

THE DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE USSR *)

(Editor's NOTE. Publications describing a country's achievements - be this in the field of art, technology or industry - are apt to be labelled abroad as propaganda. If by propaganda the reader means "that which is being propagated" then well and good. But more often the term propaganda is used to wave aside what is considered exaggerated advertising or intentional superimposition of certain ideas upon the reader - then such an interpretation would be foolish if applied to Russian publications for the dissemination of information amongst the masses about what the country is planning, doing and achieving. I deliverately say "foolish" because it shows that the enormous psychological and educational value which such publications carry - is completely ignored - and yet it is in this direction that the most effective force upon mass education is exerted.

The fact that such publications in the Soviet Union are published not by a publication division of a Ministry of Information and Broadcasting but by the highest body of learning - the Academy of Sciences of USSR is another factor well worth studying. For it insures a high standard of the information propagated, and gives them authority. Such publications are therefore highly valued and respected and not thrown into the waste paper basket.

To take two instances: (1) State Planning and (2) the enlightening of the masses, in a unified form, about the underlying politico-philosophic structure on which the country is run, (Naturally in the case of the USSR this structure is communism), are explained in two booklets, which every boy and girl knows:

1. A. Kursky, Planning of the National Economy of the USSR.
2. J. Stalin, Dialectical and Historical Materialism.

I cannot of course quote the entire text of these two books here but I have requested the USSR Cultural Attache to supply me with a number of these two booklets and they have promised to do so. Any reader of this Bulletin wishing to study this problem from the angle of dissemination of knowledge amongst the masses is welcome to write to me for a copy sending a self-addressed wrapper with a 1/2 anna stamp (or two 9 pies stamps) on it.

On these pages, however, it is particularly the intention to show how scientific-technical and industrial knowledge and information are spread amongst the masses and the contents pages of 4 Russian magazines (only the first of which is available abroad in English) will be given.

1. "USSR in Construction".
2. "Science is Strength".
3. "Technology for Youth".
4. "Science and Life".

I must also mention here, in conclusion, that Russia knows no "Comic" paper or magazines (of the American type, where glamorous maidens perpetually are kidnapped by evil monsters from other planets and gallantly rescued by super he-men) nor the flood of detective stories without which youth abroad seems to be unable to live, (nor, incidentally are there any advertisements whatsoever in Russian newspapers). Youth in the USSR finds all the interest in a mass of most attractively printed scientific and technical "propaganda" and in excited following the charts and tables of the progress of their Five-Year consturctional Plans in which their fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters not only enthusiastically participate, because they enjoy and love building up their country, but may even be honoured by the much covated Gold Star of Hero of Socialist Labour. They chat and discussed all this whenever they are free, and know from early childhood much more about their country's aims, work and all the "Big Men" (whom they call heros) of Art, Science and Learning - than any other children in the world know about theirs. Prof. S. Engelhardt, a visiting scientist from the USSR who recently toured India, the Director of the laboratory of the famous Pavlov Physiological Institute, confirmed this at a recent lecture he gave under the auspices of the National Institute of Sciences, held in the Physics Lecture theatre of the Science Faculty of Delhi University. I can hear some of my friends argue: but you know the old proverb: Work and no play makes Jack a dull boy! Sure, it does, but you see, the trick here is not give Jack a ball to play with, but to give him Knowledge to paly with, and the USSR has solved this trick. This incidentally is one of the many reasons why she so jealously guards her people and youth from what they consider "seditious infection" from the West. Purely logically speaking they are certainly quite right in guarding all their hard-earned dialectical materialistic acquisitions.

The psycholological and educational value of mass dissemination of knowledg is therefore tremendous and should not be under estimated. Mass dissemination of knowledge should be regarded the fundamental factor on which the country's progress and welbeing are bases. - V.S.)