Action to Ensure that Soviet Citizens Enjoy Equal Rights and Opportunities

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THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS succeeded Tsarist Russia as a result of the October Revolution of 1917. It covers an area of about 8.6 million square miles, measuring some 3,000 miles from north to south and 6,200 miles from east to west, and includes an extraordinary variety of natural conditions and climate, ranging from the frozen northern wastes to sub-tropical luxuriance.

This vast area is at present populated by some 238 million people, made up of 130 different nationalities, with their own languages, cultures, economies and ways of life. There can hardly be another country in the world with such extreme ethnological diversity.

At the same time this population is socially very homogeneous, being made up of workers, officials and peasants working on collective farms, in the following proportions (the figures given include non-working dependants) [2]:

Workers and employees (officials)	77.34 per cent
Peasants grouped in co-operatives (collective farms)	22.63 per cent
Peasants not working on collective farms	0.03 per cent

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For other articles concerning equality of opportunity in various countries see John E. MEANS: " Fair employment practices legislation and enforcement in the United States ", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 93, No. 3, Mar. 1966, pp. 211-247; R. A. MÉTALL and M. PARANHOS DA SILVA: " Equality of opportunity in a multiracial society: Brazil ", ibid., No. 5, May 1966, pp. 477-508; P. M. MENON: " Towards equality of opportunity in India ", ibid., Vol. 94, No. 4, Oct. 1966, pp. 350-374; " Correcting racial imbalance in employment in Kenya ", ibid., Vol. 95, Nos. 1-2, Jan.-Feb. 1967, pp. 61-77; " Equality of opportunity and pluralism in a federal system: the Canadian experiment ", ibid., No. 5, May 1967, pp. 381-416; and " Cultural pluralism, equality of treatment and equality of opportunity in the Lebanon ", ibid., Vol. 98, No. 3, Sep. 1968, pp. 225-244.

[2] *Trud v SSSR: Statistichesky sbornik* (Moscow, 1968), p. 3.

Town-dwellers account for 55 per cent of the total [1], and half the workers and employees are women.[2]

These data show that for the USSR the problems involved in trying to ensure equality of rights for its citizens, irrespective of national origin, sex or social position, were never abstract in the past; nor (as far as the task of ensuring equality in fact is concerned) is there anything abstract about them today. What sort of problems are involved? How have they been tackled in the past? And how are they being tackled today? This article is an attempt to answer these questions.

The foundations of equality

Tsarist Russia was politically, economically and culturally a backward country. Two-thirds of the population were peasants. The workers represented no more than a fifth of the total. Their conditions of life were difficult in the extreme.

The non-Russian peoples were subject to all sorts of restrictions based on religion or national characteristics. They were not allowed to live outside certain areas (" pales of settlement ") and their access to education was restricted.

The " Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia ", which had been written by V. I. Lenin, the founder of the Soviet State, and adopted by the Soviet of People's Commissars on 15 November (2 November) 1917 [3] laid the foundations for a multi-national socialist State which was to replace the Russian Empire. The Declaration laid down the following fundamental principles as the basis for the national policy: *(a)* equality and sovereignty of all peoples of Russia; *(b)* the right to self-determination, extending to separation and the formation of independent States; *(c)* the abolition of all privileges and restrictions based on nationality or religion; *(d)* the free development of the national minorities and ethnic groups living within the frontiers of Russia.

As regards the introduction of equal rights for all citizens, the decree " abolishing estates and civil ranks ", dated 23 November (10 November) 1917, is of special interest. This enactment abolished " all estates and official classes hitherto existing in Russia, and the division of citizens by estate or class, together with estate or class privileges, restrictions, organisations and institutions, and all civil ranks and distinctions". It did away with all ranks and titles and laid down that there should be but one " title for the whole population of Russia—that of Citizen of the Russian Republic ".[4]

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[1] *Trud v SSSR : Statistichesky sbornik*, op. cit., p. 19.

[2] Ibid., p. 76.

[3] *Istoria Sovetskoy Konstitutsii, 1917-1956* (Moscow, Gosyurizdat, 1957), pp. 57-58. Here as elsewhere the dates in parentheses are given according to the old Julian calendar.

[4] Ibid., p. 63.

The decree "on civil marriage, children and the keeping of records of births, marriages and deaths", dated 31 December (18 December) 1917, marked a very important stage in the introduction of equal rights for women.[1]

The decree promulgated on 2 February (20 January) 1918 by the Council of People's Commissars "on the separation of the Church from the State and of schools from the Church" [2] is a major landmark in the campaign against discrimination on the grounds of religion. It forbade the enactment of any local laws or resolutions which might in any way restrict freedom of conscience or establish advantages or privileges for citizens on account of their belonging to a certain religion. Section 3 runs: "A citizen shall be free to belong to any confession or to none; any restrictions placed on a citizen's rights because of his belonging to a particular confession or his failure to do so are hereby abolished." And in a comment to this section it is underlined that "any reference to a citizen's belonging or not belonging to a particular confession shall be struck out of all official Acts".

On 10 June 1918 the All-Russian Congress of Soviets adopted the first Soviet Constitution, the Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), laying down the principles on which the various parts of the country, distinguished by their non-Russian populations and distinctive way of life, should be federated. The Constitution proclaimed freedom of conscience (article 13), freedom of opinion (article 14), freedom of assembly and procession (article 15), freedom of association for the workers (article 16), and free access to knowledge by means of the free and full education which would be provided for the workers (article 17). All citizens, the Constitution proclaimed, had a duty to work, and it coined the slogan (article 18): "No work, no food."

Article 22 of the Constitution said that the RSFSR in proclaiming equal rights for every citizen, independently of race or national origin, considered that privileges or advantages based on such criteria, and any oppression of national minorities or attempt to deprive them of equal rights, ran counter to the fundamental laws of the Republic.[3]

This first Soviet Constitution thus laid down all the basic principles which would later be systematically applied by the Soviet Government to ensure equality of rights and opportunities in the political, economic, and social life of the country.

Later on, these principles were confirmed and developed in the first Union Constitution—the Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of 1924.

In this fashion, beginning with the earliest decrees issued by the Soviets, and up to the USSR Constitution of 1924, efforts were system-

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[1] *Istoria Sovetskoy Konstitutsii, 1917-1956*, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

[2] Ibid., pp. 109-110.

[3] Ibid., p. 147.

atically pursued to lay the legal foundations on which the entire population could enjoy equality of rights in all spheres of life, including the field of social welfare.

A point not to be overlooked is that all this was going on while civil war and military intervention were raging. The economy had broken down and the country was being subjected to an economic blockade. This being so, it will be readily understood that very great difficulties had to be overcome before these principles could be put into effect. Enormous efforts were required for reconstruction and development of the national economy. A vast amount of energy was needed to make good the economic backwardness of the peoples of Russia and to wrench the masses from their ignorance and illiteracy. A veritable revolution was needed in the mentality of millions of people, accustomed since time immemorial to revere authority, to despise other peoples, to be intolerant in religious matters, and to look down on women. There had, in fact, to be a clean sweep of the vestiges left by the past.

Before real equality of rights could be ensured for the many nations and nationalities in the country, the economic foundations had to be laid. The yawning gulf between the level of economic development of the centre of the country and its outlying districts (a legacy from Tsarist times) had first to be bridged.

After the ruined national economy had been put on its feet again, a campaign of industrialisation was launched, as the most effective way of catching up with other countries. No external assistance being forthcoming, it would have been a lot easier to set up industries in the central areas first of all, since some industry already existed there, together with a supply of skilled labour. But such a course would not have been conducive to the economic equality of the component nations. Hence industrialisation proceeded throughout the country, the more developed central areas assisting the backward outlying ones.

The RSFSR provided the mainspring of industrial progress in the national Republics. Whole factories were transferred from Moscow, Leningrad and other towns in central Russia to Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and other Republics. Workers left Moscow for Uzbekistan, and Leningrad for Kazakhstan. Skilled workers, engineers, technical specialists, doctors, teachers and others went to the national Republics, where they helped to develop the local economy and to accelerate the training of skilled workers. Young people from the outlying areas went to Moscow, Leningrad and other central cities to study, and on their return home constituted a nucleus for the local educated classes.

Ethnic diversity and equality

The Government's policy concerning the non-Russian population was to ensure that nationals from the areas in question, thoroughly

familiar with the customs, mentality, way of life and language of the local people, were well represented in all organs of federal and local government and administration.

Thanks to the action thus taken, the rate of development of these hitherto backward national Republics was a good deal faster than that of the Soviet Union as a whole. As a result, in 1940 the gross national product of the Soviet Union as a whole was 7.7 times what it had been in 1913, whereas the figure for Armenia was 8.7, for Tajikistan 8.8, for Kirgizia 9.9 and for Georgia no less than 10. This meant that a substantial equalisation of the levels of economic development among the peoples of the Union had been achieved, and this in turn was a sound foundation on which to construct political and legal equality. Peoples which very shortly before had been nomads or feudal serfs, peoples amongst which illiteracy had been universal, now began to enjoy a standard of living equal to that of many developed nations. A network of schools, vocational training colleges, institutes, scientific organisations, hospitals, sanatoria, child-care establishments, theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and the like was built up from scratch.

A difficulty constantly encountered in putting through this policy with regard to the non-Russian peoples was that Tsarist colonialism and oppression of one nation by another had left its traces in the mentality of the peoples concerned. The Russians themselves, for so long accustomed to occupying a privileged position, found it hard to shake off a chauvinism that found expression in an attitude of overweening contempt for other nationalities and a narrow and ungenerous adhesion to bureaucratic practices on the part of isolated representatives of the central authorities when confronted with the needs of the outlying areas. In addition there were vestiges of nationalism among several of the peoples of the USSR which had suffered under Tsarist oppression and continued to entertain feelings of resentment; this was apparent in a certain aloofness on their part, an absence of complete confidence in the measures carried out by the central authorities. Hence a decisive struggle had to be waged on two fronts: firstly against the great-power chauvinism in the centre, and secondly against the legacy of suspicion and resentment that still existed in the outlying areas.

The practical measures designed to eliminate these vestiges took two forms. Firstly, there was a big effort of education, an attempt to get people to think internationally and to respect other nations. At the same time, specific action was taken in the field of organisation; first and foremost, a reconstruction of the higher organs of the Union so that they would be conscious of, and able to cope with, the general needs and aspirations of all the peoples of the Union as well as the special needs and requirements of the individual nationalities. To this end, the first Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1924) set up two chambers enjoying equal rights: the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of

Nationalities. It provided for the creation of supreme organs and executive bodies in each of the constituent Republics and for inclusion in the Supreme Court of the Union of the Presidents of the Supreme Courts of the Republics. Provision was also made for central decrees and ordinances to be published in the national languages of these Republics.

These principles were developed in the Constitution of 1936, article 13 of which confirmed that the USSR was a federation. The federation is made up of the fifteen national Republics, all enjoying equal rights and freely united in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics while continuing to enjoy national sovereign rights.[1]

Under article 17 of the Constitution of the USSR, each of the fifteen constituent Republics may secede from the Union with or without the assent of the Union authorities or of the other Republics.

In addition, to provide for the peculiarities of the small as well as of the large nationalities and ethnic groups, the federation comprises a status called " autonomy ". This autonomy is granted to certain districts or areas which constitute an economic unit and are inhabited by people having a particular way of life and using a language of their own.

The Autonomous Republics are themselves part of the constituent Republics of the Union, and enjoy political and administrative autonomy. There are, in all, twenty such Republics in the Soviet Union.[2]

The Autonomous Regions, of which there are eight [3], constitute the means whereby, within their territorial limits, the smaller ethnic groups exercise internal self-government. As a rule, such a province bears the name of the people who live there. The indigenous population may run to several tens of thousands of people, and the government is in the hands of the Soviet of Workers' Representatives. The organs of government conduct affairs in the national language.

The National Districts, of which there are ten [4], are administrative and territorial entities within a " province " or " territory ", and with certain special features characterising the people who live there and their way of life. Almost all are sparsely populated and it is common to find

[1] The fifteen Republics are the RSFSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the Byelorussian SSR, the Uzbek SSR, the Kazakh SSR, the Georgian SSR, the Azerbaijan SSR, the Lithuanian SSR, the Moldavian SSR, the Latvian SSR, the Kirgiz SSR, the Tajik SSR, the Armenian SSR, the Turkmen SSR, and the Estonian SSR.

[2] *Sixteen in the RSFSR :* the Bashkirian, Buryat, Checheno-Ingush, Chuvash, Daghestan, Kabardinian-Balkar, Kalmyk, Karelian, Komi, Mari, Mordovian, North Ossetian, Tatar, Tuva, Udmurt, and Yakut; *two in the Georgian SSR :* the Abkhazian and Ajarian; *one in the Azerbaijan SSR :* the Nakhichevan; and *one in the Uzbek SSR :* the Kara-Kalpak.

[3] *Five in the RSFSR:* the Adygei, Gorny-Altai, Jewish, Karachai-Cherkess, and Khakass; *one in the Azerbaijan SSR:* the Nagorny-Karabakh; *one in the Georgian SSR:* the South Ossetian; and *one in the Tajik SSR:* the Gorny-Badakhshan.

[4] These districts lie in the territory of Krasnoyarsk, and in the provinces of Archangel, Tyumen, Irkutsk, Kamchatka, and Chitinsk. Among the native peoples who inhabit them are the Aivenki, the Dolchani, the Nentsi, the Komi, the Permyaki, the Hanti, and the Buryats.

several ethnic groups within the same area. All ten districts are part of territories and provinces of the RSFSR, and lie to the north and east. Each is governed by a Soviet of Workers' Representatives.

The Constitution of the USSR, which provides for the equality of the peoples of the Soviet Union and their self-government, also ensures that they participate in the administration of the Federal State.

Thus, fifty-eight nationalities are at present represented in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Such, then, are the economic and political foundations of national equality. They are the outcome of a systematic application of the national policy proclaimed in 1917 in the " Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia ".

Sex and equality

The October Revolution completely abolished the ancient laws which had for so long kept women in subjection. From the very outset, Soviet decrees assumed the equality of men and women as regards political and civic rights. They made women equal partners in marriage, and proclaimed equal pay for equal work, an eight-hour working day for both sexes, and equal rights to social insurance. A special decree laid down that women workers should be entitled to maternity leave, eight weeks before confinement and eight weeks after, with full pay throughout.

But no legal enactment could ensure full equality of women in everyday life. A lengthy, stubborn struggle had to be fought before women were accepted as equals in fact as well as in law.

Right from the beginning, all workers were taught that both male and female workers had interests in common, and there was a constant effort to make women aware of their rights. In the course of the first few years after the Revolution special sections were set up in local Soviets to help women to surmount all sorts of domestic and family problems, give advice, organise various hobby groups for women, and bring literacy and elementary knowledge within their grasp.

It proved especially difficult to take the first steps towards the liberation of women in the eastern territories, where the general outlook was still deeply marked by feudal or patriarchal relationships, customs and prescriptions. Polygamy, the buying and selling of brides, the giving of female children in marriage, and the seclusion of women within the home were still current, and put women in the humiliating position of being treated as inferior beings. In 1925 the Central Executive Committee of the USSR launched an attack on this state of affairs by publishing a special proclamation "on the rights of female workers in the Soviet East and the need to fight against the enslavement of women in economic affairs and in family life ".[1]

[1] See *Istoria Sovetskoy Konstitutsii, 1917-1956*, op. cit., p. 490.

In areas such as these, special women's clubs were set up; depending on local conditions these were fixed or itinerant. They were clubs of a very special kind, comprising schools for teaching women to read and write, libraries, lessons in arts and crafts, kindergartens and day nurseries. Lectures were organised on problems of health and sanitation; medical and legal advice, and some instruction in domestic science, were provided. Small workshops for women were also organised.

Illiteracy was a very serious obstacle to the effective enfranchisement of women. Something like two-thirds of all the illiterates in the country were women (in the RSFSR, out of some 17 million persons totally unable to read or write no less than 14 million were women).[1] In what had been the frontier areas of the former Russian Empire almost every woman was illiterate. To overcome this problem special schools were set up throughout the country, including units dealing particularly with women. In 1921, in the RSFSR alone, 37,000 such units were created.[2] Already in 1918 free compulsory education in schools of the first and second grade had been introduced for all children of school age, whether boys or girls.

The campaign for the elimination of illiteracy among women ran into considerable difficulties in the central Asian Republics, where traditional anti-feminist prejudice was still very much alive. It was for this reason that the Central Executive Committee's ordinance, dated 7 April 1936, " on the elimination of illiteracy and semi-illiteracy in the Turkmen and Tajik Soviet Socialist Republics ", called on the authorities in these Republics to "devote special attention to the elimination of illiteracy and semi-illiteracy among women, and especially among girls ".[3] As a result of this action educational levels rose much faster among women than among men. Thus in 1959 there were 4.4 times as many women who had had a secondary education as in 1939, whereas the figure for men was 3.2.[4]

From the outset, efforts to make women really equal to men went hand in hand with action to attract female labour for productive activities. In the first few years of the Soviet régime, the desire to ensure true equality for women was as powerful a motive for such action as any economic considerations. Suffice it to say that the free, governmental employment exchanges organised in January 1918, which were responsible for effecting a planned apportionment of manpower and disappeared only with the complete elimination of unemployment at the end of 1930, also kept a record of women unemployed, and these women received unemployment allowances, just like the men, and this at a time when unemployment among men was rife. Nowhere did such a practice exist before then.

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[1] V. BILLSHAI: *Reshenie zhenskogo voprosa v SSSR* (Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1959), p. 124.

[2] *Zhenshchiny v Revolyutsii* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 35-36.

[3] *SZ SSSR*, 1936, No. 59, art. 437.

[4] *Zhenshchiny i deti v SSSR: Statistichesky sbornik* (Moscow, 1969), p. 54.

Other measures, too, were taken. For example, from 1927 onwards it was decreed that the proportion of women among the unemployed trainees taking vocational training and retraining courses in the Central Labour Institute should not be less than 25 per cent. It was also laid down that if an undertaking or organisation reduced its staff, the percentage of female employees on the staff should remain unaffected. All this was done to ensure that women enjoyed the same rights of access to employment as men. But even this was not enough. Women had to be given the same opportunity as men for access to skilled employment. The elimination of illiteracy among women and the raising of their educational qualifications had laid the groundwork for the acquisition of occupational skills. Accordingly, on 29 July 1920 the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR issued a decree [1] under which all workers, irrespective of sex, between the ages of 18 and 40, were made liable for compulsory short-term evening training courses. The trainees' working day was shortened by two hours, a reduction especially welcome to the women.

Since a good many male workers still looked askance at the employment of women, special steps had to be taken to enable them to acquire vocational qualifications. It was for this reason that the VIth Trade Union Congress (November 1924) condemned the practice, current at that time, of edging women out of factory training courses. To eliminate the practice, special quotas for women entrants were introduced in technical colleges and higher educational institutions.

To make it easier for women to study and enter productive employment, the State also assumed considerable responsibilities in connection with the care of children.

Equality of educational opportunity

One important prerequisite for equality of rights in the field of employment is that everybody should enjoy equal opportunities in respect of access to general education and vocational training.

But illiteracy had been rife in Russia, where no more than 28.4 per cent of the population could read or write [2], and in the outlying areas illiteracy was virtually complete. Hence urgent action was required in the out-of-school education of adults.

On 26 December 1919 a decree was promulgated on the elimination of illiteracy among the peoples of the RSFSR; this obliged everybody between the ages of 8 and 50 to learn to read and write, either in Russian or in his native tongue, as he (or she) might prefer. This was the signal for an intensive nation-wide campaign against illiteracy. Everywhere " likbezi " (special schools for illiterates or semi-illiterates) were set up. In 1920 an All-Russia Special Committee to combat illiteracy, with local

[1] *SU RSFSR*, 1920, No. 70, art. 325.

[2] *Strana Sovetov za 50 let* (Moscow, Statistika, 1967), p. 272.

branches, was set up within the People's Commissariat for Education. Similar bodies were created in the Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Trans-Caucasian territories. To assist these committees, a voluntary organisation was set up, called the Away-with-Illiteracy Association, composed of students, teachers, librarians, trade union militants, club organisers, and the like who had volunteered to teach the illiterate.

In this campaign a very important part was played by the fact that a written language had been created for those peoples—the Kirgiz, the Buryats, the Kalmyks, the Chukchi, the Komi, and many tribes in Dagestan and the Far North—which had never possessed one.

Between 1923 and 1939 more than 50 million illiterates and some 40 million semi-illiterates received instruction and the census returns for 1959 revealed the following literacy rates [1]:

	USSR	Countryside
Both sexes	98.5 per cent	98.2 per cent
Men	99.3 per cent	99.1 per cent
Women	97.8 per cent	97.5 per cent

It may therefore be affirmed that by 1959 illiteracy had virtually ceased to exist.

While the campaign against illiteracy among adults was under way, a national education system was being organised, which from the very beginning was based on the following basic principles: all schools and other educational establishments were run by the State, and provision was made for children to advance without interruption from the kindergarten to high school; educational establishments of all kinds were accessible to all, and all children of school age had to be educated up to a certain level; there were highly developed facilities for combining study with employment. All education was secular; everybody was equally entitled to education, irrespective of sex, race, or national origin; instruction was given in the children's native tongue. Theory was combined with practice, and study with socially useful work, appropriate to the student's age.

On the basis of decrees promulgated in 1918 and 1919 by the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR, schools were separated from the Church, and private schools and other educational institutes handed over to the State. New rules governing admission to institutes of higher education were devised, so as to make them accessible to workers and peasants.

On 16 October 1918 a decree was issued in the RSFSR introducing unified " labour schools "; these offered a nine-year course and were open to children of all classes between the ages of 8 and 17. There were two levels: level I (five years) and level II (four). Instruction was free and

[1] *Strana Sovetov za 50 let*, op. cit., p. 271.

was given in the children's native language, and boys and girls were educated together.

In 1921 there were seven-year schools alongside the secondary schools (nine-year, later ten-year). In 1923 special schools were set up in the countryside for the children of the peasantry, and in 1925 seven-year factory schools were introduced in towns and cities. Between 1919 and 1940, schools of a special type were very widespread; these were the " rabfaks ", or workers' faculties, which prepared workers and peasants for admission to higher educational establishments.

The year 1930 saw the introduction of universal compulsory primary education for children between the ages of 8 and 10. Not only was this education free of charge; the State and society gave considerable assistance to needy children in the way of free school books, writing materials, clothes, footwear, food, transport, and the like.

Thanks to all these measures, between 1930 and 1940 there was an increase of almost 10 million children in classes I to IV, and of 9 million in classes V to VII. In the academic year 1940/41, 35.5 million persons were being provided for by the general educational system.

During the Second World War schools were set up in towns and cities for young workers, and in the countryside for young peasants, to enable them to get secondary education during their spare time if for any reason they had been unable to complete their education in the ordinary way.

Universities, too, were radically reorganised. In 1914-15 there were no more than 105 institutes of higher learning in the whole of the Russian Empire. These had 127,000 students, most of them from the upper classes.[1] The majority of these establishments were in the towns and cities of the central European part of the country. There were none at all in Byelorussia, central Asia, Siberia and elsewhere.

On 2 August 1918 the Council of People's Commissars promulgated a decree laying down rules for admission to higher establishments and providing that the latter should be open to all boys and girls who had reached the age of 16. These establishments were forbidden to demand certificates of any kind, except certificates of age and identity. The decree abolished payment for the education so received and introduced a system of state scholarships.[2]

Between 1918 and 1922 higher educational establishments were opened in considerable numbers in various parts of the country: the State University of the Urals, the Turkestan State University, seven higher educational establishments in Byelorussia, five in Azerbaijan, four in Uzbekistan, and one in Armenia and Kazakhstan. By 1922-23 there were 248 such establishments in the country, with 216,700 students [3],

[1] *Soyuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik, 1917-1967*, (Moscow, 1967) p. 377.

[2] *Vysshaya shkola SSSR za 50 let* (Moscow, 1967), p. 16.

[3] Ibid., p. 24.

i.e. twice as many as before the Revolution. Later years saw a further steady increase both in establishments and in students. The following data, showing the number of students for every 10,000 people in the various Republics of the USSR, are highly significant [1]:

	Academic year 1928/29	Academic year 1938/39
USSR	**12**	**35**
RSFSR	13	36
Ukrainian SSR	12	40
Byelorussian SSR	9	31
Azerbaijan SSR	19	37
Georgian SSR	38	62
Armenian SSR	16	47
Turkmen SSR	—	19
Uzbek SSR	9	29
Tajik SSR	—	10
Kazakh SSR	0.2	13
Kirgiz SSR	—	11

At the same time the doors of higher educational establishments were widely opened to women. Before the Revolution female students in advanced technical colleges had represented a little more than 1 per cent of all students, and 5 per cent in agricultural colleges.[2] In 1928 female students in higher educational institutes of all kinds represented 28.1 per cent of the total and in 1940-41 they represented 58 per cent.[3]

If people are to enjoy equal opportunities in the field of employment and occupation the question of access to technical and vocational training is of considerable importance.

Right from the beginning considerable attention was given to the question of extending training of this kind. On 30 June 1919 the Council of People's Commissars issued a decree on measures to be taken for the extension of technical and vocational skills. In accordance with this enactment undertakings set up schools of apprentices, which played a great part in turning out young skilled workers. Between 1929 and 1940 these schools alone produced 2,350,000 such workers.[4]

As we have mentioned, compulsory technical training for all workers between 18 and 40, in vocational and technical training schools and in courses organised within undertakings, was introduced as part of the drive to raise the very low levels of technical proficiency which prevailed among the workers and to meet industry's urgent need for skilled manpower.

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[1] *Vysshaya shkola SSSR za 50 let*, op. cit., p. 51.

[2] *Strana Sovetov za 50 let*, op. cit., p. 282.

[3] *Vysshaya shkola SSSR za 50 let*, op. cit., p. 52.

[4] *Narodnoe obrazovanie v SSSR* (Moscow, 1967), p. 245.

By July 1921, 4,842 such schools and courses had been organised, attended by some 233,000 students.[1]

A ukase promulgated in 1940 by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR "on state labour reserves in the USSR" was to have a marked effect on the further development of technical and vocational training in the Soviet Union. It provided for the creation of a unified state system of technical and vocational training, to undertake the systematic training of new young workers from town and countryside with a view to providing industry with the manpower it required. Later on various changes were to be made in this system. There is at present a single nation-wide system of technical and vocational educational establishments offering courses in more than a thousand trades and occupations in all branches of the national economy.

The action taken by the State to develop the national educational system in all its forms, at the same time making the system accessible to the workers and their children, proved to be a prerequisite for, and a guarantee of, equality of opportunity in the field of employment.

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As we have seen, a series of decrees, issued during the first year of existence of the Soviet régime, gave systematic expression to the principle that all Soviet citizens, irrespective of race, national origin, religious belief, and so forth, were entitled to equal rights. But the fullest expression of the principle of equality of rights in the field of employment is to be found in the first RSFSR Labour Code of 1918.[2] In article 10 of this Code, we read: "Every able-bodied citizen shall be entitled to exercise his trade or calling." Laying down that all citizens without distinction were equally entitled to work, the Code did not and could not provide any real safeguards for this right; this was a time, be it remembered, of economic dislocation and widespread unemployment caused by civil war and armed intervention. Nevertheless the Code not only laid down that all citizens were entitled to work but also that all citizens were equally entitled to exercise their particular trade or calling. It specified that a worker could be paid only for the work he had actually done, and at a rate which would depend on how difficult, arduous or dangerous the work had been, on the responsibilities borne by the worker, and on his experience and skill. In this fashion differences in pay based on irrelevant factors (colour, race, national origin, religion, class, and so on) were made illegal. This principle was systematically embodied in all subsequent enactments concerning wages, including the new RSFSR Labour Code of 1922, the basic provisions of which are still in force today.

[1] *Narodnoe obrazovanie v SSSR*, op. cit., p. 246.

[2] *SU RSFSR*, 1918, Nos. 87-88, art. 905.

Legal standards now in force

The principle that all citizens should be equally entitled to employment is given formal expression in Soviet labour legislation, which in turn is largely based on the Constitution of the USSR and the Constitutions of the Soviet Republics. It is given concrete form in the equal rights enjoyed by all Soviet citizens in the field of labour (comprising a right to payment commensurate with the quality and amount of work done, equal rights to leisure, education and improvement of vocational skill, and the right enjoyed by every worker to decent, safe and healthy working conditions, and to support in old age, sickness, and loss of earning capacity). The fact that these rights apply to each and every worker *ipso facto* means that discrimination against any group or category of citizens is inadmissible.[1]

We must, however, bear in mind that these general rights necessarily entail corresponding obligations. There can be no talk of equal rights if obligations are not the same for everybody; if some have rights, and others obligations, then there can be no possible equality. Hence, under Soviet legislation the right to employment, enjoyed by all, goes hand in hand with a general obligation to work. The right to payment for work done entails an obligation to abide by certain labour standards and to maintain labour discipline. The right to free specialised training entails an obligation to make a definite contribution to the common weal in accordance with the training received and the skills acquired.

Among the most important clauses in the Constitution of the USSR are those proclaiming that all citizens of the USSR enjoy equal rights in all spheres of life, and forbidding discrimination in any shape or form. First and foremost, article 123 provides that—

> Equality of rights of citizens of the USSR, irrespective of their nationality or race, in all spheres of economic, government, cultural, political and other social activity, is an indefeasible law. Any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of, on conversely, the establishment of any direct or indirect privileges for, citizens or, account of their race or nationality, as well as any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt, is punishable by law.[2]

In the criminal codes of the Soviet Republics any breach of a citizen's rights on grounds of race or nationality is regarded as a crime against the State and carries very heavy penalities.[3]

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[1] Here, of course, we are not concerned with those guarantees and privileges enjoyed by women, young persons, and similar special classes of worker.

[2] *Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1967).

[3] See, for example, article 74 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR.

Article 122 of the Constitution of the USSR, which is concerned with equality of rights between men and women and forbids discrimination on grounds of sex, states that—

> Women in the USSR are accorded all rights on an equal footing with men in all spheres of economic, government, cultural, political and other social activity. The possibility of exercising these rights is ensured by women being accorded the same rights as men to work, payment for work, rest and leisure, social insurance and education, and also by state protection of the interests of mother and child, state aid to mothers of large families and to unmarried mothers, maternity leave with full pay, and the provision of a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens.[1]

Article 134 of the RSFSR Criminal Code, and the corresponding articles in the criminal codes of the other Soviet Republics, makes it a criminal offence to oppose the exercise of equal rights by women.

Article 124 of the Constitution of the USSR lays down that equality of rights shall be independent of creed or confession. It runs as follows:

> In order to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience, the Church in the USSR is separated from the State, and the School from the Church. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda is recognised for all citizens.[2]

Breaches of the law concerning the separation of Church from State, and School from Church, and any attempt to interfere with the rites of religion, constitute a criminal offence.[3]

In a special ordinance [4] issued by the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR " on the application of the Criminal Code, article 142 " (and in similar enactments promulgated in other Soviet Republics) it was laid down that refusal to recruit a citizen for work, or to admit him to an educational establishment, and to dismiss him or exclude him from such an establishment or deprive him of the rights and privileges to which he might be entitled by law, for reasons connected with his attitude towards religion, was a breach of the legislation prescribing the separation of Church from State and of School from Church, and as such was a criminal offence within the meaning of article 142 of the RSFSR Criminal Code.

Article 118 of the Constitution of the USSR bears directly on the question of the equality of rights of the citizens in the field of employment:

> Citizens of the USSR have the right to work, that is, the right to guaranteed employment and payment for their work in accordance with its quantity and quality. The right to work is ensured by the socialist organisation of the national economy, the steady growth of the productive forces of Soviet society, the elimination of the possibility of economic crises, and the abolition of unemployment.[5]

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[1] *Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, op. cit.

[2] Ibid.

[3] See articles 142 and 143 of the RSFSR Criminal Code and the corresponding articles in the Criminal Codes of the other Soviet Republics.

[4] *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR*, 1966, No. 12, p. 221.

[5] *Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, op. cit.

Article 118, besides proclaiming the citizen's inalienable right to work, thus enumerates the economic safeguards for the exercise of this right.

These general economic safeguards are supplemented by a series of special legal guarantees under which all citizens are assured equal rights in employment. Thus it is unlawful to refuse anyone employment because of his social origin or previous convictions or because his parents or relatives have been convicted [1]; it is a criminal offence to refuse a woman employment, or to dismiss her, because she is pregnant (the same applies to nursing mothers) [2]; and an employment contract is held to be null and void if by virtue thereof working conditions sink below the levels provided for by law.[3] Other guarantees are afforded by the obligation to provide persons graduating from intermediate and higher technical training schools and vocational training institutes with jobs commensurate with the special skills they have acquired; the introduction of a special quota governing the recruitment by undertakings of young people between 16 and 18 years of age [4]; the fact that undertakings and organisations are obliged to employ a worker in a manner commensurate with his skills and special trade, and may not require him to do work not provided for in his contract of employment [5]; the fact that any clause in a contract of employment having the effect of restricting the political and civic rights of a worker is null and void [6]; the need to secure a worker's consent before transferring him to other permanent work [7]; the ban on dismissals by the management in the absence of good and sufficient reason, as defined by law, and without the consent of the trade union committee [8]; the fact that the management is obliged to reinstate a worker it has dismissed without the consent of the trade union committee.[9] All these, and other guarantees exist to safeguard the right to employment.

A decision issued by the Council of Ministers of the USSR on 25 February 1960 [10] sternly condemned, as an instance of bureaucratic red-tape, the practice followed by certain enterprises and institutions of demanding from a candidate for employment that he produce documents

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[1] *SZ SSSR*, 1936, No. 31, art. 276.

[2] Article 139 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, and corresponding articles in the Criminal Codes of the other Soviet Republics.

[3] Article 4 of the Labour Code of the RSFSR, and corresponding articles in the Labour Codes of the other Soviet Republics.

[4] The quota varies from between 0.5 and 10 per cent, depending on the branch of industry concerned (*SP SSSR*, 1966, No. 3, art. 26).

[5] Labour Code of the RSFSR, art. 36.

[6] Ibid., art. 28.

[7] Ibid., art. 37.

[8] See *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, 1958, No. 15, text 282, and Labour Code of the RSFSR, art. 47.

[9] Para. 2 of the ordinance dated 30 June 1964.

[10] *SP SSSR*, 1960, No. 6, art. 33.

(such as a certificate of previous employment and of wages received, a certificate of civil status, or a reference from his previous employers) over and above those prescribed by law.[1]

In many instances the law requires a candidate for employment in a scientific or educational establishment to possess the appropriate degree or diploma. Vacancies for academic lecturers, scientists and the like are filled by competition.

It is forbidden to employ closely related persons in official positions if this means that when both are working at the same time one will be subordinate or answerable to the other.[2] Nobody may be offered official employment if he has forfeited, by verdict of the courts, his right to occupy the post in question.

Apart from these restrictions on access to employment, no other limitations, including any relating to political convictions, are recognised by Soviet legislation.

In this connection it must not, of course, be overlooked that special demands are made on persons occupying responsible positions in the machinery of State and Party. The tasks they perform and the aims they pursue are set forth by law and regulation, and they have to ensure that the nation's affairs are managed in a way which is ideologically and politically consistent. Hence their political convictions are bound to count. But the demands made on them are such that these may properly be considered as professional requirements.

Article 118 of the Constitution of the USSR lays down the important principle that wages shall be commensurate with the amount and quality of the work done. These are the only criteria; no others are admissible.

There are all sorts of ways in which, for the sake of equity, account is taken of the special features of a job. Thus, over and above the basic wage, set in accordance with an official scale, there are post adjustments, bonuses, " regional indices " to compensate for arduous climates or lack of amenities, and various supplements payable whenever conditions of work are unavoidably abnormal.

To ensure equal pay for equal work, the State undertakes the regulation of wages for all workers and salaried employees (in conjunction or consultation with the central organ of the trade unions, the VTsSPS). Scales for wages, post adjustments, incentives, bonuses, etc., and extra pay for arduous or dangerous work, are centrally defined. This in itself provides the worker or employee with a firm yardstick against which to assess his wages or salary, since the official rates will be independent of the profit or loss made by the undertaking for which he works, and thus constitutes a safeguard against arbitrary action on the part of the management.

[1] As a general rule, a candidate for employment has to produce his employment book and passport. Should the work require special qualifications, he will have to produce the requisite diploma or other document.

[2] See *SU RSFSR*, 1923, No. 1, art. 8.

In addition, provison is made for basic wages or salaries to be supplemented by various bonuses, depending on the output of the undertaking, of the team of workers to which the individual belongs, or of the individual himself.

A correct and efficient combination of basic wages and salaries with various systems of incentives ensures that workers will in fact be receiving equal pay for work equal in amount and quality.

Finally, the Constitution of the USSR offers all Soviet citizens without any distinction a guaranteed right to rest (article 119); article 120 guarantees them the right to maintenance in old age as well as in case of sickness and disability; and article 121 safeguards their right to education.

From equality in law to equality in fact

As we have already had occasion to say, to ensure that people are really equal in all spheres of activity (including employment) it is not enough to proclaim their equality—irrespective of race, colour, national origin, sex, religious beliefs, political convictions and social class—before the law. Certainly, equality of rights in the formal sense is extremely important; indeed, it is a natural stepping-stone and a logical prerequisite for equality in fact. To achieve real equality [1], we must, apart from proclaiming equal rights, provide citizens with the assurance that they will be able to exercise those rights. We have to provide legal safeguards for such rights and ensure that economic and social circumstances are sufficiently alike for all citizens for these rights to be effectively exercised.

As we have seen, from the outset and during more than fifty years of existence the Soviet State has gone beyond a proclamation of equal rights for all citizens. It has established legal safeguards for such rights. Furthermore, it has done its best to eliminate the multifarious obstacles standing in the way of real, as opposed to theoretical equality. But it would be wrong to assert that all these problems have been solved. There are still differences in the level of economic and cultural development among the peoples and nationalities which together make up the USSR; real equality between men and women has not yet been entirely achieved; there are still substantial differences between conditions of work and life in towns and in the countryside, between manual and non-manual work; and there are still differences of incomes among the working people.

Before describing these problems in detail, let it be said at once that the actual inequality still existing cannot be attributed to " discrimination "; it is not the result of legislative enactment, nor does it derive from any breach of the law proclaiming equality of rights of the citizens.

[1] We are not of course talking about absolute equality. Conditions of life are so different for every individual member of society that this is impossible of attainment. The reference here is to relative equality, based on the elimination of substantial differences in conditions of life. The minor differences which distinguish man from man, and lead to inequality, being inevitable, are impossible to eliminate.

Rather is it attributable to the fact that society has not yet reached the point in economic and social development where these inequalities can be completely eliminated. As production increases and educational levels rise, and as the socialist organisation of society becomes more complete, so will inequality gradually disappear. Its passing will be marked by the creation in the countryside of conditions of life and work in no way inferior to those existing in towns, by the abolition of substantial differences between manual and non-manual work, by greater equality in educational and cultural levels among the workers of the various national Republics, by further action to liberate women from the tyranny of household work, and by greater equality of income between the various groups of worker.

Peoples and nationalities

We have already seen that the national policy of the Soviet State has always gone beyond a campaign for the political and legal equality of its peoples and nationalities. Action has been taken to overcome the flagrant inequalities inherited from the old régime. The only way to achieve real equality was by mutual assistance and co-operation between advanced and backward peoples. It was by these means that greater equality in economic development and educational levels was brought about. Backward areas were equipped with industries of their own and helped to develop faster; local people were trained as skilled workers; large credits for development were set aside in the central budget; and so on and so forth.

A few facts to illustrate these assertions may not be amiss. Between 1913 and 1967, gross industrial production in the Soviet Union increased 73 times, whereas the equivalent figure for Kazakhstan was 114, for Moldavia 111, for Kirgizia 137, and for Armenia 136. Between 1940 and 1967 the increase for the USSR was 9.5 times, for Kazakhstan 15, for Moldavia 19, for Kirgizia 14, and for Armenia 16.[1]

Before the Revolution, in most of the areas which have now become national Republics, there were no higher educational institutions at all. Today all the Soviet Republics have such institutions turning out highly qualified specialists for the national economy. In 1967, for example, there were 28 such establishments in Byelorussia, 38 in Uzbekistan, 43 in Kazakhstan, 9 in Kirgizia, 8 in Moldavia, and 7 in Tajikistan.[2] There is an academy of sciences in each Soviet Republic. The Academy of Sciences of the USSR has its branches in the various Autonomous Republics and Regions.[3] Since the Soviet régime came into existence written languages have been devised for some fifty nationalities of the Soviet Union, and

[1] *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1967 g.* (Moscow, Statistika, 1968), p. 190.

[2] Ibid., p. 792.

[3] The Kolsky, Komi, Daghestan, Ural, Karelian, Bashkir, Tatar, Yakut, and Buryat branches.

books are now published in no less than eighty-nine languages of the peoples of the USSR. All of which witnesses to the enormous progress made in the development of the economic structure, culture and sciences among the peoples of the Soviet Union. At present, it may be said that the contrasts that used to exist between one area of the country and another, as far as economic development and educational levels are concerned, have now completely disappeared. Some differences, it is true, still exist, but they have nothing to do with national differences. That is to say, they are not bound up with national cultural peculiarities, or with national differences in mentality, way of life, custom or tradition. The problem is rather to secure an all-round rise in economic prosperity and in educational and cultural levels, and all-round development of social institutions, so as to secure equality without at the same time sacrificing national ways of life and national traditions; indeed, while giving them all possible encouragement.

From this, however, it would be a mistake to conclude that the process of securing greater economic equality amongst the national Republics necessarily entails, or has in the past entailed, the creation of absolutely every form of industrial activity in each of them. Nor does it mean that the relationship between industry and agriculture, between the extractive and the processing industries, should be exactly the same throughout the Soviet Union. Such a policy would run counter to the rational apportionment of productive energies throughout the country and would not be in the interests of Soviet society as a whole. If it had been applied, indeed, the previously oppressed and economically backward peoples would have taken even longer to catch up.

For example cotton growing has traditionally been the bulwark of the economy in Uzbekistan. Soil and climate are highly favourable and the local people have for centuries accumulated the requisite skills and experience. This being so, to curtail cotton growing for the sake of encouraging other industries would have been damaging to the economy of Uzbekistan and to that of the Soviet Union as a whole. Hence cotton growing has been developed even further as the mainstay of the local economy. At the same time other branches of industry, closely bound up with cotton growing, have been developed, such as the textile industry, the manufacture of agricultural machinery, and the production of fertilisers and insecticides. In addition, a metallurgical industry has been set up, electric power stations have been built, the manufacture of building materials has been started, there is a gas industry, and both coal and oil are being extracted.

What do we mean when we talk about ensuring equality of economic, educational and social development? The process involves, firstly, doing away with a distorted division of labour, as when certain areas are industrialised while others remain purely agricultural. In the past, Kazakhstan was such a backward agricultural area; today, it is the richest granary in

the Soviet Union and in industrial production it is surpassed only by the RSFSR and the Ukraine. Secondly, the process means that if we examine any particular industry, then the level of labour skills and productivity will be more or less uniform throughout the country. Thirdly, it involves ensuring a uniformly high level in the vocational training of workers. And fourthly, it means evening up standards of living and cultural levels among the Republics.

In this respect, what are the problems still outstanding?

An analysis of the pace of industrial growth in the USSR and in individual Soviet Republics reveals that in certain years some Republics made particularly swift advances. By 1967 the average annual increase in over-all production was gradually evening out (see table I).

TABLE I. GROWTH OF INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT, IN THE USSR AND CERTAIN SOVIET REPUBLICS, 1913 TO 1967

Republic	Average annual rates of increase in gross industrial output (percentages)		
	1913-40	1945-60	1960-67
USSR	**7.85**	**12.30**	**8.76**
Lithuanian SSR	3.60	24.18	11.92
Moldavian SSR	6.72	22.28	11.26
Latvian SSR	−0.38	23.39	9.92
Estonian SSR	0.98	20.18	9.52
Uzbek SSR	5.90	9.56	8.60
Turkmen SSR	7.30	9.44	7.42
Azerbaijan SSR	6.79	8.97	7.14

Source: *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1967 g.* (Moscow, Statistika, 1968), pp. 190 and 191.

There are differences in the rate of growth of industrial labour productivity. Thus, for the Soviet Union as a whole, labour productivity in 1967 was 417 per cent of what it had been in 1940; the equivalent figure for the Uzbek SSR was 297 per cent, for the Georgian SSR 263 per cent, for the Azerbaijan SSR 267 per cent, and for the Tajik SSR 234 per cent.[1] But it should not be forgotten that there are differences in the pattern of industrial production in the Republics that go far to explain these discrepancies.

Despite a notable rise in standards of education, some of the Soviet peoples, and especially the smaller ones, have not yet caught up with the highly developed nationalities as regards certain indices in this field.

[1] *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1967 g.*, op. cit., pp. 213 and 214.

In the central Asian Republics, Moldavia and Byelorussia, national education had to start virtually from scratch. Before the Revolution, they had no higher educational institutions of any kind. And although they have been developing very fast by comparison with the other Republics, levels of education are still somewhat lower than in the RSFSR, Georgia, and Armenia, for example. That this is so is borne out by the following figures, showing how many students there were in such establishments, for every 10,000 population, in 1967-68 [1]:

USSR	**182**	Lithuanian SSR	174
RSFSR	200	Moldavian SSR	124
Ukrainian SSR	165	Latvian SSR	169
Byelorussian SSR	141	Kirgiz SSR	143
Uzbek SSR	182	Tajik SSR	139
Kazakh SSR	139	Armenian SSR	210
Georgian SSR	185	Turkmen SSR	121
Azerbaijan SSR	178	Estonian SSR	174

A very similar state of affairs is shown by the fact that in the USSR as a whole, for every 10,000 people, there were in 1967 some 25 physicians, whereas the figure for the Latvian SSR was 33, for the Georgian SSR 36, for the Armenian SSR 29, i.e. more than the national average. The figure for the Uzbek SSR was 18, for the Kazakh, Moldavian and Kirgiz SSRs 19, and for Tajikistan 15.[2]

A major witness to the attainment of real equality is the fact that standards of living among the Soviet Republics are very much the same, thanks to a single nation-wide official policy with regard to wages and prices, a single system of social security, a common taxation system, and so on. But to judge by the data for national income, savings banks deposits [3], and housing, some differences between one Republic and another still exist (see table II).

These few examples will suffice to indicate that a number of problems remain to be solved in the process of attaining the highest possible degree of effective equality among the peoples of the USSR. They are being and will be solved by an improved division of labour and better co-operation among the Republics, by the reinforcement of existing economic ties between them and the establishment of new ones, and by efforts to bring these peoples economically and culturally closer together.

In the Soviet Union it is always assumed, as far as questions of nationality are concerned, that a man's nationality does not depend on his personal qualities, nor his personal qualities on his nationality; therefore the position he occupies in society ought not to depend on his

[1] *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1967 g.*, op. cit., p. 794.

[2] Ibid., p. 844.

[3] It has to be borne in mind that the amount deposited is no more than an indirect indication of the standard of material well-being attained, since it is affected by psychological factors, customs, traditions, etc., and not by economic factors alone.

TABLE II. GROWTH OF NATIONAL INCOME AND SAVINGS, 1960-67, AND HOUSING SITUATION, 1967, IN THE USSR AND CERTAIN SOVIET REPUBLICS

Republic	Average annual rate of increase in national income, 1960-67 (percentages)	Personal deposits in savings banks		Provision of housing (USSR = 100)	
		Average annual increase, 1960-67 (percentages)	Level of savings per head, 1967 (USSR = 100)	Stock per town-dweller, 1967	New housing per head, 1967
USSR	**7.05**	**10.45**	**100**	**100**	**100**
Armenian SSR . . .	8.85	15.72	150	94	127
Latvian SSR	7.32	10.63	104	127	71
Kazakh SSR	7.88	11.70	94	87	116
Uzbek SSR	7.32	11.87	83	74	107
Moldavian SSR . . .	9.20	9.92	78	97	105

Source: *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1967 g.*, op. cit., pp. 10, 672, 678, 682 and 701.

national origins. In this spirit a vast programme of public information and education is carried on amongst the peoples of the Union.

But the problem, unfortunately, is not quite so simple. Nationalism, the consciousness of belonging to a certain ethnic group, often takes the respectable, indeed beneficent form of loyalty to national traditions, a healthy sense of pride, etc. But it can (and in the Soviet Union still occasionally does) take the form of dislike for other nationalities or of a desire to outdo them. Sometimes, moreover, such manifestations of national feeling are not so much a relic of the past as a cloak for the selfish interests of the individual. Be this as it may, the essential thing is that in the Soviet Union political conflicts among the various peoples are completely excluded.

Manual and non-manual workers

A problem which still awaits solution is that concerning the difference in rewards for manual and non-manual work, attributable to the fact that society still needs people to do simple, unskilled labour, as well as those who are creative or highly skilled. As educational levels rise and more and more heavy work is taken over by machines, the demand for unskilled labour will fall off and the distinction between manual and non-manual work will gradually disappear.

What is important is that such inequalities as still exist have nothing to do with class distinctions or social origin. Whether a man is engaged in manual or mental work depends only on his education, skills, personal qualities, desires and aspirations.

A few examples should suffice to make our meaning clear. In the last few years 50 per cent of the full-time students in establishments of higher education at Sverdlovsk have come from workers' families.[1] In 1966 an inquiry conducted among a hundred leading persons in the Uraloboov Combine (the managers of the Combine and factories and their deputies, heads of departments, foremen and their deputies, i.e. persons who had had an engineering training) revealed that 49 came from workers' families, 41 from the peasantry and only 10 from the families of office and professional workers.[1]

At the Pervouralsk Novotrubny factory a similar inquiry was made among engineers and technicians. This revealed that 44.4 per cent came from workers' families, 25.6 per cent from the peasantry, 24.3 per cent from the families of office workers and 5.7 per cent from the families of professional workers.[1]

It very often happens, in the Soviet Union, that one and the same family will comprise wage earners and salaried employees, representatives of manual and non-manual occupations.

But elimination of the distinctions between manual and non-manual work goes beyond abolition of social distinctions between groups of workers. At the present stage the problem is one of doing away entirely with the substantial distinctions between manual and mental work. Many authors have observed that the concepts of " manual work " and " mental work " are becoming harder and harder to define. Thus many simple jobs requiring little in the way of skill are still classified as " brain " work, while more and more highly skilled jobs, created by the prodigious speed of technical progress and requiring problem-solving abilities, are still classified as " manual ". Hence it is no accident that in 1967 six out of every ten workers in the country had received a secondary (completed or uncompleted) and higher education.[2]

The existence of a national education system providing free instruction for all, so that everyone wanting to acquire special skills and qualifications starts off on an equal footing, has created a situation in which the age-old differences between manual and non-manual work can at last be done away with.

Suffice it to say that in the academic year 1967/68 some 76 million people in the Soviet Union were at school or studying. This means that one person in every three is learning. The general school system alone was educating 49 million people. Vocational training establishments accounted for more than 2 million, medium-level specialised educational establishments for more than 4 million and universities and institutes of higher learning for 4.3 million people.[3]

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[1] *Voprosy teorii i zhizn* (Moscow, 1967), p. 62.

[2] L. A. KUNELSKY: *Zarplata, dohody, stimulirovanie* (Moscow, Ekonomika, 1968), p. 57.

[3] *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1967 g.*, op. cit., p. 777.

The problem of ensuring real equality is not, however, fully solved by offering everybody equal access to general and specialised education, and to vocational and technical training. There is one thing which obstinately resists all attempts to ensure equality, and perhaps constitutes an insuperable obstacle, namely the fact that people are differently endowed by nature. Nevertheless, it is perfectly possible—indeed essential—to ensure that each individual's capacities are fully developed and properly used. This means that education and training must be combined with vocational guidance on a comprehensive scale.

This is an important point, and, unfortunately, vocational guidance in the USSR still leaves much to be desired. It is sometimes understood in a somewhat unilateral manner—not as a means of developing, and making the most of, an individual's gifts and capacities but merely as a means of channelling candidates towards vacancies which happen to exist locally. There are problems of theory and method (these criticisms have been mentioned in the press) which have not yet been solved; not enough has been done in drawing up psychological and physiological " profiles " for various occupations, and classifying them, and scientific methods of assessing personality (measuring interests, inclinations and aptitudes) have not yet been devised.[1]

In the last few years educational levels have been rising at such a pace that roughly 40 per cent of the young people taking employment in factories, the building trade or transport have had a secondary, and sometimes an uncompleted higher, education.

But this general rise in educational levels among young people is itself throwing up difficulties. The universities and establishments of higher education cannot accommodate all the young people leaving secondary schools (and indeed it would not be advisable that they should). But these same young people have not had the vocational training they need to become skilled workers right away. Hence much thought is now being devoted to developing the technical instruction given in secondary schools as a preparation for employment, and to expanding the vocational training system still further. This is the aim of a recent decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR " on further improvements in the training of skilled workers in technical and vocational training establishments ", which provides for the gradual transformation of these establishments into technical vocational training colleges offering three-year and four-year courses, designed to turn secondary-school leavers into skilled workers. Graduates would get a certificate of occupational competence, together with a certificate to the effect that they had had a secondary education.[2]

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[1] I. NAZIMOV: " Pered tysyachyu dorog ", in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 10 Jan. 1969.

[2] *Pravda*, 17 Apr. 1969.

Another problem not infrequently arises. Young people are leaving school better and better educated, and they sometimes find that conditions in industry are not up to their expectations. The young worker feels that he does not have full scope for his talents, as a result of which he is frustrated and restless.[1]

The way to solve this problem is to reinforce and broaden vocational guidance services (and of course to improve working conditions and the organisation of work in undertakings).

Town and country

It is most important, in any attempt to ensure actual equality, that standards of living and education, and conditions of work, should be uniform as between town and countryside. In the Soviet Union, as in other countries, town-dwellers enjoy a higher standard of living (larger incomes, better housing and supplies, better services, better facilities for education, culture, amusement, and so on). The gap is being bridged in various ways. Influenced by the above advantages, people simply abandon the countryside for the towns; this is happening in every country—a simple, spontaneous reaction which may not always be economically desirable. There is another method, namely widespread industrialisation, the creation of new industrial centres in various parts of the country, thus *ipso facto* increasing the urban population and leading to a general rise in material well-being. In 1913 town-dwellers represented 18 per cent of the total population; in 1940 the figure was 33 per cent; in 1959, 48 per cent; and at the beginning of 1968, 55 per cent.[2] In other words, more than half the population today lives in towns.

However, a solution to this particular problem—the discrepancies between living standards in town and country—first of all demands that the latter should catch up with the former. What is exceedingly important is that a homogeneous society be created—a society in which class distinction between workers and peasants no longer exists.

The Soviet Union has already gone far in this direction. In particular, in the last few years a system has been introduced under which members of collective farms *(kolkhoz)* receive a guaranteed monthly wage equivalent to the wage earned by workers on state farms *(sovkhoz)* in the same area. In addition, a pension system for collective farmers has been introduced, and the prices at which certain goods are sold in the countryside have been brought down to town levels.

Statistics show that the population of the Soviet Union is becoming much more homogeneous. Between 1939 and 1967 the proportion of

[1] G. Osipov and V. Podmarkov: " Chelovek, trud, kollektiv ", in *Pravda*, 11 Jan. 1969.

[2] *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1967 g.*, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

workers and employees in the total population rose from 50.2 to 77.3 per cent.[1] At the same time there was a very significant rise in educational levels among both workers and peasants. Thus in 1939, out of every 1,000 workers, 82 had had a secondary (completed or uncompleted) or higher education; by 1967 this figure had risen to 500. For members of collective farms the equivalent figures were 18 and 330 respectively.[2] Apart from providing evidence of the enormous progress made in people's education, these figures reveal two things: firstly, that the peasants are still, educationally speaking, behind the workers, and secondly, that in this respect they are advancing at a greater pace than the workers themselves. This in itself bears witness to the scale of the problems to be tackled.

It is planned that by 1970 secondary education will become compulsory for all. This will represent a very great step forward, after which differences in educational level will be even less marked. But to this end thousands of new teachers have to be trained and many new teachers' training colleges created. New schools will have to be built and the output of manuals and textbooks stepped up. An ambitious programme, designed to ensure that all this is done, is already being put into effect.

Action has been taken to ensure that amenities in the countryside are more nearly equivalent to those in the towns. The Soviet Five-Year Development Plan for 1965-70 provides for the construction in rural areas of properly equipped houses in large numbers, plus the provision of cultural and educational institutions and social services, the building of roads and the development of communications, further electrification of the countryside, universal television, and so on. The plan also provides for a general increase in repairs and other services which for the population as a whole will in 1970 be 2.5 times what they were in 1966, and for the villagers, 3 times.

Women and men

Since the Soviet system was first established, much has been done to ensure that women enjoy equal rights and to lay the necessary foundations for effective equality in all spheres (including employment). With every year that passes women play an increasingly important part in the national economy. In 1967 half of all manual and office workers were females; among physicians, nurses and health workers, 85 per cent were women, and among teachers, 72 per cent.[3] By the end of 1967 female specialists with an intermediate or higher education and active in the

[1] *Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1967 g.*, op. cit., p. 35.

[2] Ibid., p. 34.

[3] Ibid., p. 654.

national economy represented 58 per cent of all certified specialists. In this same year, out of all university-trained specialists active in the national economy, women represented 30 per cent of all engineers, 63 per cent of all economists, 72 per cent of all physicians and 38 per cent of all scientists.[1] These figures show that the door has been thrown wide open to skilled and educated women. That such a thing has been possible is due to the special guarantees which enable women to exercise their legal right to employment and to combine productive work and study with motherhood and family obligations.

If women and men are really to enjoy equality, then they must be guaranteed equality by the law; at the same time women must be offered legal safeguards for the exercise of their equal rights. If a woman is to have an equal right to employment, to earn her own keep, and to improve her qualifications, this will very largely depend on what is done to solve the social problems with which women have to cope and to relieve them of petty day-to-day worries and minor domestic cares.

Up to now, of course, the burden of running a family has always rested very largely on women's shoulders. Data for 1964 reveal that the numerous organisations and undertakings providing everyday services and facilities for women only manage to reduce their housework by 5 per cent.[2] For this very reason many active, able-bodied women are obliged—even if, as is often the case, they have had some specialised training—to remain housewives. This, as Professor A. G. Kharchev of Leningrad has observed, is a grave economic loss to the country, in that the public funds devoted to giving these women a specialised training are simply wasted.

The same authority maintains that the shortage of facilities for the care of children makes women's employment incompatible with motherhood, with the result that women either sacrifice their opportunities for improving their skills, and hence for promotion, or have fewer children. Either way, society is the loser. A lower birth-rate means that the country's resources of productive manpower increase more slowly. At the same time, the family as an institution suffers, since the big family is usually less likely to break up than the small or childless one.[3]

Measures have recently been taken to ensure that by 1970 the demand for child care establishments will be fully met. This, however, is by no means all. Not long ago, the Council of Ministers of the USSR issued a decision to the effect that women should be free to take, at their own expense, leave until their child was one year old; during this time they would retain their right to return to their jobs. Such leave would be

[1] *Zhenshchiny i deti v SSSR : Statistichesky sbornik*, op. cit., pp. 97, 98 and 107.

[2] V. N. TOLKUNOVA: *Pravo zhenshchin na trud i ego garantii* (Moscow, Yurizdat, 1967), p. 172.

[3] A. G. KHARCHEV: *Byt i semya v sotsialisticheskom obshchestve* (Leningrad, 1968), p. 28.

TABLE III. DISTRIBUTION BY ACTIVITY OF ABLE-BODIED URBAN POPULATION IN THE REGION OF NOVOSIBIRSK, 1962

Type of town	Percentage of able-bodied population occupied—		
	in productive employment	as full-time students	in house-keeping and cultivation of private plots
All towns	**77.7**	**6.2**	**16.1**
Regional centre	83.3	6.7	10.1
Regional towns	70.0	4.7	25.3
District towns	60.6	4.9	34.5
Urban-type communities in rural areas	51.0	4.4	44.6

Source: M. Y. SONIN: *Aktualnie problemy ispolzovaniya rabochei sily v SSSR* (Moscow, 1965), p. 228.

over and above the paid leave for pregnancy and confinement [1] to which women are entitled. Moreover, it was decided in 1964 that women should be entitled to a shorter working day, so as to be able the more easily to combine employment with their domestic obligations.

The industries which over the years have sprung up or been created throughout the country are not evenly apportioned, and it frequently happens that towns, and even whole districts, are overwhelmingly concerned with some particular form of production. As a result, a balanced use of male and female labour is impossible (e.g. in mining settlements, forestry camps, textile towns, and the like). Accordingly, action has been taken over the last few years to restore the balance by creating suitable undertakings in the towns and settlements concerned. When the siting of new undertakings is being planned, due allowance has to be made for this factor.

Despite a constant shortage of labour, a proportion of the country's able-bodied women are not employed by society. The reasons for this are extremely diverse; an uneven apportionment of industry is not alone to blame. The major reason is that families are still better off in towns than villages, since in the towns access to centralised social services is so much easier. Suffice it to say that, until very recently, women in the villages of the RSFSR were getting only one-sixth of the social services available in towns; in the villages of Turkmenia, the proportion was one-seventeenth.[2] Hence village women have every inducement to remain

[1] This leave extends from fifty-six days before to fifty-six days after the birth. In the case of abnormal, or multiple births, post-confinement leave can extend to as much as seventy calendar days.

[2] *Kommunist*, 1965, No. 3, p. 81.

in domestic work, or to concentrate on the cultivation of a private allotment.

This trend can be clearly seen at work in towns both large and small. There is, of course, a grave shortage of labour in Siberia, and there are all sorts of difficulties involved in transferring manpower from the central areas of the country. But there are at the same time considerable unused resources in Siberia itself. Table III reproduces the figures provided by Professor M. Y. Sonin on the apportionment of able-bodied people in towns in the region of Novosibirsk in 1962.

These figures show that if women are to be attracted in greater numbers into productive employment, especially in the remoter parts of Siberia, life in the countryside will have to be brought up to urban standards. This in fact is the purpose of an ordinance promulgated on 17 August 1966 by the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR " on action to increase the provision of social services and facilities in rural areas " [1], which provides for a broad programme of action to endow villages with municipal services, schools and kindergartens, medical and social services, and other amenities such as houses of culture, clubs, cinemas and sports centres.

Incomes

We have already mentioned that in the Soviet Union, at the present stage in the country's economic and social development, the principle underlying the system of remuneration does not necessarily guarantee equality of consumption. What the principle means is that if two people doing the same job do an equal amount of work and their work is of equal quality, they receive the same reward. But not all kinds of work are paid for at the same rate. Furthermore, the principle makes no allowance for the composition of the worker's family (i.e. how many people he has to support), and this leads to differences in income per head.

But this inequality in income per head is by no means unchangeable; in fact the income of the less favoured families is gradually being increased.

There are several ways in which earnings can be equalised. One way is to increase the minimum wage and the wages earned by workers in the middle of the wage scale. Another is to use public funds to increase consumption, by offering payments and bonuses independently of any contribution a worker may make by his labour. And lastly, taxes may be reduced or abolished, and prices brought down.

Which of these methods should be chosen? L. A. Kunelsky [2] offers some interesting information in this connection, based on the following calculations. If as our unit we take the number of families that could accede to a higher-income bracket if there were a big all-round reduction

[1] *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR*, 1966, No. 34, text 914.

[2] KUNELSKY, op. cit., p. 24.

in prices, then for the same expenditure of public money 3.8 times as many families could accede to a higher-income bracket if minimum and medium wages were increased; if taxes were abolished, the figure would be 2.1, and if pensions were increased, 1.2. Thus the swiftest and most effective way of achieving the desired end would be to raise minimum and medium-level wages; the longest way, to reduce prices.

But this does not mean that the wage method should be used to the exclusion of the others; if it were, then wages would no longer constitute a stimulus and incentive. Hence, in the Soviet Union, the policy is to use a judicious combination of all these methods, i.e. increasing minimum and medium-level wages, abolishing or reducing taxes—in the first instance for the benefit of the workers at the botton or middle of the wage scale—increasing minimum pensions, and reducing the prices of mass consumption goods with a quick turnover, again primarily for the benefit of workers at the bottom or middle of the income scale.

A few figures should make the position clear. Between 1961 and 1965 average wages increased by 19 per cent, and the minimum wage rose by between 28 and 48 per cent. Between 1966 and 1970 the average wage will have increased by a further 20.5 per cent; and by 1967 the wages earned by workers at the bottom of the scale had already increased by 33 to 50 per cent.[1] In the biggest engineering undertakings, before 1961 a manager's salary was typically 13.3 times the wage of a female office cleaner. By 1967 this discrepancy had gradually been reduced to a ratio of 8.2 : 1, and in 1969, after minimum wages had been increased (the higher salaries remaining unchanged), the ratio was 5.5 : 1.[2] Taking the economy as a whole, the average wage in 1958 was 2.9 times the minimum one; in 1968 the figure was 1.8.[3]

An important part in producing greater equality in earnings is played by what are called " public consumption funds ", i.e. disbursements and rebates awarded independently of any contribution the worker may have made by his labour. A proportion of these funds are spent, in accordance with specific criteria, on the less-favoured families first of all (payment of a child's kindergarten or boarding-school fees; free passes, or passes at very reduced rates, for visits to health resorts, rest homes and the like).

Data obtained in a sample survey among manual and office workers employed in textile mills in Ivanov show the important part these public funds play in the equalisation of income.[4] On the basis of wages alone, 46.9 per cent of the families covered were found to be " less well-off ", 50.9 " fairly well-off " and 2.2 " well-off ". When account was taken of benefits and rebates paid for from public funds these percentages were found to be 6.7, 77.0 and 16.3 respectively.

[1] KUNELSKY, op. cit., p. 21.
[2] Ibid., p. 29.
[3] Ibid., p. 30.
[4] V. Y. LION: *Byudzhet sovetskoy semyi* (Moscow, " Znanie ", 1965), p. 17.

Thus, public funds are used to overcome disparities in the material well-being of families, while the income per head, in families where earnings had been below the average, is substantially increased.

Disbursements and rebates offered from public funds (payments in connection with social insurance, pensions, assistance of various kinds, students' grants, free education and medical care, the maintenance of kindergartens, nurseries, sanatoria, rest homes and the like) represent more than 26 per cent of the total income of workers (wages plus the benefits received from public funds).[1]

* * *

It stands to reason that at the present stage in the history of the country there are various other problems to be solved before the major disparities in education and standards of living can be eliminated, greater uniformity in earnings assured, and a more even distribution of social services and amenities achieved. Many of these problems would long since have been settled had the country not lost twenty years on account of wars and reconstruction of an economy ruined in the process. However, these problems still exist. When they have been finally overcome, thanks to further improvements in standards of living and education—proclaimed as an aim to which Soviet society aspires—then full and real equality between all citizens of the USSR will have been achieved.

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[1] *Strana Sovetov za 50 let*, op. cit., p. 226; and *Trud v SSSR*, op. cit., p. 136.