaners, maids, etc., and also students training to be teachers. There is a special Trade Union for workers in higher educational institutions, including Universities. In each faculty there is a student Trade Union Committee (Profkom), and an all-University Trade Union Committee (Mestkom), which represents the students as a whole. These committees have roughly similar functions to the Students' Unions in Britain. They help organise students' leisure and entertainment, run the wall newspaper and news sheet (both live features of Soviet University life), and although the calls which may be made on students by outside organisations have now been limited, they still organise the students to help in the harvest and to assist in cases of emergency. The Moscow students, for example, did their share of the work of building Moscow Underground. The main difference from our Student Unions is that these Committees are represented on, and have considerable say in, the academic councils of the University and faculty.

There is no all-Union organisation of students *as* students, but there is, however, a Central Student Bureau attached to the Central Council of Trade Unions, for guiding and co-ordinating the instructors, whose special work is amongst the students. There are also frequent conferences of a regional and all-Union scale, which bring students together on a faculty basis.

In addition, there is the political organisation of the students in the Young Communist League (Komsomols), and in the Communist Party. These groups cut across faculty divisions and embrace both students and staff. The Communist Party groups, although small (in Moscow, 200 out of 4,600 students ; 107 out of 633 staff), consist of the most politically advanced individuals, and have, therefore, a

very considerable influence in University life. The Komsomols organisations are much larger (in Moscow, 2,383 out of 4,600 students; 40 out of 633 staff), and play a very big part in the life of the University, co-ordinating activity, organising meetings, and giving a general lead to all University undertakings, both academic and otherwise. Locally and nationally there are special student Komsomol Officials for the control and development of work amongst students.

A Promise for the Future.

Here then, in the heart of Soviet society, cherished by the whole population, we find Universities which can fulfil their rightful function, and be of real value to the whole community. Here for the first time we find real freedom for the intellectual development of each individual, as a contribution to the advance of the whole country, and not the imaginary freedom for a few to construct their own fantasies ; here for the first time are being put into practice those principles of education with a purpose which have inspired humanists and thinkers throughout the ages. The narrow function of preserving knowledge for the sake of knowledge, has been ended, for here the aim is to give this knowledge to the whole people. The millions of volumes of the works of Shakespeare, Voltaire, Goethe and other foreign writers, as well as of Russian classical writers, such as Pushkin, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, which are published and read annually, is only one indication of how far this has been achieved. A visit to the Park of Rest and Culture where the scientific lectures and exhibitions draw vast crowds, or to the thronged art exhibitions is but another. The British citizen feels a certain indefinable pride in the existence of our Universities ; in the Soviet Union this pride is based on the conscious realisation of the contribution which the Universities make to the life of each individual.

In this Soviet society we have, therefore, a promise of the Universities of the future, just as in the Soviet Union as a whole we see the advance guard of a new civilisation. There is no claim to perfection ; they are not put forward as the blue-prints for Universities all over the world. As in everything else under socialism, the Soviet Universities are still experimenting, still improving, still expanding. But here there is a wider conception, a fuller realisation, a completely new interpretation of the function of a University and of its position in society, which cannot be ignored. May it not contain

the solution to the problems which succeeding generations of students in this country have grappled with ? Cannot we too, build a similar society in which the Universities may reach their full fruition ?

To-day there is much we can learn from the Soviet students. Together with them we can show what a vast reservoir of strength the Universities can be in the fight against Fascism ; together we can find the means of contributing to the national effort while still continuing to study.

The Soviet students will not have the difficulties which students in this country have had to face. They will be free from the personal conflicts which often confound the individual student in this country ; they will be free from the ever present questions that beset the British student: " Couldn't I be doing something else ? Is this really useful work of national importance?" The Dnieper dam has gone, fine new factories have been sacrificed, but in the U.S.S.R. the student knows that the Soviet Government will jettison the minimum of the social, scientific and cultural achievements which the Soviet people are so finely defending against the Fascist aggressors. In the Soviet Union, too, the students will not have to solve the problem which confronts the British students of bridging the gulf which separates them from the rest of the population, and of having to prove their worth, for there they will automatically be given responsible work of national service, which will bring the minimum of interference in academic work.

The great army of Soviet students, who are firmly convinced of their role in this struggle will be of enormous assistance to the British students in solving their own problems. There is a common aim and common function ; the interchange of ideas, of suggestions, of news of achievements will be of mutual assistance in the heavy responsibility that is shared equally by both countries, the responsibility of preserving the intellectual inheritance of mankind, the vast wealth which humanity has created, against its greatest enemy, Fascism. The realisation of this responsibility is shown by this message sent by all the students of Moscow University to the students of Cambridge :

" Our Universities have always been united by a common aspiration towards science and progress ; towards the struggle against barbarity and darkness. These ties will grow stronger in

the common struggle against Fascism. History has entrusted the peoples of Great Britain and the Soviet Union with the momentous mission of rescuing world civilisation, science and culture. Let us then give our all to this noble aim and honourably perform our duty to future generations."

[*Much of the information included in this pamphlet was obtained by a party of British students who visited the Soviet Union in the summer of* 1939.]

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