

■ Mums and dads learn how to rear children for citizenship in a Soviet state.

UNIVERSITIES FOR PARENTS!

And now its Parent's Universities in the Soviet Union!

These institutions of learning or mums and dads have sprung up in Moscow and Leningrad, in the Ukraine, and elsewhere. They offer one-and-two-year courses, designed to make sure that the USSR'S expanding network of boarding schools and pre-school establishments is backed up by understanding and cooperation at home.

Soviet mums and dads take kiddy culture seriously. Studies include: school, child psychology by age groups, pedagogy in the home, reading guidance, this last with much information about literature. Additionally, elective courses cover domestic science, the cutting and sewing of clothes, and so on.

Courses in child hygiene equip parents with essential knowledge to "grow healthy and happy children." The psychology courses acquaints them with psychic develop-

ment and its characteristics in different age groups. This information is held to be "necessary to parents for resolving their educational problems."

Heightened interest in parents education at this time is due to the decisions of the 22nd Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, calling for completion by the year 1980 of transition from the socialist to the communist society. A broad expansion has been projected in the system of pre-school facilities and boarding school, which gives the state an even greater control over the development and indoctrination of children. Making sure that the home does not undo the work of the school, parents are thoroughly instructed in the aims and techniques of Soviet education in schools of their own — Parent's Universities.

In this connection, Premier Khrushchev's demand at the 22nd Congress is quot-

ed: "The generation of Communism must be formed from childhood on, it must be nurtured and made hardy in youth; we must watch attentively, lest we have moral cripples, victims of improper upbringing and bad example."

It is made clear that no matter how much of the child's rearing is taken over by the state, the parents are not relieved of their share of responsibility. In fact, any undesirable non-school influence is apt to be blamed on parental degree than ever before.

Parents who attend their university for a special one year course take up child hygiene, psychology, and pedagogy in the family. The two-year students grapple with reading guidance at home, and with advanced courses in psychology, pedagogy, and history of pedagogy.

Attending lectures and participating in seminars, they receive factual histories of child rearing at home, cases close to their own daily experience. The examples are analyzed in the light of the dominant educational

theory. This initiates parents into applying the pedagogical approach explaining the cause-and-effect link between parental influence and child behavior, the attitude of children to school work, to their contemporaries and elders.

The Parent's University at the Moscow State University has found especially useful the written reports of parent students who tell of concrete changes on the family scene, thanks to their study of psychology and pedagogy.

Soviet authors strongly advise provision within the Parent's University framework for individual and group consultations. It is recognized that parents feel the need to consult with the expert instructors. Ideally talks which are held on days free of lectures and seminars have become extremely popular.

Parent education includes excursions to the Houses of Pioneers, sitting in on lessons in their children's schools, familiarization with the long-day schools (these do not return children to their homes until the adults

of the family are back from work) and with children's numerous clubs.

Admission to Parent's Universities now is much easier than it was in some cases at the beginning. At the Moscow State University any parent wishing to attend is allowed to do so even without a written application.

In fact, Parent's Universities are a channel for efficient and extensive propagation of the principles of child rearing for citizenship in the communist state.

Simplicity is the keynote in organizing Parent's Universities. They may be attached to such diverse organizations as Palaces of Culture, clubs, libraries, residential-complex administrations, schools, teacher-training institutes, Homes of Pioneers, and others. Often one

eager person sets up a small committee, which finds a qualified leader. Together they examine the likely programs of study, recruit lecturers, assist in research and preparation of materials, and attend to other organization matters.

At Parent's Universities, students are shown how their sons' and daughters' reading will evolve from year to year and they are introduced not only to extensive, carefully compiled book lists but also to independent orientation in the midst of a steady stream of new juvenile literature. Reading-guidance lectures and seminars are often followed by "literary concerts" where school boys and girls read, recite, and dramatize works under review. — *London Express Service*.

CIRCUMSTANCE

Earth wages open war against her children, and under her softest touch hides treacherous claws. The cool waters invite us in to drown; the domestic hearth burns up in the hour of sleep, and makes an end of all. Everything is good or bad, helpful or deadly, not in itself, but by its circumstances. — Robert Louis Stevenson.