

NEEDED: AN IMAGINATIVE INDO-SOVIET TEXT BOOK PROGRAMME.

(N.V. Krishna Warrior, Director, State Institute of Languages, Kerala).

TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA.

India is putting forth a tremendous effort to transform her tradition-bound education and to make it science-based and modern. The urgent necessity for such a transformation of education has been emphasised by the Education Commission in their report (1966). The allocation for University education in our Five Year Plans reflects this decision of the Nation. In the Second Five Year Plan Government of India allotted Rs.19 crores for University education. In the 3rd Plan this was raised to Rs.37 crores while in the Fourth Plan Rs.115 crores were allotted for the same purpose. Necessarily the allocation for University education in the Fifth Plan will have to be considerably raised.

In 1951 there were only 29 Universities in India. In 1970-71 the number of Universities rose to 83. The number of Colleges for both Under-graduate and Post-graduate instruction was 548 in 1950-51. At the end of 1969 the number of Colleges rose to 2,361.

In 1950-51 the number of science students enrolled in various institutions in India was 1,27,168. In 1969-70 this number rose to 9,14,739. The number of Engineering and Technology students was 12,094 in 1950-51. This went upto 1,04,266 in 1967-68. Corresponding numbers in other branches are Medical students: 15,260 in 1950-51 and 95,017 in 1969-70; Students of Agriculture: 4,744 in 1950-51 and 53,120 in 1968-69; Students of Veterinary Science: 1,100 in 1950-51 and 6,610 in 1967-68.

In 1950-51 there were 31 Engineering Colleges in the country. In 1969-70 this number went upto 106. There were only 34 Medical Colleges in India in 1950-51. This almost quadrupled into 125 by 1969-70. The number of Agriculture Colleges in 1950-51 was 16. In 1969-70 this number went upto 54. In the place of 7 Veterinary Colleges in 1950-51 there were 23 Veterinary Colleges in 1969-70.

In 1969-70, 41.5% of the total enrolment at the University was in different branches of science. The percentage increase per year in the number of science students on an average is calculated to be 10.

Based on this calculation the enrolment of students in science, medicine and technology is expected to be 1.86 million in 1974-75, and 4.84 million in 1984-85.

DEPENDENCE ON ANGLO-AMERICAN TEXT BOOKS.

This enormous mass of students as well as their teachers are at present to a very large extent depending upon text books produced in Great Britain and America. The drain on our economy which this dependence entails can very well be imagined.

Schemes for foreign collaboration in this field have already been afoot. Subsidised American and British Text books are flooding the market. One has to admit that to some extent this is also benefitting the student community. But viewed from another point, these schemes for subsidisation are also being used to repatriate blocked foreign assets from this country, and thus to debilitate our economy.

Apart from economics, the intellectual and cultural dependence of our educated youth on foreign countries which this situation perpetuates is doing incalculable harm to the blossoming of original talents in this country. Now India is being constantly fed with out-dated cheap educational material produced in foreign countries. The outlook of these books is mostly outmoded and unsuited to India. Especially in Social Sciences the bias of these books is diametrically opposed to the growth of secular socialist democracy in this country.

PRODUCTION OF UNIVERSITY-LEVEL BOOKS IN REGIONAL LANGUAGES.

With the liberal financial assistance provided by the Government of India, organisations have been set up in all Indian States to produce University-level books in the regional languages. The teaching community in India who have hitherto been mostly purveyors of second hand knowledge, is now faced with the challenge of producing original books in those branches of knowledge with which they are concerned. Naturally they model their creations on the texts with which they are familiar, their main problem being how to put their limited knowledge of the subject into their more limited capacity to express ideas in the regional languages. No wonder if many of the text books produced under these circumstances do not measure upto high standards.

In order to remedy this and raise the standard of Text books in the regional languages a large scale translation of foreign books has been recommended by the Academic community. According to this demand the Government of India has set up a unit in the Ministry of Education to obtain translation rights of foreign books mainly books published in the United States and the United Kingdom from their publishers. This unit has been able to get some of the American publishers to agree to give translation rights of their publications to Indian publishers, subject to the payment of a remuneration which cannot be considered small or symbolic from Indian standards. The publishers of the United Kingdom who have a flourishing market in India for their products are by and large unwilling to agree with the proposals of the Government of India.

CO-OPERATION WITH THE  
SOVIET UNION.

The possibility of co-operation with the Soviet Union in the production of University-level text books has to be viewed in this context.

The Soviet books are not copy-righted. Without paying any royalty we are free to translate any number of Soviet publications into our language.

There are authentic and up-to-date texts in all branches of sciences and other disciplines of knowledge in the Russian language. Some of the Russian Publishing Houses like the Progress Publishers are also bringing out English translations of several of their publications. There is nobody to prevent us from using these Soviet books in English as texts in our educational institutions. But generally the authorities of our Universities have been found extremely reluctant to make use of Soviet publications even when these are better than American or British publications. This irrational prejudice against Soviet books has to be overcome.

The Government of India have constituted an Indo-Soviet Text Book Board in the Ministry of Education. A reference library of Russian books has been built up at the Ministry of Education, New Delhi. Anybody may make use of this library, select suitable books for translation and approach the Indo-Soviet Text Book Board for technical assistance. But it is extremely doubtful if any organisation is making use of this facility at present.

Recently the State Institute of Languages, Kerala, contacted representatives of Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga, one of the foremost firms dealing in



Soviet books Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga have agreed to render necessary assistance in contacting authors in the Soviet Union and in making available latest editions. They will also advise if better Russian books are available on the same subject. Any publisher in India, whether in the private or in the public sector, may get the same facilities from Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga.

PAUCITY OF TRAINED TRANSLATORS  
FROM RUSSIAN INTO INDIAN  
LANGUAGES.

The greatest difficulty in utilising this offer of assistance is the paucity of translators from Russian to Indian languages.

Though the Education Commission has recommended that Russian may be introduced as second language in our high schools and colleges, very little has been done so far in this field. No Secondary school in Kerala at present teaches Russian as an optional subject even though there is provision for teaching Arabic, Sanskrit, French and certain other less important languages as such. In the colleges also we have not provided for the instruction of Russian while students may offer Syriac, Arabic, Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, French, German, Tamil or Kannada. The only facility to learn Russian provided by any University in Kerala at present is the Post-graduate Diploma course at the Trivandrum city campus of Kerala University.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS:

1. TEACHING OF RUSSIAN IN COLLEGES. In order that Indian Universities may be able to profit from the enormous amount of scientific knowledge stored in Russian language it is necessary that we train at least a few hundred translators who will be able to mediate between us and the Russian authors. A preliminary step towards such a development will be the introduction of Russian as a language in the Pre-degree and Degree classes of Indian colleges. Since there already are a number of young Indians who have either had their education in the Soviet Union or have studied Russian at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, the problem of finding suitable teachers will not be unmountable. Our Universities will have to be moved for the introduction of Russian as a language in these courses and sufficient popular pressure towards this end has to be generated.
2. TRAINING OF TRANSLATORS. Translation from one language to another is an art as well as a science. It is possible and is necessary to organise courses

of sufficient duration to train translators from Russian to Indian languages. This may be done at two stages. Preliminary courses may be conducted at different centres in India, and selected students may be subjected to short intensive courses at the Soviet Union. The National Committee of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society may take up this question and prepare a scheme for which assistance may be obtained from State Governments as well as the Society for Soviet Indian Cultural Relations in the Soviet Union. Assistance may also be made available from the Government of the U.S.S.R.

3. PERSUADING UNIVERSITIES      The resistance of our Universities to use  
TO USE SOVIET TEXT BOOKS.      books produced in the Soviet Union has to  
be broken. The pronounced Angle-American bias of higher education is  
doing very great harm in the development of an egalitarian socialistic  
ideology in our country. The sooner this is realised the better it will  
be for us.