



Vocational Education in Soviet Russia

by

B. A. NIKOLSKY.

The importance of vocational education was not recognised in Russia until a comparatively recent period, and before the war the numbers of vocational schools and of pupils attending them were still far from adequate. When the Soviet Government came into power in November 1917, it at first took no interest whatever in questions of special or purely vocational education. Its first object was to give workers and poor peasants a full and general education, intended to fit the young worker to enter any occupation. The results of this reform were negative so far as concerns vocational education. Far from increasing, the number of technical schools decreased. The already serious shortage of skilled labour became acute. At last, under the influence of the trade unions, the Government decided to reform its policy, and in 1920 it formed a General Committee on Vocational Education, which has organised a vast system to eradicate "technical illiteracy". The machinery of this reform and its results will be described in the second part of this article, which will appear in the next number of the Review.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

DURING the latter half of last century there was a steady development of industry in Russia, and not until then was vocational education, which is directly related to industrial progress, recognised as a problem of vital importance.

The first secondary technical school, known as the Komissarov, was opened in Moscow in 1865, between which date and the Revolution a network of vocational schools was set up by both government and private initiative, the latter playing a great part.

Excluding territories no longer belonging to the Soviet Union, the total number of pupils attending a vocational school in 1914 may be estimated at close on 165,000, a very modest figure as compared with the seven million pupils in all public educational institutions. The first and obvious conclusion is therefore that before the war the number of institutions for vocational education and of pupils in them was quite inadequate.

TABLE I : VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN RUSSIA BEFORE
THE REVOLUTION

Type of education	Organising authorities or nature of studies	Number of schools	Number of pupils
I. Elementary vocational and technical education of all kinds	Ministry of Education	227	17,128
	Ministry of Trade and Industry	142	14,326
	Ministry of Agriculture	314	12,301
	Other Ministries	65	8,100
	Special trade courses in ordinary town schools	—	10,000
	Total	725	61,365
II. Secondary vocational education	Ministry of Education	173	26,630
	Ministry of Trade and Industry	218	36,919
	Ministry of Agriculture	18	3,430
	Total	409	63,879
III. Higher education	Arts	22	43,580
	Medicine (plus 7 university faculties)	2	9,522
	Industrial technology	12	21,500
	Agriculture	14	7,840
	Total	50	82,442
Total number of institutions and pupils		1,184	207,686

If the different types of education are compared, it will be seen that the secondary schools led with their 63,879 pupils, as against 61,365 at the elementary schools, including about 10,000 in the ordinary schools attending special trade courses. The Act of 7 March 1888 had defined the object of the elementary vocational school as the training of skilled workers and foremen. It must therefore be concluded that Russian industry made very little use of technical education in recruiting this grade of skilled worker ; the training of future foremen was mainly left to practice of the trade. On the other hand, the certificates issued by the secondary technical schools were, if not indispensable, at least extremely useful to the future technician. In general these schools were very well organised and equipped, but there were not enough of them.

The instruction given in the technical colleges was excellent. often, indeed, the theoretical side was over-emphasised to the detriment of practical training. The courses and curricula were overloaded, and the course of study lasted five or six years, so that it was hardly possible to obtain an engineer's diploma before the age of 24 or 25. The number of engineers in Russia was very inadequate, but the disproportion between supply and demand was even greater with assistant engineers and technicians, who were urgently wanted in every branch of industrial activity.

A characteristic feature of the system of vocational education was the absence of co-ordination. The technical schools were not all under the Imperial Ministry of Education; several Ministries, such as those of Commerce, Agriculture, and Public Works, had their own system of technical schools managed by small independent departments. This led to a lack of uniformity in management and a certain rivalry between the different Ministries. This rivalry, however, was not without some advantages. Too often the Ministry of Education was hampered by financial restrictions, so that the technical schools outside its jurisdiction were sometimes the best organised and most flourishing.

Another characteristic of Russian technical schools, as of the ordinary schools, before the war was the lack of continuity; there was no link between the elementary and the secondary schools, or between these and the technical colleges. Each type of school was intended to give more or less complete instruction to different grades of technical workers, without opening the way for them to a higher type of school. On the other hand, there were no obstacles to prevent youths of the working classes from continuing their education in secondary vocational schools or technical colleges except financial ones — the school fees and the cost of living in a large town.

Such, in brief, was the situation confronting the Soviet Government in October 1917. The evolution of vocational education in Soviet Russia may be divided into two quite distinct periods: the first from the Revolution of November 1917 to 1920, the second after 1920.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FROM NOVEMBER 1917 TO 1920

During the first of these two periods the authorities took no interest whatever in questions of special or purely vocational

education. At first the attention of the Commissariat of Education was concentrated on destroying the school system it had inherited¹. Subsequently,

Being entirely obsessed by the idea of the "unitary labour school" (i.e. the radical reform of the ordinary schools), the Commissariat categorically opposed any attempt to introduce special tuition before the two grades of the ordinary schools had been completed. The only kind of special instruction allowed at that time was that given by the Technical College. Thus the Commissariat of Education failed to recognise the vital importance of vocational education, which was not given its proper place in the system of public education until after many misadventures and difficulties².

"It is the object of the Government to give workers and poor peasants a full, general, and free education." This was the school programme formulated in the first Constitution adopted by the fifth Soviet Congress on 10 July 1918³. It was to cover, first, the "unitary labour school" created by the Decree of 16 October 1918, and, secondly, the reform of higher education.

The Unitary Labour School

The main provisions of the Decree of 16 October 1918⁴ concerning the unitary labour schools were as follows :

(1) The previous subdivision into elementary and secondary schools (in both ordinary and special education) was abolished.

(2) All elementary and secondary schools were to be attached to the Commissariat of Education⁵.

(3) Schools of every kind already in existence were to be replaced by "unitary labour schools" with two grades, the first admitting children from 8 to 13 years (5-year course), and the second young persons from 13 to 17 (4-year course) (section 2).

(4) Attendance at the courses of both grades was made compulsory for all children of school age (section 4).

(5) Instruction was to be free, common to both sexes, and secular, all religious instruction being prohibited (section 6).

The school reform of 1918 put an end to the variety of ordinary

¹ See : "Vocational Education in Russia from 1917 to 1921", in the Official Jubilee Survey (Gosiadat), p. 7. Moscow, 1921.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³ Collection of Laws, 1918, Section 582.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Section 812.

⁵ This had been already ordered on 23 February 1918 (Collection of Laws, 1918, Section 367), but the rule had to be repeated several times, and was not successfully enforced until 1920.

schools and of their teaching staff, creating instead a single type of elementary and secondary school, known as the unitary labour school. The term "unitary" implied not only that all the schools would in future be centralised, but also that the two grades would form the two halves of a single system of instruction, the upper grade being the direct complement of the lower. The term "labour" was explained by the Decree of 16 October 1918 (section 12) as follows:

Productive labour should be the basis of all the work of the labour school, not to meet the costs of the school, nor as a pedagogic method, but for intrinsic reasons of social necessity. It should be closely bound up with any process of instruction which diffuses knowledge of the sciences. As it grows steadily more complex and goes beyond the child's surroundings and conditions of life, productive labour should acquaint him with the different forms of production, including even the most advanced of these.

At the same time the labour school was to give general ("polytechnic") instruction in both upper and lower grades (section 13). "Polytechnic" education was defined in Section I of Part 12 of the Communist programme adopted by the eighth Soviet Congress in March 1919 as "a method of instruction which gives both theoretical and practical knowledge of all the chief branches of production".

In pursuance of these legislative measures, the Commissariat of Education proceeded to revise the curriculum of the new type of school. The most important change was the total abolition of all religious instruction. The syllabus of other courses could not be changed so suddenly owing to the lack of new text books, and the modification of curricula and teaching methods was only gradual. The new spelling, however, came into force on 23 December 1917¹.

Reform of Higher Education

The object of the measures concerning higher education adopted by the Government during the period 1917 to June 1919 was first to make such education accessible to larger numbers of the population, and secondly to reduce the obligations of the students to a minimum.

By a Decree of 2 August 1919² higher education was declared

¹ Collection of Laws, 1917, Section 170.

² *Ibid.*, 1918, Section 632.

free and open to any person of not less than 16 years of age, no proof of previous education being required for admission, but simply a certificate of identity.

A Decree of 27 November 1918¹ introduced special entrance examinations for colleges giving practical training, so that persons with insufficient grounding could be separated out and given special preparatory courses. But these examinations were soon abolished by a Decree² instructing the councils of Starosts (elected by the students) themselves to make this first classification. At the same time a further Decree³ abolished the state examinations for the diploma of higher education and all end-of-term examinations. The latter were to be replaced by tests to be given at any date chosen in agreement with the teacher.

The Decree of 10 July 1919⁴ abolished the councils of Starosts, and entrusted the classification of candidates for admission to colleges to organisations of students belonging to the Communist or any other Party which had recognised the Soviet Government. There was no appeal against the decision of these organisations. In effect, therefore, it was only necessary to satisfy the requirements of a committee of Communist students, after which the pupil was free to follow his own plan of study.

The curricula of the colleges were changed very little during the first few years (1917-1919) of the Soviet régime. The main changes were in the type of pupils and the abolition of fees.

Workers' Faculties

In addition to these measures, which were intended to open the doors of the colleges to all by changing the conditions of admission and organisation, the Soviet Government set up special "workers' faculties" attached to the colleges for the sole purpose of preparing workers and peasants for the college courses. In theory at least the curriculum of the workers' faculties differed very little from that of the ordinary secondary schools. Their main purpose was to give higher education outside the general system. Hence the special nature of their curriculum, aiming simply at filling the gaps in the knowledge of pupils which prevented them from attending the colleges proper.

¹ *Ibid.*, Section 771.

² *Ibid.*, Section 863.

³ *Ibid.*, Section 885.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1919, Section 347

By the Decree of 17 September 1919 pupils in the workers' faculties were given the same rights as students. The faculties were open to workers and peasants holding a certificate from their works committee or a Communist group to show that they actually belonged to the proletariat, that they did not exploit the labour of others, and that they supported the Soviet system (section 12).

Practical Results

The effects of the school reform of 1918 on vocational education were mainly negative, for the central authorities, in their hope that the new labour school would completely replace all technical schools, neglected the latter altogether and made no change in their curricula and methods of instruction. In the Regulations for the administration of the Decree on labour schools, technical and vocational schools were not even mentioned as institutions to be transformed into such schools. The absence of special provisions was often interpreted in the provinces as implying that vocational schools, too, were to be transformed into labour schools. This led to the closing down of vocational schools, often very well organised, and their place was not filled by other institutions. Thus a number of technical schools were closed in 1918-1919, at the very time when the number of persons entitled to admission grew by the simple fact that vocational training was made free and open to all.

As an official of the Commissariat of Education stated in 1920¹ :

Vocational education has suffered tremendously from the mistakes made in the provinces in applying the principle of the unitary labour school ; the elementary and secondary technical schools suffered most. Urgent steps had to be taken in 1919 to put an end to these abuses, but many schools had already disappeared.

Mr. Lunacharsky, in the first statement on vocational education made by the Commissariat of Education, said in July 1919 :

It is regrettable to have to state that owing to an unfortunate misunderstanding many very useful and excellently equipped technical schools have been closed and replaced by ordinary labour schools.

Positive results from the school reform and the realisation of the hopes placed in the labour school were dependent on two

¹ Report of the Second Session of the "Sovprofobr" (Vocational Education Council), p. 61. Published by the Gostidat, 1921.

conditions. In the first place the new schools had to be brought into touch with production itself, i.e. with factories or apprenticeship workshops and well equipped technical laboratories ; and secondly an adequate teaching staff would have to be recruited, able successfully to carry out the proposed scheme of general technical training. Under the circumstances prevailing in 1918, when the reform was introduced, neither of these conditions could be fulfilled, and the reform thus remained a dead letter.

Criticisms

By 1919 this failure began to be realised, and there were vigorous criticisms of the decisions of the Commissariat of Education on vocational education, criticisms which led to a speedy and radical change of policy. The initiative was taken by the trade unions, before whose increasing opposition the Commissariat had to give way. The Commissary himself, Mr. Lunacharsky, admitted¹ that " from its inception the Commissariat had undoubtedly made a mistake in completely abolishing the special Board for technical and vocational education "².

The labour school was an institution for giving general technical education in a labour state, and was intended to equip all young persons of 17 years of age with the power to do good work. In addition it was to open the way to higher education for all who wished to continue their training. This was the fundamental purpose of the authors of the 1918 school reform. According to Mr. Lunacharsky, the introduction of general technical education in the ordinary elementary and secondary schools, which was the very kernel of school reform, was the main principle of socialist pedagogics. In a statement in June 1919, he urged that :

Even if the welfare of the state were imperilled, it would be a denial of every principle of socialism, which is the defender of personality and aims at creating a universal man, to condemn children to bear on their young brows the brand of specialisation, an indelible brand to be a curse throughout their lives. As long as the bourgeoisie regarded the mass of the workers and peasants as mere cattle, it could at will brand their children as shoemakers, carpenters, or stokers. We, on the contrary, must give the youth before he reaches the age of seventeen an education which will open all paths to him.

Mrs. Krupskaya, at the third Trade Union Congress in 1920, said that specialists with their limitations were not wanted in

¹ Cf. his article, " All Russia ", in the *Official Survey*, 1923, p. 305.

² Set up in the Ministry of Education in 1883.

production. The chief aim of vocational education should be to develop general capacities for work. Specialisation was needed in industry, not in the worker.

On the same occasion another advocate of these views said :

A plunge into a system of narrow specialisation will lead not to the raising but to the demoralisation of the proletariat ; it will create not a Communist State but one where everyone is a locksmith.

This theory did not meet with unanimous approval. The views of the opponents of the principle of general technical education were very clearly formulated by Mr. Schmidt, Mr. Lunacharsky's deputy on the Vocational Education Committee set up in 1920. At the second meeting of the Vocational Education Council (known as the Sovprofobr), held in 1920, he said¹ :

In the works of Marx there is a statement, written seventy years ago, that vocational education should give way to general technical education. This is the reason why it has been continually to the fore since the creation of the Commissariat of Education, but the accuracy of the principle has never been examined in spite of its notable sponsors. The outcome is absurd. It is absolutely impossible to cram into a child's head all the multitude of facts about all the main branches of industrial production.

Mr. Solnikov, an ordinary metal worker, expressed his views as follows at the third Trade Union Congress :

We cannot blindly follow the Commissariat of Education. When at a congress I heard the representative of that Commissariat say that one could not be a boilermaker for ever, I said to myself that the Commissariat's scheme was impracticable.

The above quotations give some idea of the differences of opinion between the advocates of general and those of specialised training. In 1919 the latter party gained a decisive victory, for two main reasons : first, the lack of positive results from the school reform, and, secondly, the acute shortage of skilled labour. According to Mr. Rykov " the authorities had the greatest difficulty in finding the twenty or thirty skilled workers who were sometimes absolutely essential for the production of the munitions needed by the Red Army ".

The shortage of skilled labour was primarily due to the war, as the mass of young workers went into the army. There was further an exodus from the towns to the country as soon as a shortage of food began to be felt. Finally, a large number of

¹ Report of the Second Session of the Sovprofobr, p. 120.

skilled workers, especially the more efficient, were absorbed by central or local government offices, the more important posts being given to the most faithful supporters of the new régime.

As soon as the Government became aware of the crisis, it issued the order "Back to the factory", and took steps to restore equilibrium. It fully realised, however, that these steps were only palliatives, and that the real remedy for the shortage of skilled labour was to provide a new supply of skilled workers. Industry itself, where production had already fallen to 25 or 30 per cent. of the normal figure, was unable to fill the gaps as in the past. The urgent need of reform in vocational education as the only means of training the necessary labour therefore came to be recognised. This was the consideration which finally led to a decision in favour of the advocates of reform.

The question was included in the agenda of the second All-Russian Trade Union Congress held in January 1920. The report on vocational education submitted to the Congress, which led to heated discussion, demanded that a special body, consisting of representatives of the trade unions and independent of the Commissariat of Education, should be set up to manage vocational schools. These extreme demands were modified in the resolution actually adopted. The Congress recognised, in the first place, that the object of vocational education may be attained if the worker is given not only instruction in skilled processes, but also a general industrial education covering industrial technology, economics, economic geography, the technical management of an industrial undertaking, etc.; and, secondly, that the control of vocational education should be centralised in the hands of a committee attached to the Commissariat of Education and consisting of trade unionists. This committee would be responsible for the management and financial administration of vocational schools and for drafting new curricula.

Thus the second Trade Union Congress, while recognising the importance of general education for the workers, considerably modified the principle of the "polytechnic" school in the direction of a return to specialised instruction. The discussion was resumed at the third Congress, which was even more definitely in favour of this view.

Thus towards 1920 the conflict between the two ideas of general and specialised technical training was settled, and the ground was prepared for the new policy in vocational education, which

combined both systems. The principal stages in the change were marked by the creation of new institutions.

New Institutions

Already in January 1919, under the influence of the second Trade Union Congress, a first step towards reform had been taken with the creation of the Vocational Education Committee¹, where trade union representatives were in the majority. At the same time a Board for the Reform of Vocational Education, organised on bureaucratic lines, was set up at the Commissariat of Education.

The work of these two bodies led on 24 April 1919 to the creation of the Department of Vocational Education at the Commissariat of Education. Unlike the Committee, it included only a small proportion of trade union representatives (two out of ten), the other members representing various Commissariats. Its progress was very slow owing to differences between the Commissariats, which, in spite of the Decrees mentioned above, opposed the centralisation of vocational education under the Commissariat of Education. According to one official publication²:

The results of this work showed that a speedy and satisfactory solution of the problem of vocational education in Russia necessitates a radical change in the composition of the central body responsible for it and the removal of all factors likely to complicate its work.

This radical change was effected when a committee, of which Trotsky was chairman, was convened by the Council of People's Commissaries at the beginning of 1920 to draw up "a uniform economic scheme", and to "organise the work of the masses". This committee drafted the constitution of two new bodies, the General Labour Committee (*Glavny Komitet Trooda*, known as Glavkomtrood) and the General Committee on Vocational Education (*Glavny Komitet professionalnago obrazovania*, known as the Glavprofobr). According to a statement made by Mr. Schmidt on 20 October 1920, a comparison of these two bodies was significant.

The function of the Labour Committee is to mobilise and organise the forces of labour; that of the Vocational Education Committee is to renew the depleted ranks of labour. This need for renewal is the origin of the Glavprofobr.

¹ "Vocational Education in Russia from 1917 to 1921", p. 8.

² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

THE GENERAL COMMITTEE ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The constitutions drafted by the Trotsky Committee were confirmed by a Decree of the Council of People's Commissaries dated 29 January 1920¹, a specially important measure as it marks the inception of a new era in the history of vocational education in Soviet Russia.

Organisation

By the Decree of 29 January the Glavprofobr, set up in the Commissariat of Education, enjoys complete financial and administrative independence. It has to organise vocational education throughout the country and centralise the work of the different departments and organisations, without hampering their initiative, but securing the necessary co-ordination. The Committee comprises a Board of Control, an Advisory Council, a Central Office, and local branches.

The Board of Control consists of five persons, appointed by the Council of People's Commissaries, under the chairmanship of the Commissary of Education. The first Board was appointed on 10 February 1920, the trade unions being represented by Mr. Koslov, one of the most ardent advocates of specialisation².

The Board is the chief executive authority. The Vocational Education Council (Sovprofobr) is attached to it in an advisory capacity. Its chairman is the Commissary of Education, and it includes a large number of representatives of the different Commissariats and various organisations³; certain members of the Board are *ex officio* members of the Council.

The Central Office of the Glavprofobr, which is at Moscow, originally had 20 divisions and 11 subdivisions, with a large staff. In 1924 the number of divisions was considerably reduced and the organisation simplified⁴.

¹ Collection of Laws, 1920, Sections 41-42.

² The programme he defended in his brochure, "The Technical and Vocational Education of the Proletariat and the Trade Unions" (Moscow, 1920), was that adopted by the Glavprofobr.

³ The second sitting of the Sovprofobr, held in October 1920, was attended by 43 voting members (only 10 representing the trade unions) and 128 members in an advisory capacity.

⁴ The number of divisions was reduced to three, i.e. for higher education, elementary and secondary education (with a subdivision for adult workers' education), and workers' faculties.

In the provinces the local branches of the General Committee are subdivisions for vocational education attached to the education departments, and these in turn form part of the soviet executive committee (Ispolkomi). The subdivision acts as the central office for each provincial government. The local bodies must keep in touch with local trade union organisations, which are thus able to exercise a certain degree of supervision¹.

The position of the Glavprofobr in the organisation of the Commissariat of Public Education was defined by the Decree of 15 February 1921²; the Central Office stands between the Office for General Technical Education (for children up to 15 years of age) and that for education outside the schools, and its functions are extremely wide. In fact, all schools open to adults over 15 years of age, including all kinds of colleges, are treated as vocational schools in the Decree and consequently come under the Central Office.

Work of the Committee

The creation of the Glavprofobr had a considerable influence on the system of vocational education. According to an official document published by the Moscow Education Department³: "Just as formerly this question was pushed to the background in the policy of the Commissariat of Education, so now it tends to become the chief feature." This work of the Commissariat led to the création of an entirely new system of vocational education which is summarised in table II.

Of the 69 Decrees dealing with vocational education which have been issued since 1917, 54 date from this period; 10 of them relate to general questions, 36 to the technical colleges, and 8 to the workers' faculties. Of the first group, 5 are mere declarations⁴,

¹ In 1924 a special Decree had to be issued (Collection of Laws, 1924, Sections 52-497) on the co-operation of the local bodies with the trade unions, at the demand of the latter, which complained that they were completely ignored by the executive committees.

² Collection of Laws, 1921, Section 78.

³ "Data on Vocational Education", p. 7. Moscow, 1920.

⁴ Decree of 10 October 1920 (Collection of Laws, § 406) on measures for promoting the work of the Commissariat of Education.

Decree of 27 August 1921 (Ibid., § 437) on special agricultural courses for peasants.

Decree of 7 September 1921 (Ibid., § 450) on measures for improving the standard of technical education.

Decree of 1923 (Ibid., § 346/29).

Decree of 1924 (Ibid., § 369/40) on the organisation of agricultural education.

Type of education	Courses and schools	Age of admission	Previous education required	Time of classes	Total length of course	Divisions of the course		Standing acquired on completion of each successive division	Total period of training ^a required (years)
						Number	Length of each division (successive)		
Instruction for "technical illiterates"	Compulsory apprenticeship courses for workers without any technical training	18-40	—	Day and evening	—	—	—	Technical knowledge	—
Elementary	Technical vocational schools for young persons	14-16	Lower grade of a unitary labour school (5 years)	Day and evening	4 years	2	3 years 1 year	Skilled worker Master craftsman	8 9
	Industrial apprenticeship schools for young persons (<i>Fabzavooch</i>)	14		Day and evening	4 years	—	—	Skilled worker, master craftsman	9
	Technical vocational courses for adults	16		Evening	6 months to 2 years	4	6 months 6 months 6 months 6 months	Foreman Fitter Engineman Master craftsman	5 ½ 6 6 ½ 7
Secondary	Day technical courses (first year general technical education)	16	Lower grade and two classes in the upper grade of a unitary labour school	Day	4 years	2	3 years 1 year	Master craftsman Specialised engineer (after practical work)	10 11 (plus practical training)
	Evening technical courses (first year general technical education)	16	Two classes in the lower grade of a unitary labour school (Two years' work in a factory entitles pupils to begin at the third year of these courses)	Evening	6 years	4	1 year 1 year 2 years 2 years	"Vocational literate", foreman, fitter Master craftsman, engineman Technician Specialised engineer	6 7 9 11
Higher	Technical college	18	First and second grades of a unitary labour school (5 + 4 years)	Day	3 years	—	—	Managing engineer	12
	Advanced technical courses	—	Full day or evening technical course	Day or evening	1 year	—	—	Managing engineer	12
	Scientific research institutes	—	Full course at a technical college	Day and evening	—	—	—	"Expert engineer"	12
Complementary education	Workers' faculties (<i>Rab-fak</i>) attached to technical colleges or independent	18	Lower grade of a unitary labour school	Day and evening	—	—	—	Right of admission to technical college	5

¹ According to the Decree of 25 March 1923 on fees for attendance at schools under the Commissariat of Education (Collection of Laws, 1924, Section 279), instruction in all elementary vocational schools is still given free of charge (as an exception).

^a Including previous education required.

2 refer to the organisation of the Commissariat of Education¹, and 3 to special questions².

The three main features of the policy which resulted in the creation of the present system of vocational education were (1) measures against "technical illiteracy"; (2) the reform of elementary and secondary education; (3) the reform of higher education.

Technical Illiteracy

By the Decree of 29 July 1920 to eradicate "technical illiteracy" and remedy the acute shortage of skilled labour, all workers of 18 to 40 years of age who do not hold a certificate at least equivalent to that issued by the former trade schools and are not attending courses in a vocational school are bound to undergo a period of vocational and technical apprenticeship (sections 1 and 3). They must follow a full course of special classes at the factory or evening classes for a short period (section 5). In order to facilitate the enforcement of these measures, the hours of work for adults are reduced by two (making a 6-hour working day) and for young persons by four (making a 4-hour working day). Moreover, the wages of persons attending compulsory apprenticeship courses may not be reduced (sections 8 and 9). On the other hand, failure to attend these courses without sufficient reason is made illegal (section 15). The courses are held in the evening and must occupy at least 18 hours in the week (section 6).

This Decree — which must not be confused with that of December 1919³ relating to illiteracy in the ordinary sense of the word — refers only to the technical side of education. The courses in question give specialised instruction intended to acquaint the workers with the technical processes of production in the factories where they are actually employed. Persons who have completed one of these compulsory apprenticeship courses are described as "literate from the technical point of view", though they may be quite illiterate in the ordinary sense of the term.

¹ Decree of 15 February 1921, already quoted (general plan of the Commissariat of Education).

Decree of 20 August 1923 (Collection of Laws, § 73/711) concerning all kinds of schools and containing a programme of future development.

² Decree of 29 July 1920 (Collection of Laws, § 325) on the eradication of "technical illiteracy".

Decree of 25 March 1923 (Ibid., No. 24, § 279) abolishing free education.

Decree of 10 April 1924, already quoted (Ibid., § 49), concerning the co-operation of local educational authorities with the trade unions.

³ Collection of Laws, 1919, Section 592.

According to the organ of the Council of Trade Unions¹, this Decree was merely "a confused and vague statement". It would perhaps be fairer to say that it yielded no practical results, or that it is impossible to estimate its positive results, for neither the term "technical illiteracy" nor the nature of the courses was clearly defined.

The Statistical Bulletin gives the number of pupils attending these courses on 1 January 1924 as only 44,473, although, according to the statement made by Mr. Preobrazhensky to the tenth Soviet Congress², the total number of workers without technical knowledge may be estimated at about a million and a half. Even though the courses were to be short, the disproportion between the two figures is none the less striking, even apart from any corrections, which would much reduce the figure given by the Statistical Bulletin.

Various Soviet publications give some indication of the factors which hamper the enforcement of the Decree of 29 July. This "is prevented by the disagreement between the managements of the factories and the economic authorities", according to Mr. Koselov, a member of the Board of the Glavprofobr, and Mr. Kalashnikov, speaking at the second session of the Vocational Education Council³. Another cause of difficulty is the shortage of funds. It was in fact unlikely that this measure would yield much in the way of positive results, considering that the campaign against illiteracy properly so called, initiated by the Decree of 30 December 1919, had met with serious obstacles, although tenaciously pursued.

(To be continued.)

¹ *Viestnik Trooda*, No. 4, 1924, p. 118.

² Mr. Preobrazhensky stated that about 2½ million workers were employed in industry (including transport), and only one million were skilled. "In order to make up for the loss of labour due to deaths, the schools should be able to give instruction to about 350,000 young persons."

³ Report of the Second Session of the Sovprofobr, pp. 77-78.