The twenty-fourth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) reviewed the activity of the Soviet people over the past five-year period and outlined plans for the further development of the national economy between 1971 and 1975. New targets were set for the development of industry and agriculture and for a further rise in living standards. The effectiveness and productivity of labour are sure to increase as the latest achievements of science and technology are embodied in the national economy.

All this affects the training and upbringing of the younger generation, the people who are starting out in life; and schools that provide a general education—those that lay the necessary foundation for subsequent vocational training—play an important part in shaping the development of these young people.

National network of kindergartens

In our country, the view is held that schooling begins in the kindergarten. The Soviet Union has an extensive network of pre-school institutions, in which 9.5 million children are enrolled. In addition, a network of temporary collective-farm kindergartens, with an enrolment of about 3 million, functions in country districts during the period when agricultural work is at its peak.

Kindergartens were established in the first instance chiefly for the purpose of helping mothers by looking after their children so that they could take an active part in public life and work. Later on, they were given a second task—to provide the most favourable social conditions for the upbringing of children. The pre-school years, we know, are of very great importance for the development of the personality. The

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Prospects for education in the U.S.S.R.

combination of a family and a communal upbringing provides the best possible conditions for the inculcation of high moral principles in children. This is becoming particularly important now that many families have only one child. The small child needs to have contact with a group, and he finds this in the kindergarten.

Society as a whole in the Soviet Union shows concern for small children. Approximately two-thirds of all expenditure on maintaining children in kindergartens is borne by the State. Special factories have been set up throughout the country—and more are being built—to produce children's furniture. Large quantities of all sorts of games and toys are produced by some 750 factories, and there is a special Toy Research Institute. Great care is taken with the publication of children's books. Every year, about 100 publishing houses bring out 600-700 titles of children's books, 130-140 million copies of which are printed. The publishing house Detskaja Literatura alone brings out 150 titles of books for children of pre-school age every year.

The scientific principles to be observed in bringing up children of pre-school age are elaborated at the Pre-School Education Research Institute of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. A new programme for educational work in kindergartens is being introduced, in which a great deal of attention is paid to mental development, laying the foundations of good health, correct posture and the inculcation of good manners and social behaviour.

Research carried out in a number of Soviet schools has shown that children who have attended a kindergarten before entering the first grade have usually reached a higher stage of development than those brought up in the family.

Provision is made in the current five-year plan for work to start on the construction of pre-school institutions for 2 million children, the work being financed from public funds. In addition, collective farms and other co-operative organizations, as well as industrial firms, are giving the greatest possible assistance at their own expense towards the building of pre-school institutions and the education of children. In the period 1971-75, many more pre-school establishments will be available, with places for more children, and further improvements will be made in the upbringing of the Soviet Union's youngest citizens.

We shall now consider the organization of the school system in our country. Children are enrolled in the first grade of school at the age of seven, and they stay at school until they have completed the eight-year course (junior secondary school). It is now compulsory for all