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THE NATIONAL POLITICS OF LABOR POLICY: THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN ALLOCATING ITS LABOR FORCE

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Introduction

Soviet planners depend considerably on market forces to allocate manpower among enterprises and industries. Individual workers generally are free to select their place of employment and to respond to higher wages and better working conditions offered in other jobs. Wage rates for individual occupations are fixed on a national basis and are designed to attract manpower into high-priority sectors of the economy. Since the early 1930s, for example, wage differentials have been set to encourage workers to seek employment in heavy industrial enterprises rather than in food or consumer goods enterprises as well as to attract labor to areas with substandard living conditions or far from population centers.[1]

The planners, however, never have depended exclusively on the wage system to distribute labor wherever and whenever needed to meet plan goals. Various agencies of the government ususally have engaged to some extent in direct, and often compulsory, methods of allocating labor and in enforcing restrictions on job choice. When Stalin died in 1953, for example, the labor

market was characterized by harsh controls over voluntary job-changing and absenteeism. In addition, the government was using considerable compulsion in allocating labor to various economic sectors. Youths were drafted into technical schools, farmers were drafted for work in industry, and forced labor was used widely in activities such as mining, construction, and logging.[2]

Since the mid-1950s, as the government has come to depend more on incentives and less on compulsion throughout the economy, many changes have taken place in the structure and operation of the labor market. Changes in labor laws, for example, have removed most of the formal restraints on voluntary changing of jobs and have limited the use of compulsion in job placement.[3] The government nonetheless continues to play a major role in the labor market, and to have a decisive influence on labor allocation. The levers at its disposal include a variety of plans, policies, regulations, and special institutions.

This paper focuses on the Soviet institutions engaged directly in matching jobseekers with job vacancies. It traces the history of those institutions, assesses the extent and nature of the control that the government currently exercises over the initial job placement of school leavers, and evaluates the role of labor exchanges in placing other jobseekers. Other, less direct, government involvement in labor allocation -- such as manpower planning; regulation of wages, hours, and working conditions; control over the educational

and retirement systems; and the internal passport and police registration systems -- are beyond the scope of this paper.

Evolution of the Government's Placement Role

Until 1957 the direct participation by the Soviet government in the job placement of youths who had reached working age[4] was limited to graduates of vocational (labor reserve) schools, secondary specialized schools (tekhnikums), and higher educational institutions (VUZs)[5]. Because of their relative scarcity, such graduates were rationed by the planning authorities in accordance with a centrally determined distribution plan. Each branch of the economy and each geographic area was allotted its share of graduates, and a graduate with little promise or pull would have to accept a post in an industry with low priority in an area with few amenities. Students in the regular elementary schools and high schools who had reached working age and were not planning to continue their education on a full-time basis were free to choose their own jobs on the basis of the available opportunities.

Since 1957, government participation in placing school graduates has been extended to all terminal points in the school system. A decree issued in 1957 directed authorities of local governments to supervise the placement of graduates from the 10-year general schools. In 1958 this responsibility was extended to include graduates from 8-year schools who were not

continuing their education. Decrees issued in 1961 and 1962 charged the local governments with the placement of graduates of the new vocational-technical schools, which were replacing the labor reserve schools. Finally, the central government formalized the placement procedures and delegated enforcement responsibility to the republics in 1966. Subsequently, the RSFSR issued a detailed decree in April 1969, which apparently served as a model for the other republics.

The workload imposed on the government agencies involved in placing school graduates more than doubled between 1957 and 1975, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

USSR: Graduates of Full-time Vocational, Secondary, and Higher Schools

Type of School	Number of Graduates (Thousands)	
	1957	1975
Total graduates	2,582	5,612
General secondary*	1,265	2,716
Vocational Technical	696	1,710
Tekhnikum	434	752
VUZ	187	434

* About 20% of the graduates in 1957 and 1975 enrolled in VUZs instead of going directly to work.

Sources: USSR Central Statistical Administration. Narodnoye obrazovaniye, nauka i kul'tura v SSSR, 1970, Moscow, Statistika, p. 102.

_____. Narodnoye khozyaystvo SSSR v 1959 godu. Moscow, Statistika, 1960, pp. 621, 748.

_____. Narodnoye khozyaystvo SSSR v 1975 godu. Moscow, Statistika, 1976, pp. 557, 670, 684.

Placement of VUZ and Tekhnikum Graduates

The oldest and most elaborate method of assigning school graduates in the USSR is that for placing graduates of VUZs and Tekhnikums. These graduates are called "specialists", and their assignment to specific jobs for a compulsory period of service has been regulated by law since the early 1930s.[6]

These specialists currently are allocated on graduation in accordance with a decree issued in March 1968 by the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education of the USSR.[7] The decree specifies that specialists who graduate from tekhnikums and VUZs are to be assigned to jobs in accordance with a distribution plan worked out by the various republics and coordinated and approved by the central planning authorities in Moscow. An individual plan that indicates the specific enterprises to which graduates in various specialties are to be assigned is formulated for each educational institution. The task of matching individuals with specific jobs, however, is delegated to school officials and other local authorities.

According to the decree of 1968, the assignment of specialists to specific jobs is carried out at each school by a Commission for the Personal Distribution of Young Specialists, which consists of (1) the director of the school, who serves as chairman; (2) a representative of the ministry or department, such as a particular industry which the school predominantly serves in its degree program, who serves as deputy chairman; and (3) representatives of various political organizations at the

school, such as the Communist Party and Komsomol. The commission may permit deans of various faculties and even representatives of local enterprises to participate in the meetings. The decree directs each school to complete the job arrangements for its graduates no later than four months before graduation.

The 1968 decree specifies that the specialists must work at their assigned jobs for 3 years. Managers of enterprises are forbidden to hire graduates who within 3 years after graduation do not have official documents either assigning them to that enterprise or authorizing them to find a job on their own. The commission is authorized to permit certain graduates to find jobs independently, but this provision is supposed to be applied only to the disabled, to spouses of commissioned and noncommissioned officers of the armed forces, to spouses of other specialists who are currently in their 3-year job assignment, and to pregnant women. Permits for such self-placement are to be issued to such persons only if suitable assignments cannot be arranged under the distribution plan. In 1975, about 15% of the graduates subject to compulsory placement were authorized to find jobs themselves.[8]

The compulsory 3-year work period for the specialist meant also, according to the 1968 decree, that managers were forbidden to discharge the specialists without the express permission of a higher authority, such as a ministry or department. In July

1972, however, this provision was modified to provide for a 1-year probationary period. The purpose of the probationary period, according to the official announcement, is to "determine the work and practical qualities of the graduate in order to use him at the given enterprise, organization, or institution in the most correct and efficient way."[9] Apparently, the inflexibility of the 3-year job assignment rule had tended to perpetuate erroneous assignments by prohibiting even within-plant transfers, and the probationary period was intended to limit such instances to a maximum of one year. Students who enter the armed forces after graduation are credited with the military service against the 3-year requirement, but must undergo the probationary 1-year period following discharge.

Those graduates of VUZs who go on to further study in graduate school on a full-time basis also are directed to 3-year work assignments when they receive their advanced degree. The USSR Council of Ministers in September 1969 directed that such placement be supervised by the State Committee for Science and Technology, in collaboration with the National Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education. These agencies formulate the annual distribution plans for the nation as a whole, but the VUZs and Research Institutes that grant the advanced degrees carry out the actual placement.[10]

The placement procedures described above are applicable only to those persons who have attended school on a full-time

basis and do not apply to graduates who have completed evening or correspondence programs at tekhikums or VUZs. The decree of 1968 specifies only that local government authorities and enterprise managers should transfer young specialists who have graduated from an evening or correspondence educational program to a job that is commensurate with the education that they received. The decree, however, imposes no obligation on the student to accept an assignment that is offered by the authorities.

The number of graduate specialists subject to the compulsory placement law -- that is, completing full-time programs -- has increased dramatically since the mid-1960s after relatively little change during the previous decade. The number approached 1.2 million in 1975 compared with somewhat more than one-half million in 1965 and 1955 (see Table 2). Meanwhile, part-time academic programs in both types of schools have become far more widespread, accounting in 1975 for more than one-third of the graduates compared with one-sixth in 1955. Part-time programs, however, have been deemphasized since the late 1960s, and the number of such graduates have leveled off. Nevertheless, because of the growth of part-time programs, the government's control over the placement of graduate specialists has diminished. Only about 63% of the 1975 graduating class was subject to compulsory placement compared with 83% in 1955.

Table 2

USSR: Graduations from VUZs and Tekhnikums

(Thousand Persons)

	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975
VUZs, Total	245.8	343.3	403.9	630.8	713.7
Full-time	179.2	228.7	224.8	334.8	433.6
Evening	4.6	15.4	43.5	82.1	79.7
Correspondence	62.0	99.2	135.6	213.9	200.4
Tekhnikums, Total	387.8	483.5	621.5	1,033.3	1,157.0
Full-time	345.1	348.1	332.8	602.7	752.2
Evening	16.0	57.9	104.7	161.5	125.4
Correspondence	26.7	77.5	184.0	269.1	279.4
Total	633.6	826.8	1,025.4	1,664.1	1,870.7
Full-time	524.3	576.8	557.6	937.5	1,185.8
Evening	20.6	73.3	148.2	243.6	205.1
Correspondence	88.7	176.7	319.6	483.0	479.8

Sources:

USSR, Central Statistical Administration. Narodnoye khozyaystvo SSSR v 1958 godu, Moscow, Statistika, 1959, p. 837

_____. Narodnoye khozyaystvo SSSR v 1975 godu, Moscow, Statistika, 1976, p. 684.

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Graduates of Vocational-Technical Schools

Unlike the formal procedures involved in placing tekhnikum and VUZ graduates, the placement of vocational-technical graduates is highly informal. According to the laws regulating this school system, the Council of Ministers in the various republics are directed to assure that enterprise managers assign such graduates to jobs that utilize their vocational education. This procedure is facilitated by the fact that most such schools are operated under the auspices of particular ministries or enterprises.[11]

During the 1930s, vocational training was offered only on the job by Factory-Plant Apprenticeship schools (FZU -- Fabrichno-zavodskoye uchenichestvo). Both the training of the students and their allocation on graduation were controlled by the factory management. Student enrollment was voluntary until the introduction in October 1940 of the Labor Reserve Law, which subjected youths 14 to 17 years of age to a compulsory draft for vocational training in full-time schools for periods ranging from 6 months to 2 years. On graduation these youths were assigned to jobs by the Main Administration for Labor Reserves and had to serve in these compulsory assignments for 4 years.[12]

Between 1940 and 1953 the Labor Reserve System consisted of a network of trade, railroad, factory, and mining schools serving primarily heavy industry. Since 1953, however, the system has been altered frequently to meet changing needs and

circumstances. In September 1953, for example, a large network of farm mechanization schools was set up to serve the long-neglected agricultural sector. Graduates were assigned to jobs at which they were required to remain for 2 years.[13] In August 1955 a decree authorized an expansion in the number of trade schools serving the construction industry and imposed compulsory 4-year assignments on the graduates.[14] Neither of these decrees contained any provision for a compulsory draft of youths; in March 1955, moreover, the draft feature of the original Labor Reserve Law was amended to exclude certain of the labor reserve schools from compulsory mobilization.[15] By 1959, of the 583,000 graduates of the labor reserve schools, only 94,000 or less than one-sixth had attended schools for which a draft was still legally in effect. Moreover, about 383,000 or almost two-thirds of the total number of graduates in 1959 had attended farm mechanization schools and other vocational schools that were established after 1953.[16]

As a result of these developments, the system of vocational education in the USSR in 1959 bore little resemblance to the system envisioned by the Labor Reserve Law of 1940. In addition, the labor reserve schools were under the national jurisdiction of the Main Administration for Labor Reserves at a time when most of the enterprises for which the workers were being trained were subordinate to ministries or other departments under the councils of ministers of the various republics.

In 1959, therefore, the Main Administration for Labor Reserves was reorganized into the State Committee for Vocational-Technical Education, and all of the schools under its jurisdiction were transferred to the various republic governments. Under the same law, all the various schools were converted into urban and rural vocational-technical schools.[17]

In 1966, a decree designed to upgrade vocational-technical education called for increased admissions of students who had already graduated from secondary schools but who wished to learn specific vocational skills. Subsequently, to make the vocational-technical program even more attractive -- and to aid in the drive for universal secondary education -- a 1969 decree created a limited number of schools offering students with only eight years of education the opportunity to earn a high school diploma while receiving vocational training.[18] In 1975, of the 2 million graduates of vocational-technical schools, about 200,000 or 10 percent received high-school diplomas.[19]

The regulation currently governing the training and placement of vocational-technical graduates, promulgated in 1969, does not provide for the obligatory assignments that prevailed under the Labor Reserve System. It provides only that "the Councils of Ministers of the Union Republics, ministries and departments of the USSR, and directors of enterprises, construction sites, state farms, and organizations insure that preparations are made in a timely manner for hiring the young workers

graduating from the vocational-technical school system, establishing the conditions necessary for their employment in jobs for which they were trained, and assisting in every possible way their cultural and technical development.[20] The reference to these graduates as "workers" reflects the fact that time spent at these schools is counted as worktime and credited toward length of service.[21]

Graduates of General Schools

Placement of graduates of the general secondary schools (10th graders, usually 17-year-olds) is under the general control and supervision of State Committees for the Utilization of Labor Resources in the various republics.[22] These committees were established in 1967 as directed by the USSR Council of Ministers in a decree of 22 December 1966.[23] The actual placement is performed at the local level by Commissions for the Job Placement of Youths, which have been operating since 1957 when the USSR Council of Ministers directed the local governments to insure the employment of youths who were not continuing their education.[24]

The order to place these youths in jobs was prompted by a sharp increase in the number of general school graduates who were not going on to higher education. The number of graduates increased from 469,000 in 1953 to 1,265,000 in 1957, while admissions to full-time VUZ's actually declined from 265,000 to 220,000. Many youths not admitted to higher education chose to remain unemployed and reapply later rather than work as general laborers.[25]

The number of unemployed teenagers was aggravated by new legislation that priced young people out of the labor market. Many youths who wanted to work had difficulty finding jobs because (1) the employment of youths in overtime

or night work was forbidden, (2) managers were required to pay 15-17 year-old workers for a full eight hours even though they worked less, and (3) workers enrolled in part-time education programs were entitled to generous amounts of extra paid leave to pursue their studies. Furthermore, competition for jobs increased following the partial demobilization of the armed forces in 1956-57, which swelled the ranks of civilian jobseekers.[26]

The number of graduates from general secondary schools began to decline in 1959 and by 1962 reached a low of 400,000, reflecting primarily the impact of the unusually low birth rates during World War II. The local placement commissions, which apparently were not widespread but concentrated in the larger cities and industrial centers, must have been relatively inactive during the early 1960s.

The imbalance between general school graduates and full-time VUZ admissions again widened sharply in 1966, however, when 2.6 million graduates were competing for less than one-half million admission slots to higher education (Table 3). That was the last year of existence for the 11th grade, which had been added to the general school system in 1958, so that two classes -- 10th and 11th graders -- were graduating simultaneously. Since then, the Soviet drive toward compulsory secondary education has meant ever larger graduating classes. In 1975, there were 2.7 million graduates but less than 600,000 openings in higher education.

Table 3

USSR: Graduates of General Schools and Admissions to Full-Time VUZ's

Thousands of Persons

	Graduates of General Schools	Admissions to Full-Time VUZ's
1960	709	258
1965	913	378
1966	2,581	427
1967	1,681	437
1968	1,871	453
1969	1,927	475
1970	1,968	501
1971	2,091	517
1972	2,222	532
1973	2,331	545
1974	2,510	566
1975	2,716	594

Sources:

USSR Central Statistical Administration. Narodnoye obrazovaniye, nauka i kul'tura v SSSR, (National Education, Science, and Culture in the USSR), 1970, Moscow, Statistika, pp. 102, 187.

_____. Narodnoye khozyaystvo SSSR v 1968 godu (National Economy of the USSR in 1968), Moscow, Statistika, 1969, p. 687.

_____. Narodnoye khozyaystvo SSSR v 1970 godu (National Economy of the USSR in 1970), Moscow, Statistika, 1971, p. 644.

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To handle the sudden upsurge in graduates, the USSR Council of Ministers issued a decree in February 1966 entitled "Measures for Expanding the Training and Job Placement in the Economy of Youths Completing General Schools in 1966."[27] The decree imposed [redacted] quotas on enterprise managers, requiring that they hire the youths in numbers ranging from 1/2% to 10% of the enterprise's payroll. Local government authorities were ordered to assure enforcement of quotas. Local Commissions for Job Placement of Youths had to find jobs for youngsters not placed under the quota system, or laid off after being hired.

With the class of 1966 out of the way, and the imbalance expected to continue to widen, the various republics took steps to formalize the placement system for these graduates by issuing detailed decrees on their organization and functions. The Ukraine SSR issued its decree in 1966,[28] and the RSFSR in 1969.[29] In general, the decrees spell out the interaction expected between the commissions on the one hand and the many government and political organizations involved in the placement effort on the other, with ultimate responsibility for enforcement placed upon republic and local government authorities. Unlike the national decree of 1966, the republic decrees levy no hiring quotas on enterprise managers.

The RSFSR decree, which probably serves as a model for the other republics, states that placement commissions are to be established at all government levels (autonomous republic, kray, oblast, city, and rayon). At each level, the deputy director of the council of ministers or executive committee acts as chairman of the Commission, and the director of the labor resources agency is deputy chairman. Members of the commission include representatives of the Communist Party, trade unions, Young Communist league, economic organizations, and educational departments.

At the beginning of each school year, according to the decree, the labor resources authorities receive a list of available jobs from local businesses, and forward the list to school authorities for dissemination among 10th graders. The labor resource authorities also receive a list of graduating seniors from the general schools, indicating the desire of the students to continue schooling or to begin work. These materials are then integrated for use by the placement commission in carrying out its mission.

Redistribution of Employed Manpower

In addition to its participation in the initial assignment of school graduates, the Soviet government plays an active role in redistributing employed persons from one job to another. The USSR has had a nationwide network of

government agencies, in one form or another, engaged exclusively in the redistribution of the labor force since formation of the All-Union Resettlement Committee in 1925 and the administration for Organized Recruitment in 1931. Currently, resettlement activities are administered by the State Committees for the Utilization of Labor Resources in the various republics, and organized recruitment activities are integrated with the activities performed by local placement and job information bureaus, which are under the jurisdiction of those State Committees. The establishment of these local bureaus in 1969 signaled the reappearance of labor exchanges on the Soviet labor scene for the first time since 1930.

Resettlement

Throughout Soviet history the resettlement of workers has been an instrument of Soviet migration policy. The administration of resettlement was under local jurisdiction until 1925, when the All-Union Resettlement Committee was formed to coordinate all resettlement activities for the nation as a whole. The original purpose of resettlement was spelled out in a decree, issued in 1928, which declared that the settlement of the Urals, Karelia, Siberia, and other sparsely populated regions of the USSR was of national significance and, therefore, the chief aim of resettlement policy. The government agencies administering the resettlement

system played a major role in each of the mass migrations of the Soviet population, including the settlement of the Far East and far north, the shift of population and industry to the Urals during World War II, and the settlement of the new lands in Kazakhstan during the 1950s. Between 1954 and 1959 the resettlement agencies also were active in relocating families from areas to be flooded during the construction of hydroelectric power plants.[30]

From its beginnings, resettlement has involved the permanent transfer of entire families, and sometimes entire collective farms, from one location to another. The magnitude of resettlement has varied over time and has been lower in recent years than before World War II. The industrial resettlement that characterized the period 1928-37, when an average of 75,000 persons each year were resettled in Siberia and the Far East, was resumed after World War II but had declined in importance by the mid-1950s. This resettlement program provided workers for the factories, construction sites, and logging camps in those newly developed areas.[31]

Since the mid-1950s the resettlement agencies have concentrated on the relocation of families for work in agriculture. The principal aim of resettlement policy was described in a 1959 Soviet publication as "the assurance of manpower for the large state farms and collective farms by

resettlement of the rural and urban population to sparsely populated regions."[32]

The major reason for the discontinuance of industrial resettlement probably was the changed demand structure for workers in the industrial sector of the economy. During the 1930s and 1940s, when the demand for industrial labor could be expressed for the most part in terms of "able-bodied" family members, resettlement of families regardless of the skills they represented apparently was considered worthwhile. At the present level of technology of Soviet industry, however, the necessary workers must be recruited primarily on the basis of skills acquired through either training or experience.

Resettlement is voluntary, according to the Soviet media, and the state offers monetary and other incentives to individuals and families volunteering to relocate in areas where agricultural labor is in short supply.[33] In May 1973, for example, the USSR Council of Ministers issued a decree entitled "Benefits for Resettlers" that authorized bonuses ranging from 100 to 300 rubles for family heads and from 35 to 80 rubles for each additional family member for resettling to specified areas. The larger bonuses applied to the Far East and the lower to areas such as the Ukraine and Georgia. Transportation costs, subsidized housing, and tax benefits are included in the incentive package.[34]

Organized Recruitment

A system of organized recruitment (Organizovannyy nabor, usually called Orgnabor) was established in the USSR in 1931 to meet the large requirements for additional labor in industry and construction, that is, to direct the desired shift of manpower resources from the farms to the cities. The establishment of Orgnabor as a department in the Commissariat of Labor took place in 1931 -- a year after the announced abolition of unemployment in the USSR, which was accomplished by halting the registration of unemployed workers at labor exchanges, closing the exchanges, and discontinuing all payments of unemployment insurance.[35]

During the first year of its operation, Orgnabor directed the transfer of about 5.5 million persons from agriculture to nonfarm jobs, and in 1932, 3.5 million persons were so transferred. During the remainder of the 1930s, Orgnabor transferred an average of 2.5 million workers annually from farms to industrial and construction enterprises. According to the Soviet economist Sonin, Orgnabor provided at least one-half of the new workers that were added to industry during 1929-37 and at least two-thirds of those added to construction enterprises during those years. The proportions were somewhat smaller during 1938-40.[36]

In 1942, the functions of Orgnabor were transferred to the Committee for Reporting and Distributing Labor under the Council of Peoples Commissars, which controlled the wartime mobilization of the civilian population. When it was reestablished in 1947, Orgnabor was administered by a department in the Ministry of Labor Reserves. In 1953, its functions were dispersed among the republics and assigned to Main Administrations for Organized Recruitment under the Councils of Ministers of the various republics.[37] Since 1967, Orgnabor has functioned as a separate department in the State Committees for the Utilization of Labor Resources established in each of the republics.[38]

The relative role of Orgnabor in filling the labor requirements for Soviet industry has diminished steadily since World War II. By 1950, Orgnabor accounted for only 13 percent of all workers hired by industrial enterprises, in 1955 10 percent, and in 1958 about 6 percent.[39] By 1972, for the RSFSR alone, Orgnabor's share of new hires was only about 4 percent.[40]

In the early years of its operation, Orgnabor assigned quotas to collective farms and negotiated collective labor contracts with the farm management. An individual who was included in the quota but refused to leave could be expelled from the collective farm.[41] Since the 1950s, however, Orgnabor has depended mostly on recruiting in urban areas.

In the RSFSR, for example, the proportion of urban residents among those recruited by Orgnabor increased from 28 percent in 1950 to 74 percent in 1958.[42]

Labor Exchanges

The opening in 1969 of nine local Placement and Job Information Bureaus in the RSFSR -- under the jurisdiction of the republic's State Committee for the Utilization of Labor Resources -- marked the restoration of labor exchanges after an absence of 39 years from the Soviet labor scene. The bureaus were established on an experimental basis in Arkhangel'sk, Vladimir, Tula, Ufa, Krasnodar, Stavropol', Kuybyshev, Tomsk, and Cherkassk -- mainly centers of machine-building and metallurgical industries and probably characterized by chronic labor shortages and high labor turnover. By 1975, labor exchanges existed in 278 cities in the USSR, including all cities with a population of 100,000 or more in the RSFSR.[43]

Use of the labor exchanges, and their effectiveness, increased rapidly. The number of registrants in the RSFSR increased from 128,000 in 1969 to 1,183,000 in 1974, the share of registrants referred to potential employers increased from 75 percent to 95 percent, and the share actually placed in jobs increased from 37 percent to 64 percent.[44]

As in other industrial countries, the major purpose of the Soviet labor exchanges is to match jobseekers and jobs. The RSFSR Council of Ministers in its decree of October 1972 entitled "On the Operation of the Job Placement and Public Information Bureaus" pointed out that the job placement and public information bureaus set up in RSFSR cities are assisting in supplying personnel to enterprises and organizations of especially major national economic significance, contributing to the rational use of labor resources, informing the public on enterprises' and organizations' requirements for workers, and contributing to the population's job placement. The job placement of the public through bureaus, according to the decree, is functioning as "a new form for the systematic distribution and redistribution of manpower in accordance with the requirements of the developmental stage of the national economy today."[45]

Terms like "unemployment" or even "frictional unemployment" are totally absent from Soviet evaluations of the role and effectiveness of their labor exchanges, but absence of the terms does not mean that the problems they define also are absent. Note, for example, the following evaluation in a Soviet journal:

> The development of the productive forces of socialist society is accompanied by growth in the territorial, branch, and occupational mobility of manpower. Given the conditions

> of the socialist management system, this thrusts to the fore extremely important problems in the field of the systematic organization of the processes of manpower distribution....
>
> The distribution and redistribution of manpower involve the placement of the participants by types of activity in branch and territorial breakdowns. These processes require a certain amount of time, during which manpower is temporarily distracted from direct participation in the labor process....
>
> ...in facilitating the search for a job, the (placement) bureau contributes to reducing the time during which an individual is outside the labor force. The bureau's role is also great in attracting to feasible work individuals with limited physical ability (invalids, old-age pensioners) and women burdened with family matters. Bureau employees are doing much to facilitate the (employment)...of individuals who have returned from places of incarceration.[46]

Despite their expansion in numbers, labor exchanges still play a limited role in the Soviet labor market. In 1974, about 86 percent of all industrial new hires in the RSFSR got their jobs with no organized assistance -- the same percentage as in 1968.[47] Most "help wanted" information is still obtained from bulletin boards and direct inquiries to factories. According to a deputy division chief of the State Planning Committee in Moscow, writing in January 1977, "this results in...distinctive competition among enterprises in enticing workers, and increased outlays for advertising and vocational retraining of personnel. Such a practice only aggravates labor turnover and intensifies its unfavorable

consequences...." The Gosplan official then went on to propose that the placement bureaus be empowered to go beyond their role as intermediaries between employers and employees and actually verify the employers' stated need for workers. "This should be regarded," he wrote, "as one of the stages of creating in the country an integrated state system for managing labor resources."[48]

The ultimate role of the labor exchanges is uncertain, partly because of their ideological ambiguities and partly because of the government's ambivalence toward "an integrated state system for managing labor resources." The Soviet labor force currently numbers about 135 million, with almost 100 million in nonagricultural branches and about 35 million of those in industry.[49] With numbers such as these, and an increasingly specialized labor force as well, the role of the exchanges will likely be limited to that of an intermediary, with any additional functions relating more to vocational guidance rather than to controlling allocation.

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