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Pamphlet
.SO-040

Miners' Rights

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Novosti Press Agency Publishing House
Moscow, 1981

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ПРАВА СОВЕТСКИХ ШАХТЕРОВ
на английском языке
Цена 20 коп.

Translated from the Russian by Tamara Mats
Translation edited by Michelle MacGrath

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1981

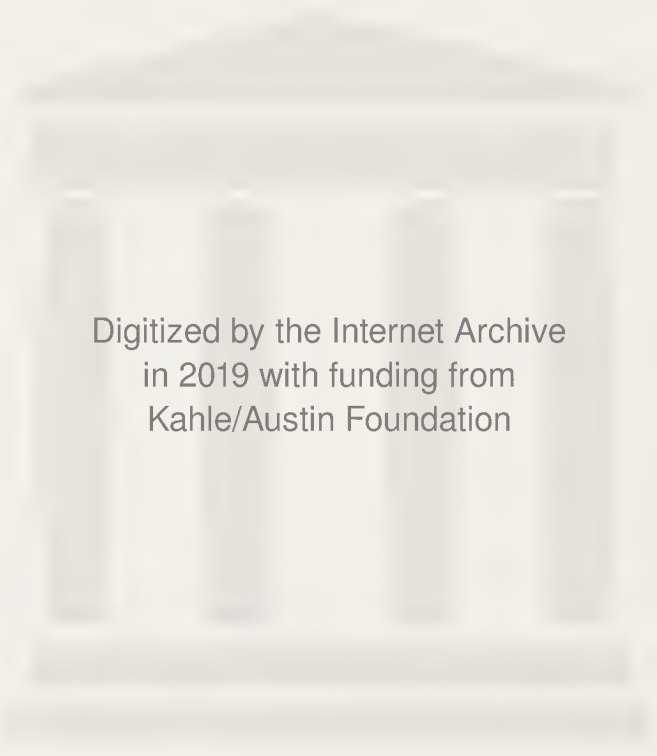
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Editing completed on February 9, 1981

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MINERS IN THE SOVIET UNION

The town is known throughout the country as the town of a million roses. Each summer a million roses flower in Donetsk which has a population of a million and is the centre of the oldest coal basin in the country. It was only ten years ago that the plan to turn Donetsk into a blossoming town was devised but it has already become a reality. If you wander through Donetsk on a summer evening you will be struck by the beauty of the illuminated roses standing proudly in the centre of well-tended lawns, a tribute to the miners who supply the country with "black gold", to their wives, loyal assistants who are usually employed in the coal industry as well, and to their sons, the miners of the future. They are miners' roses.

Donetsk stands in a sea of greenery, the million roses forming a beautiful pattern on the green carpet of the town. For several years now it has been the most green industrial city in the world, a fact confirmed by the United Nations Organization in 1979.

Donetsk is a young town and was founded in 1869 as the Yuzovka settlement when a metallurgic-

al plant was constructed there. Since 1917, it has been developing rapidly and is now a major centre of the coal, metallurgical and chemical industries and an attractive modern town.

Like Donetsk, the mining centres in the Ukraine, in the region around Moscow, in Siberia, Soviet Central Asia, the Caucasus, Kazakhstan and the Soviet Far East are noted for their greenery. All the towns in these areas are extremely well cared for and clean. This illustrates the natural concern felt for those who have chosen such a difficult, though a very necessary profession.

This book attempts to outline the rights of miners in the Soviet Union and to give some idea what their life is like: how young people become miners, their conditions of work, their leisure time, their standard of living and life style.

The coal industry still occupies an important place in the Soviet economy although coal is neither the sole nor even the major source of energy today. Oil and gas, which are much cheaper, provide more of the country's fuel, while atomic power and other energy sources are rapidly becoming more important.

The Soviet Union leads the world in its coal reserves and production. The demand for coal is constantly rising as industry expands. In 1978, production stood at 724 million tons, while 790-810 million tons were planned for 1980. It is estimated that output will exceed a thousand million tons by 1990. Coal is valuable not only as a fuel: coke is widely used in the metallurgical industry and serves as a raw material for the chemical industry. Half of the coal produced in the Soviet Union is used for power production. As Lenin, the founder of the Soviet

state, emphasised, the electrification of the entire country is the material and technical basis for building communism.

In view of the need to increase the country's fuel and energy resources, more new mines are being built in the eastern part of the Soviet Union and production in the ones already in operation, such as those in the Donetsk, Kuznetsk, Karaganda and Pechora regions, is being raised. The 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held in 1976, outlined the important tasks facing the coal industry: the completion of an opencut and a dressing factory with an annual capacity of 13 million tons in the South-Yakut coal basin; the completion of the Kansk-Achinsk fuel and energy complex including a series of power stations with an overall capacity of 65-75 million kilowatts using cheap opencut coal; the Ekibastuz coal basin was to be further developed, with the capacity of its *Bogatyr* opencut reaching 50 million tons a year by the end of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (1976-1980).

Increases in production are primarily achieved by additional mechanization: cutting and breaking down, loading and transportation at the breasts, and the loading and hauling of coal and rock in rail trucks are now mechanized. In recent years opencut extraction is assuming greater importance.

The coal industry employs over two million people, approximately half of whom are engaged directly in mining. The state allocates huge sums for mechanization: several large research and design institutes are concerned with the further automation of coal extraction and the introduction of new safety measures. However, despite these efforts to improve and modernize, the miners' work remains arduous and far from safe.

Mining is consequently held in high esteem in the Soviet Union and, as is only reasonable, a number of laws have been adopted to provide additional rights and privileges for miners.

The trade union, the largest public organization, plays an important part in the life of Soviet people. Soviet trade unions have a membership of over 127 million (98 per cent of gainfully employed population), and are organized according to industry. The highest body of each trade union is the congress which elects its Central Committee. The highest body of all trade unions is the congress of the trade unions of the USSR and, between congresses, the leading body is the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (AUCCTU). Locally, trade union activity is headed by republican, regional, territorial and city councils of trade unions. The basis of the trade union activities is the primary trade union organisation at enterprises, mines, offices and institutes.

Trade unions have extensive rights. They nominate candidates as deputies to the Soviets of People's Deputies (that is, government bodies) including the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. They have the right to initiate legislation and to take part in the elaboration of laws concerning production, labour, everyday life and culture. They are responsible for emulation to fulfil and overfulfil production targets and this is a great stimulus for increasing output.

The trade union of the coal industry exercises strict control over the observance of labour legislation at all enterprises in the industry, especially on sections which are underground, and keeps an eye on safety precautions. The trade union concludes collective agreements with the management, takes part in resolving labour disputes, and organizes the

system of public control. It also sees that housing plans are met and services developed. It helps to improve shops and public catering, participates in the affairs of social security bodies, has a say in the distribution of flats, provides the miners and their families with places at sanatoria, rest homes and children's camps, and organizes sporting activities and tourism. The trade union is the medium through which miners can take part in the elaboration of production plans and in the management of production, and can exercise control over the work of the administration.

The trade union pays special attention to developing the miners' creative initiative, to innovation and to improving mining techniques. There are permanent production commissions including miners, workers, engineers and employees attached to the local trade union committees at mines, construction sites, enterprises and offices. The trade union relies on the initiative and support of many voluntary helpers from among those employed in the coal industry.

The trade unions enjoy full support of the Communist Party, the Young Communist League and other public organizations. Important decisions are taken jointly since all these organizations have a common goal.

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The rights of the Soviet people to receive an education, to choose a trade and to get a job are interdependent and are stated in, and guaranteed by the Constitution. In the Soviet Union secondary education is compulsory for all, including miners, of

course. Before the 1917 October Revolution, there were lots of illiterate peasants among miners who, thanks to the help of experienced workers, picked up the necessary skills while actually at work in the mine. Today, a general education and special training are essential before you can start work as a miner.

A secondary education can be obtained in general ten-year secondary schools and vocational schools which give their students a trade as well as a secondary education. There are also specialized secondary schools and higher education establishments which make the right of Soviet citizens to education a reality.

Many people who work during the day study in the evenings or by correspondence. Soviet legislation provides certain privileges for those who combine work and studies. Over the last five years some 13-15,000 miners have received a general secondary education while still fully employed.

Almost all students at specialized secondary schools and institutions of further education receive a state student grant. Only those who get bad marks and whose parents are well-off do not receive grants; if they work badly but are from a low-income family they nevertheless are eligible.

There are 202 vocational schools which train skilled workers for the coal industry. They admit young people of 15 or 16 who have received an eight-year education (incomplete secondary) at a general education school. These schools train operators of coal combines, excavators, and knife machines, electricians, and other mining specialists. Training is from one and a half to two years. Students are provided with free accommodation in a hall of residence, a uniform, working clothes and three free

meals a day, or monetary compensation if preferred. They are paid for the work they do during practicals and their training is included in their service record.

Students get better and more thorough professional training at four-year vocational schools. Admission requirements here are the same but, in addition to professional training, students receive a general secondary education and, upon graduating, are issued certificates which give them the right to higher education. These schools are very popular both with young people and their parents for very obvious reasons: the students receive a good trade, they can subsequently enter any institution of further education they choose and they are also supported by the state for four years.

It is possible for miners to raise their qualifications at special training centres and their branches (of which there are 111), on various courses (of which there are over 800) and in mining schools for machine-operators (of which there are over 30). These centres have well-equipped study rooms and laboratories with the latest mining techniques or models of them and study materials on mining, safety precautions, machinery, economics, automation, industrial electronics and electrical engineering. All the centres have libraries and reading rooms.

Much has been done to raise the general education and the professional level of workers and technicians. The country's 47 specialized secondary schools graduate annually some 12,000 specialists for the coal industry. The enrolment at these schools is as high as 80,000, half of whom study while continuing to work.

Institutes for mining engineers and mining departments at polytechnics train some two thousand en-

gineers a year. Students at these institutes receive grants that are 25 per cent above the average.

The research and design institutes and enterprises in the coal industry employ 2,230 candidates and doctors of science. This huge army of intellectuals is making a valuable contribution to the technical progress of the coal industry and the raising of efficiency.

THE RIGHT TO WORK

This right is guaranteed by the Constitution of the USSR. Foreigners visiting the Soviet Union are often struck by the number of WANTED ads which are found virtually everywhere: in the newspapers, on factory walls, on special boards in the streets, in buses and trolleybuses. Thousands upon thousands of construction sites, plants, factories and trading organizations are desperately in need of workers of various kinds and educational levels. Naturally, in mining areas most of the WANTED ads are for jobs in the mines.

It is quite natural for the Soviet Union, with its rapidly developing economy and increasing need for engineers, technicians and, above all, skilled workers, to have a shortage of labour. It is hard for anyone living there to imagine what unemployment is like since it was done away with half a century ago, in 1930.

The Soviet Constitution says that citizens of the USSR have the right to choose their trade or profession, type of job and work in accordance with their inclinations and abilities. Educational level and vocational training are naturally taken into consideration. It is prohibited by the Fundamentals of Labour

Legislation of the Soviet Union and Union Republics to refuse anyone a job without valid reason. According to the Constitution, when employing someone any direct or indirect limitation of his rights, or direct or indirect privileges on the grounds of sex, race, nationality or religious belief are also prohibited.

There is also one important detail: in all enterprises and organizations a number of vacancies are held open each year solely for employing young people straight from general secondary, vocational, specialized secondary or higher schools. This means that the right of a young Soviet citizen to work is guaranteed by the state which obliges employers to hire a young person wanting to start his working career.

One may ask why it is necessary to bother with all these measures if there are so many vacancies. The reasons are, however, obvious. Any employer would prefer to hire an experienced worker rather than a greenhorn for whom even the simplest job is totally new. There are, of course, some managers who are far-sighted enough to appreciate the benefits of hiring young people, training them with the help of experienced workers and, in a year or two, turning out experienced engineers, technicians or skilled workers. Consequently, these rules concerning the employment of young people are devised for those managers who are less imaginative.

The second reason is the result of migration: the acute shortage of labour in one city today may have disappeared by tomorrow when the enterprises in the neighbouring city have to start putting up their WANTED ads. As a rule, young people looking for their first job live at home, and it would be better

for them to start their working career in their native town.

Article 40 of the Soviet Constitution states that the right to work is ensured by the socialist economic system, steady growth of the productive forces, free vocational and professional training, improvement of skills and training in new trades or professions. Clearly the Constitution concentrates, and quite rightly so, on material guarantees for realizing the right to work.

The right to work presupposes the right to remuneration in accordance with the quantity and quality of work done. It is illegal for the wage of a worker or an employee to be lower than the established minimum. It should be noted that this minimum wage is constantly increasing, the latest rise being given in 1978-79.

The work done by all wage and salary earners, including miners, is covered by labour legislation. Nevertheless, the special working conditions in the coal industry, its economic significance for the nation, the character of production and the organization of labour made it necessary to introduce clauses into the legislation concerning miners alone.

Let us see how the constitutional right to work is realized, when, for instance, a person is given a job.

As we have already mentioned, due to the nature of the work, the working conditions in mines are rather arduous: work is carried on deep underground where there is only artificial light, a lot of dust and sometimes dangerous gases; the humidity and temperature are well above normal. In mines, therefore, there are a number of unfavourable related conditions.

Consequently there are special rules for hiring both workers and office employees to work in the coal industry.

Firstly, a large number of jobs, especially underground jobs, require special training.

The complicated work underground requires especially rigid safety precautions. Special responsibility rests with those who maintain the modern mining machinery, with the electricians and maintenance staff. This is why legislation for the coal industry stipulates specialized training as a requirement for a lot of posts. For some jobs there are additional demands regarding a future worker's skill. As the mines are equipped on an increasing scale with modern complicated machinery, the coal industry's demand for more educated and skilled personnel is growing. The main concern is not only to ensure the correct operation of the machinery but also to safeguard the lives and health of the miners.

Secondly, for some jobs there is an age restriction and former experience in the coal industry is required. For instance, in order to take exams for the right to perform blasting operations underground, which is very dangerous, the candidate must be twenty or over, have at least a seven-year education and at least a year's experience of underground silling or work on cleared faces.

Thirdly, anyone applying for a job in the coal industry must pass a rigorous medical examination based on standards which are applied for all types of activity, even sport: the Soviet health service will never allow someone to work in conditions injurious to his health.

In accordance with Soviet labour legislation, any job applicant has to be submitted to a medical check-up. It is compulsory for underground work-

ers and for all workers, technicians and engineers who run the risk of pneumoconiosis to have extremely thorough medical examinations including X-rays at least once a year. Some workers have monthly medical check-ups, for instance, underground machine operators, and workers dealing with the drinking water supply to mines, etc. Naturally, all these check-ups, as well as any subsequent treatment (if necessary) either as out-patients or in hospital, are free, since the Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to health protection which is ensured by free qualified medical care provided by the state health service.

All these examinations in fact cause the mines' management a lot of trouble, especially as far as young people are concerned. If a young man feels fit and has no complaints he usually has a very ironical attitude towards these check-ups and is in no hurry to have them; he may have to be persuaded and even reprimanded. This is quite just, since the prime aim of the health service is to prevent disease.

Fourthly, it is illegal to hire young people under eighteen for underground work.

Women were prohibited from working underground more than twenty years ago, i.e. at a time when the country was rehabilitating the economy after the war and experiencing an acute shortage of labour in all industries. Nevertheless, since working on the face appeared to be injurious for women's health it was decided to stop hiring them for underground jobs. They were given work of their choice on the surface even though it was then quite difficult to find men to replace them. The decision was, however, taken and carried out.

Everyone working underground should receive special training in safety necessary for work in a

coal mine. It should be mentioned that the contract between a worker and a mine, an opencut or a dressing factory goes into force the day the worker starts his safety training. He consequently feels part of the work force and receives both rights and responsibilities. He is paid and his training is included in his service record, which is important for being eligible for bonuses, new housing, and so on. Anyone changing his trade also has to undergo training in safety and industrial hygiene. There are special training centres with full-time courses for workers. The examining commission is generally headed by the chief engineer of the mine or his deputy; their participation underlines the significance of the exams and makes it easier to assess the students' knowledge.

Training lasts ten days for anyone without previous experience of working in mines, and five with experience. The terms of training vary for different categories of workers.

Like everyone applying to work underground, students of higher, specialized secondary and vocational schools who come to gain work experience in a mine have to undergo a five-day period of preliminary training and to pass an exam in safety techniques. In addition, all workers are annually given safety instruction, since rapid technological progress often necessitates radical changes in safety measures.

After completing their safety training, everyone without a mining trade or those wishing to change the one they have are sent to mining schools where the length of study depends on the profession chosen.

Since work is often organized more flexibly today, workers on cleared and development faces should

master at least two trades, and the mine management is held responsible for training.

WOMEN AND ADOLESCENTS

It is illegal to employ women and young men under eighteen for work which is arduous or injurious to health, underground work included. To protect the health of young people further, it is also prohibited to hire workers under twenty for work which incurs risk of pneumoconiosis.

Labour legislation strictly defines the cases when women and men under eighteen may work underground: for example, students of mining schools are allowed to do practical training underground from the age of seventeen. The same goes for students of educational institutions training workers for mines, construction sites and other enterprises connected with coal industry.

According to the resolution of the Secretariat of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, the mine management is obliged to meet the following requirements before letting students go down into the mine: students must have a thorough medical check-up; they must have a grounding in safety; they should be acquainted with the technical facilities and plans in case of emergency; they must pass a special exam. There are additional restrictions: adolescents are neither allowed to be employed in renovating neglected mines nor to work in those sections of a mine where dangerous blasting operations are carried out. The working day of adolescents underground must not exceed three hours. Labour legislation prohibits individual training of

young men under 18 by experienced workers right in the mine.

We mentioned earlier that it is illegal to hire women to work in coal mines or on underground construction sites. An exception is made for women holding responsible posts at the mine, for medical workers and for workers in the service sphere who spend only short periods in the mine. They cannot be employed in manual work. This concludes the few instances when women may work underground.

HEALTHY WORKING CONDITIONS— THE CONCERN OF THE STATE

The right of miners to work is guaranteed by providing safe and healthy working conditions. Mines are supplied with up-to-date equipment, and production is being continuously mechanized and automated. Today, mines employ over four thousand coal combines and 1,650 entry-driving machines. Some 1,600 cleared faces are fully mechanized; they account for 60 per cent of the coal output at gently sloping beds and medium-steep seams. The enterprises which use an opencut method of coal extraction are also equipped with very productive mining and hauling equipment.

Soon all transportation from the faces to the main horizontal roadways will be done by conveyor belts; the majority of mines will be equipped with trunk conveyors; supports are now made from metal and reinforced concrete. More and more machinery is fully automatic or directed by remote control. The opencut method is increasingly widespread: in 1978, output reached 36.8 per cent of the total. Research is underway to devise methods of manless

coal extraction. New equipment for automatic gas protection and cooling installations to reduce the temperature in the breasts are introduced each year. Ventilation is constantly being improved; new fans are installed, and old hoisting machines are replaced. There are two research institutes concerned with safety and improving working conditions in the coal industry.

All the improvements planned for the period from 1976 to 1980 required tremendous outlays, but the state does not spare funds to make mining safer and easier.

The Makeyevka and East-Siberian research institutes of safety in the coal industry are the two institutes dealing with safety in coal and shale mines. A group of British miners who visited one of them made the following entry in the visitors' book: "We used to say in our country that it is much better to build a fence to guard a precipice than to call an ambulance to the foot of the mountain. The institute we visited aims at working out the principles, methods and means of making the work of the miners safer. We bow our heads before this institute and its employees."

Safe working conditions in the coal and other industries are ensured by reliable equipment and technology as well as by measures aimed at ensuring the observance of the Labour Code, primarily, the sections on safety and hygiene. Article 139 of the Labour Code of the Russian Federation and the respective articles of the Labour Codes of other Union Republics rule that the responsibility for the provision of good and safe working conditions rests with the management of enterprises, mines, plants and factories. The latter is obliged to introduce mod-



A. Vorobchenko (right), a coal-cutting machine operator, and V. Gusarov, section chief, on the face of the Toresskaya mine.



The Ekibastuz coal basin. Multi-bucket wheel excavator in the Bogatyr openpit.



Dmitri Zagolovtsev (left), an excavator team leader and Iskak Uashev, coal-cutting machine operator.





This is how leading miners are congratulated on their work in Donetsk.



Before the shift (the Trudovskaya mine in Donetsk).

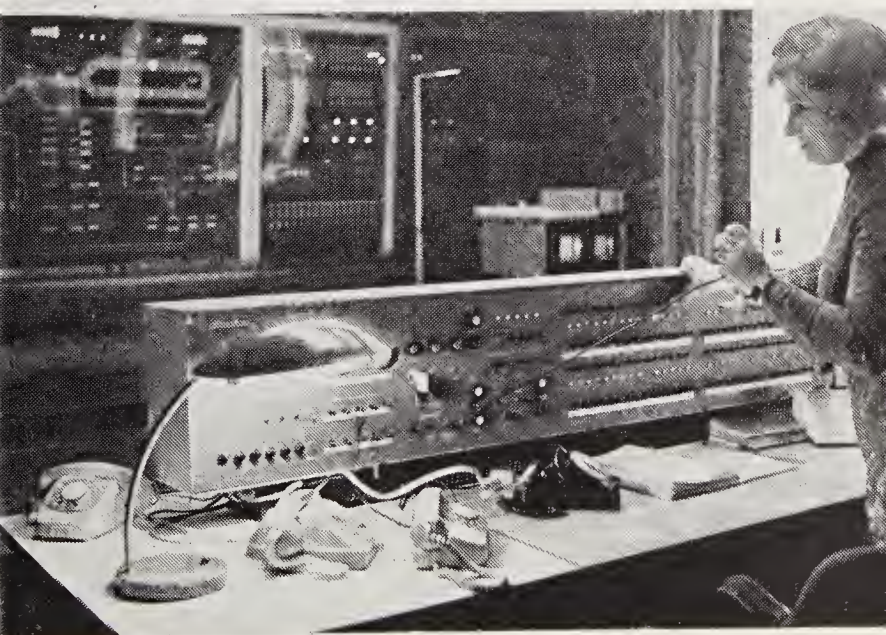
Testing the purity of air in the mine.





Valentina Mikheyeva, a mine surveyor of the Eki-bastuz association, surveying an open-cut.

Natalia Chernyak, a dispatcher at the Intinskaya mine, is responsible for power, ventilation, transportation and other operations connected with coal extraction.





A miner having a check-up in an out-patients' clinic.



In the miners' rest home, Romantika. From left to right: A. Reshto, chief engineer of the mine, L. Primak, senior nurse, and G. Astashkin, a coal-cutting machine operator and deputy to the city Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

A routine check-up of a miner's cardio-vascular and respiratory systems.

Training fire-fighters in mock emergency conditions.

A. Gorbunov, A. Petenyov and V. Voronkin have received a training alarm and are heading for the "accident".





Training how to salvage a flooded coal face.



Anatoli Asyutchenko, a miners' team leader and deputy to the Soviet of People's Deputies in Donetsk.

Donetsk is the greenest
mining town.



A miner's family in a park in Donetsk.



It is a tradition in Asyutchenko's team for a bridegroom to bring his bride to meet his colleagues before the wedding.

Alexander Pripechenko, a member of Asyutchenko's team and a Master of Sports in Judo.



A glass of beer is especially pleasant after a shift underground.

Asyutchenko's team relax.





ern safety measures and see that standards of hygiene are such as to preclude occupational diseases.

It is obligatory for workers of coal and shale mines to know the basic mining safety. Consequently the management is legally obliged to provide systematic instruction on safety, hygiene, fire prevention and other aspects of safety legislation.

To protect health and ensure safety, Soviet legislation stipulates the measures to be taken for protection against harmful, strenuous and dangerous working conditions. In some cases, workers are issued free milk and special food. Miners are accordingly issued free working clothes, footwear, self-rescuers, individual lanterns and other means of protection.

The state (namely the USSR State Committee on control over the observance of safety regulations in industry and on control in the coal industry and its local bodies) and the public (namely the trade union mining committees, trade union commissions for labour protection and voluntary factory inspectors) exercise strict control over the observance of legislation on labour protection. Mining and factory inspectors are vested with the right to inspect the mine at any moment and, if necessary, stop work, order the workers to leave and issue a prohibition notice on work areas or machinery if safety regulations are violated. They have the right to impose fines on the officials responsible if the violation of the regulations could have caused an accident or endangered life.

In addition to state bodies and inspectorates, control over labour legislation and safety is carried out, according to the law, by the trade unions and the factory and legal inspectorates which are within their jurisdiction.

General state control over the observance of safety legislation is also carried out by the office of the public prosecutor which means that it has become of national importance to ensure safety in mines.

WAGES

If you look at how miners live and the houses they live in you will get a more accurate impression of their living standards than if you just consider their wages. In the post-war years, when cars became popular in the Soviet Union, miners were the major purchasers and they continue to buy a lot of cars and motorcycles today. Miners like to dress well and can afford good clothes. They also have enough money to spend a month at the seaside, preferring the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov where there are numerous sanatoria and rest homes.

Miners' wages are paid according to differentiated rates set by the state and the coal industry's trade union. Consequently, day rates differ according to the skill grade established for each particular trade.

Miners' wages are higher than those of other industrial workers. Naturally rates for underground work are 20-25 per cent higher than for surface work or for extraction by the opencut method.

When establishing rates for each category of workers, the following considerations are taken into account: necessary qualifications, the importance and complexity of the work, and whether it is arduous or harmful in any way. The trades of all underground workers are divided into seven grades depending on the character of the work and the de-

mands made on the worker; the trades of workers of coal-dressing plants have ten grades, and the rest of the workers, including those engaged on surface work, have eight grades.

For every trade there is a reference book giving a detailed description and examples of all types of work involved, and specifying the minimum expertise required for each professional grade.

Each mine has a standing qualifications commission which determines a worker's grade. It comprises a representative of the management (a chief engineer or a chief mechanic), a representative of the trade union, the chief of the worker's particular section, the chief of the training centre and several experienced workers in the trade. A worker is only awarded a grade if he passes the required exam.

After a year, some categories of workers start to receive annual bonuses for their length of service as an increasing percentage of their monthly wage. These categories include those engaged in or connected with underground work at coal or shale mines which are still under construction or are already functioning; people working in arduous and harmful conditions, in opencut coal and shale pits, or the dumps of such pits; workers of dressing and briquette-making plants and those engaged in sorting.

For instance, after a year, a drift miner receives a bonus which is eighty per cent of his monthly pay and is usually paid at the end of each year. The size of the bonus increases annually. The service record includes, as we have already mentioned, the training period, any time spent on raising qualifications full-time, and national service, if the worker was a miner before call-up and returned to his job immediately after his term of service.

In addition to this miners receive a bonus, known as the "thirteenth pay", for overall annual results. The size of it depends on length of service, wage and each worker's contribution to the collective effort. For example, the "thirteenth pay" for the workers of the Tulaugol association, who excelled themselves during the year and received government and other awards, was raised by 25 per cent.

Miners working in the Far North and in regions of the same status have additional privileges. After six months of work they receive a ten-per-cent pay rise, although, ultimately, it should not exceed their full wage. Moreover, the wages of workers in such areas are generally higher than of those in the central regions. For instance, all the wages of those employed in the Vorkutaugol association are 50 per cent higher than those in other parts of the country. Their annual leave can be from 36 to 57 working days. Once every three years all return travel expenses for their holiday are paid by the state, no matter how far they travel.

Demobilized soldiers who are directed to the mines by the Young Communist League and who conclude an agreement with the mine or construction site management for at least three years receive 1,000 roubles not to be paid back for settling in.

Rent in the Soviet Union is the lowest and most stable in the world. Together with utilities charges, it usually does not exceed three or four per cent of the family budget. For instance, a miner's family of four with a monthly income of 500-600 roubles pays for their four-room flat (which they received from the state free of charge) some 14-15 roubles a month. This covers all utilities charges, including hot and cold water, cleaning the staircases and the lifts, keeping the land around the building tidy, routine

maintenance and capital repairs. In addition, the family has to pay some five or six roubles for electricity, two roubles fifty kopecks a month for the telephone and 96 kopecks for gas.

About 25 per cent of a family income goes on food: prices for foodstuffs and consumer goods are generally stable.

How much does food cost? Meat is two roubles a kilogram; butter, three roubles fifty kopecks; bread, 20-30 kopecks; sugar, a rouble; potatoes, 10 kopecks, even in winter. These are state prices; in the market they are a little higher and vacillate depending on the season.

It may be mentioned that miners get very cheap lunches in special canteens. In addition, many families have their own kitchen gardens, orchards and poultry. Members of miners' families who have subsidiary plots in the countryside are exempted from paying agricultural tax.

When considering miners' incomes it should be noted that free medical care is guaranteed by the Constitution, all forms of education are also free, and miners usually receive their flats free of charge. Moreover, state grants are provided for students at vocational and specialized schools and institutions of further education.

The upkeep of a child in kindergartens or creches costs the parents 12-15 roubles at the most, the rest (80 per cent) being paid by the state. A lot of children live in a kindergarten for five days a week.

EVERYDAY LIFE

The state does not spare any effort to improve shops and public catering in mining settlements. Enterprises in the coal industry are serviced by some

three thousand public catering establishments seating 500,000, thirty per cent of which are located directly at the enterprises. Dozens of cafes, canteens and shops are opened every year in miners' settlements and towns. Trading establishments servicing the workers of the coal industry include over ten thousand shops. Industrial associations, mines and opencuts often have developed subsidiary economies. There are over a million square metres occupied by the coal industry's subsidiary economies and the hothouses of associated state farms. Increasing amounts of spring vegetables are produced each year.

Depending on the conditions and place of work, hot meals, which are generally very good, are taken down into the mine either in special containers or individual vacuum flasks.

The miners who have pneumoconiosis are put on a special diet free for two months. Some three million roubles are annually allocated for this from the state social security budget.

Often very concrete and not just general questions are dealt with. For instance, in 1979 alone the Ministry of Trade of the Russian Federation twice heard the reports of the Department of Workers' Supply of the Ministry of the Coal Industry dealing with the supply of meals underground. Even the fact that one of the mines was using vacuum flasks of an obsolete design was mentioned in these reports and the appropriate management was severely criticized. Particular attention is paid to the supply of miners working in the north.

Miners' canteens are exceedingly cheap: for example, a four-course lunch costs 50 kopecks at most, although it is as good as you could have in a restaurant.

We were a little surprised by the cheapness of the canteens, even taking the skill of the chefs into account, since the prices of foodstuffs are uniform throughout the Soviet Union. The low prices are explained by the fact that almost all mining associations have their own subsidiary animal farms and market gardens which supply the catering establishments with fresh meat and vegetables.

These canteens are very popular with the miners and their families often eat there as well in the evening, which is very convenient for working mothers. The canteens' décor is another point in their favour; they are often tastefully decorated with mosaics, ceramics and metal-chasing; they sometimes have coloured TV sets and good music.

Wedding receptions, birthday parties and other celebrations are often held in these canteens. They are usually accompanied by one of the amateur music groups which are becoming consistently more popular among miners. This is only to be expected since young people are generally fond of music and have a lot of free time; quality instruments are bought for the groups out of the trade union's ample funds and their suits are ordered at the fashion houses in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Riga or Tallinn.

In addition to the trade union's contribution to miners' welfare, the Ministry of the Coal Industry has sufficient funds to build spacious Palaces of Culture, restaurants, canteens, schools, kindergartens, swimming pools and sports stadiums in mining settlements and towns.

THE RIGHT TO HOUSING

The USSR Constitution was the first to guarantee the right to housing. Housing construction is carried

on on a vast scale: six thousand new flats are built every day. Over the last five years miners have received flats with a total floor space of 10.7 million square metres, or, in other words, 210,000 families now have new homes.

Some housing is not financed by the state, but by a special fund set aside for the purpose by the mines, and is built with the help of those employed in the industry.

Miners can also build their own detached houses with extensions, if they like, in the yard. Local government bodies supply the plots of land and state organizations sell all the necessary building materials.

Independent house building is done on favourable terms for the future owner who pays only 20 per cent of the estimated cost, including all extensions and the garage. The management has the right to reduce this payment further to only 10 per cent for demobilized soldiers, newlyweds and young specialists, and for workers doing especially hard or dangerous work. Here we have another example of state benefits for this category of workers.

The management of the mines, opencuts and dressing factories enjoys long-term credit with the Construction Bank of the USSR for independent house building and this covers 80 per cent of the estimated cost. This sum has to be reimbursed over fifteen years starting from the second year after completion. Moreover, half of the credit is paid off by the enterprise itself, i.e. by the state.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Like everyone else in the Soviet Union, miners have the right to maintenance by the state in old

age, in sickness and in the event of complete or partial disability or loss of the breadwinner.

Underground workers and those working in adverse conditions receive an above-average pension on favourable terms.

Old-age pensions. Men are generally entitled to a pension at the age of sixty if they have worked for at least 25 years; women at 55 after 20 years. For work underground, in arduous conditions and in hot shops, pensionable age is reduced by ten years, and the number of years required, by five. Anyone serving only half his working life as a miner is also entitled to a pension on favourable conditions, irrespective of his last job.

Old-age pensions are a percentage of the wage received, the percentage being increased for underground work. For instance, if the standard old-age pension is 50 per cent of the former wage (for wages of a hundred roubles a month and more), the rate for underground works will be 55 per cent.

The national maximum for old-age pensions is 120 roubles; for workers of the coal and shale industries employed on arduous work in conditions injurious to health and for underground and construction workers engaged in underground operations old-age pensions may reach 140 roubles (after 15 to 20 years in these jobs) or even 160 roubles (after 20 years).

Pensioners who continue to work underground at a coal or shale mine which is in operation or still under construction receive their full old-age pension irrespective of earnings.

Disability pensions. Anyone who is disabled is entitled to a disability pension, the value of which depends on the cause and degree of disability, the length of service, the conditions of work and the individual's wage at the time of disability.

However, anyone disabled at work or suffering from an occupational disease receives a pension irrespective of his length of service and one which is higher than an ordinary sickness pension. Rates are further increased for those working underground, in hot shops and in arduous conditions or in conditions injurious to health.

Widow's and Dependent's Pensions are given to the late employee's dependents.

The dependents of employees who die from a disease other than an occupational one are entitled to a pension if, at the moment of his or her death, the breadwinner had worked long enough to be eligible for an ordinary sickness pension. The pension is higher and the required service record is shorter for the families of workers engaged on underground work and other jobs with arduous or harmful conditions.

The families of employees dying as a result of an industrial accident or occupational disease are entitled to higher pensions if the deceased was the breadwinner, irrespective of his length of service. Pensions are higher still for the families of underground workers and those in the privileged categories mentioned previously.

Temporary disability allowances. All employees of the coal industry are entitled to this allowance irrespective of their length of service. The only exception is made for those dismissed from their previous jobs for a breach of discipline or committing a crime. Anyone in this group is entitled to a disability allowance after he has worked at a new enterprise for at least six months unless he was disabled as a result of an industrial accident or an occupational disease, in which case the time requirement is waived.

The value of a disability allowance depends on the number of years in consistent full employment (except in cases of industrial accidents and occupational diseases) and on trade union membership.

If someone suffers disablement or an occupational disease as a result of his work he receives a disability allowance equal to his wage irrespective of the number of years he has been employed or trade union membership. If disablement is due to some other cause (illness, for example), an employee receives 50 per cent of his wage as a disability allowance if he has been in uninterrupted full employment for less than three years, the percentage gradually rising to equal his full pay after eight years of work. Anyone not belonging to a trade union receives a disability allowance which is 50 per cent lower than that of union members in a similar situation.

THE RIGHT TO LEISURE TIME

The Soviet Constitution guarantees the right of citizens to leisure. As we have already mentioned, this is ensured by granting people annual leave with full pay. In addition, it is promoted by creating an extensive network of centres to encourage cultural and sporting activities on a mass scale and by extending recreational and entertainment facilities in the community.

The standard working week in the Soviet Union is 41 hours, less for miners. Many categories of employees in the coal industry (including underground workers and those engaged on arduous work and jobs injurious to health) are entitled to additional paid annual leave. The length of any extra leave depends on working conditions and varies from

six to 24 working days, thereby increasing annual leave to 18-36 working days (or 21-43 days including weekends).

The workers of major mining trades and technicians and engineers working in arduous and harmful conditions are entitled to an additional leave of 12 to 24 working days. All workers engaged in sinking get an additional paid leave of 24 working days. Any worker employed on a job involving a risk of silicosis receives an extra leave of 24 days, thus increasing the total annual leave to 39 working days (or 46 days including Sundays).

The one condition is that any extra leave for adverse working conditions must be taken as a holiday from the job and the time must be used for having a rest; monetary compensation cannot be accepted.

There is one more privilege: workers with a long service record at one enterprise are entitled to an additional three days' leave. Those eligible for this are underground workers who have worked at the same mine or mine construction site for at least two years and some surface workers (maintenance staff and workers in the electric locomotive depots, timber storehouses, dressing factories, power stations, boiler rooms, and preventive dust factories, etc., that is, all who are directly engaged in the operation of the mine and who are classed as mining personnel).

A worker in the coal industry, therefore, is entitled to his basic leave, plus additional leave for adverse working conditions, plus three days for the length of service. Including Sundays, some workers have almost two months' holiday a year.

What practical steps are taken to realize the miners' right to rest?

Over recent years alone six sanatoria and rest homes for miners have been built. In December 1978, there were 187 sanatoria for prophylactic treatment housed at mining enterprises themselves and their number is steadily growing. They cater for some two hundred thousand miners annually.

At present, on the government's decision, sanatoria are being built in Tskhaltubo, Sochi, Kislovodsk, Khmelniki, Berdyansk, and rest homes in Bakuriani, Borisovo, Slavyanogorsk and other places. The number of holiday hotels for miners and their families is also increasing, some are already to be found on the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea and along the Oka River.

Over the last five years more than thirty miners' clubs with halls seating 11,860 have been constructed; in all, the coal industry boasts 810 clubs of this kind. Miners have at their disposal 900 libraries with 18 million volumes and 1.5 million subscribers. In the clubs there are over five thousand groups of amateur performers, 79 of which have been awarded the honorary title "People's Collective of Amateur Art".

More and more miners are taking an interest in doing some kind of sport (over 250,000 in 1979). There are some two hundred stadiums, 22 palaces of sport, 79 swimming pools and over 300 gyms for miners to use. Hundreds of stations for hiking, sport and improving health have been built in some of the most picturesque parts of the country.

There are some world-famous sportsmen among miners: for example, Alexei Vakhonin, Rudolf Plyukfelder, Polina Astakhova, Nina Otkalenko and Vassili Alexeyev. The Donetsk football team, *Shakhtyor* (Miner), is one of the best in the Soviet Union.

Miners' health is safeguarded by a network of out-patient clinics and hospitals; each mine has its own first-aid station.

The state shows great concern for miners' children. There are over two thousand kindergartens and creches in mining areas which accommodate over 250,000 children of pre-school age. There are also hundreds of holiday hotels and summer camps in the countryside which annually cater for over 400,000 miners' children. They are generally situated in picturesque localities, at the seaside, by a river or a lake, and are very popular with children. Many have been built in the woods and, in this case, have their own swimming pools since swimming is a favourite summer pastime.

These camps have their own system of self-administration. The children elect commanders from their own peers to be responsible for organizing sports competitions, hikes and games, as well as for maintaining discipline.

Children often like to spend the whole summer at camp because they have everything there: plenty of fresh air and friends and lots of interesting things to do. The adults in charge try to avoid excessive strictness to give the children a rest from school discipline.

The northern Intaugol mining association is a good example of the right of miners to rest in practice. During the first five months of 1978, 3,133 workers took their annual leave. Of this number 3,025 had a holiday in either sanatoria (500), rest homes or holiday hotels. Their accommodation there was either completely free (at the expense of the trade union), or at a 70-per cent discount (the trade union paying the balance). In 1977, a third of the workers rested either at a sanatorium, a rest home, holi-

day hotel, hiking centre or a prophylactic centre.

Northerners are especially fond of travelling. They frequently visit different parts of the Soviet Union and, every year, some 130 workers travel abroad.

The trade union also takes care of those miners who, for some reason or other, remain at home during their annual leave. They have at their disposal eight clubs, eight libraries with 233,000 books, 28 recreation halls and five film projectors.

Theatre companies on tour give 300 performances a year in the town of Inta. Two and a half thousand miners and members of their families participate in amateur cultural activities in 72 amateur groups.

Sport is very popular with the workers. The Intaugol association has a great number of sporting facilities: two stadiums, sports centres, an indoor hockey pitch, two swimming pools, gyms and sports grounds. There are now 13,000 miners taking part in some form of sport, of whom over three thousand have various sports ratings, including that of Master of Sports.

The constitutional right to leisure time also applies to the miners' families. Since the climate in this region is very severe, most children go to summer health camps in the south. In 1978, for example, many children spent their holidays on the Black Sea; about two thousand spent the summer in camps, at a cost to the state of over 200,000 roubles.

The future is even brighter for the young: a new summer Young Pioneers' camp is being built in the settlement of Kuchugury on the Sea of Azov at the expense of the Intaugol association. The first section will accommodate 480 children. It is estimated that the construction will cost approximately three million roubles: no expense is spared for children.

Intaugol is no exception and conditions are similar in the country's other mining centres.

* * *

The authors of this booklet are lawyers and that is why so much attention has been paid to the law in practice. In lots of countries laws are nothing but empty promises which never help the ordinary people.

In contrast, any Soviet law is only adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR if its implementation throughout the Soviet Union is quite realistic. That is why the Constitution of the USSR, which guarantees the right of Soviet citizens to work, paid annual leave, free education, housing, maintenance in old age and free medical care, is so respected in the country. Every Soviet citizen sees in his everyday life how real these rights are. Miners, whose difficult and useful work is widely respected, exercise all these rights and also enjoy certain privileges.

The 1947 Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR established Miner's Day to be celebrated throughout the country on the first Sunday of August.

Over 200,000 miners have been awarded orders and medals of the USSR for their outstanding work and for fulfilling state programmes on time. Over 570 miners have been given the title Hero of Socialist Labour, while two of them, Ivan Bridko and Ivan Strelchenko, have been awarded it twice. Over 30 miners are winners of Lenin and State Prizes of the USSR which are awarded for outstanding contributions to the elaboration and mastering of new techniques.

Miners also have their own honorary titles and awards: the badges Miner's Glory, The Leader of Socialist Emulation of the USSR Ministry of the Coal Industry, The Coal Master, For the Quality of Coal, For Work Without Break-Downs, and the titles of Honorary Miner, and Merited Miner of the Republic.

The badge, Miner's Glory, for example, is given to front-rank workers whose work and initiative help to meet the state plans for coal or shale extraction and for the construction of new mines. About 15,000 workers of the coal industry have been awarded this badge.

Workers who have excelled in their work and have helped to introduce new or advanced techniques, to improve quality and to reduce production costs, are awarded the badge the Leader of the Socialist Emulation of the USSR Ministry of the Coal Industry. The honorary title of Merited Miner of the Republic has been introduced in the Russian Federation and the Ukrainian, Kazakh, Georgian and Estonian Union Republics. It is given to workers of major mining trades for their work in mines which are in operation or still under construction and at dressing and briquette factories, for raising productivity, improving quality and reducing production costs.

The title, Honorary Miner, is awarded to miners who have worked for at least ten years underground in mines or on construction sites and who have an excellent record for at least a year. Honorary miners are given a uniform and a badge. There are now 31,000 miners with this title.

When the results of the year's work are reviewed, the best miners (like workers in other profes-

sions) are given the title, The Best in the Trade. They receive a certificate and a bonus.

Mines also have large material incentive funds. Every month the results of socialist emulation for the overfulfilment of targets are made public at section and shop meetings of workers and at sittings of the mine trade union committees. At a special meeting afterwards the winners are solemnly presented with awards, their names are entered in the Book of Labour Glory and their portraits are hung on the Board of Honour.

Thousands of miners and managers of the coal industry are elected deputies to various bodies of state power: to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Supreme Soviets of Union Republics, and the local Soviets of People's Deputies. Gennadi Smirnov, Hero of Socialist Labour and team leader at the Yubileinaya Mine in the Kuzbass, is Vice-Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Seventy miners, from a worker to the minister, represented the coal industry at the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and took part in devising the plan for economic development of the Soviet Union for the period 1976-80.

In various coal basins around the country there are challenge cups named after outstanding miners like Alexei Stakhanov, Gusup Kuzembayev, Kornei Gorbachev, Matvei Vozny, Pavel Podzharov and the Sizykh miners' dynasty.

In the central square of the mining town of Gorlovka in the Donbass is the first monument ever erected to a miner. It is to Nikita Izotov who initiated the competition for higher labour productivity and for better training of young miners in advanced methods of work.

B. Nifontov, Y. Tsimerman
Miners' Rights

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