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NEW STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE
SOVIET UNION

(Note presented by the Central Statistical Board of the
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.)

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I shall not dwell in this report on the questions of the organization of statistics in the USSR since they were covered fully enough in the book by professor A. Ezhov entitled "Organization of Statistics in the USSR" that was published in English and French and distributed at the last session. I shall neither deal with the statistical activities that are systematically carried out by the state statistics bodies of the USSR as regular, routine activities provided for in the yearly plan of work of the Central Statistical Board (CSB) of the USSR. That plan includes a very extensive programme for the collection, processing and analysis of statistical information. I should only point out here that the existing system of indicators of statistical accounting in the USSR corresponds in the main to the requirements of a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of social production, the development of the branches of the national economy and industrial branches.

The system of statistical indicators that is used in the state current and annual accounting and in the programmes of episodic surveys, sample surveys and censuses ensures the presentation to administrative, planning, economic and scientific bodies of the data needed for state administration, national economy planning, control over the fulfilment of plans and scientific research. That system of indicators provide the possibility for the elaboration of aggregate statistical information that characterizes all the aspects of the process of expanded socialist reproduction, the phenomena and the processes of the economic and social life of the Soviet society. That system helps graphically portray the progress of the implementation of the decisions made by the Communist Party and the Soviet government with regard to the development of the economy and culture of the country. The said system of indicators enables Soviet statistics to compare the achievements of the USSR in the fields of economy culture and the improvement of the standard of living of the population with those made in other countries, including capitalist states.

At the same time, it should be pointed out that state statistics as one of the most important levers of state administration and planning, as well as "one of the most powerful instrument of social study" (V.I. Lenin), should be continuously improved both as regards its organization and from the viewpoint of the system and scientific methodology of indicators on the basis of the Marxist and Leninist theory. In this connection, it would seem worthwhile to point out certain aspects of the activities carried out by state statistics bodies in the USSR and to give a brief account of statistical research projects that the CSB of the USSR and its local bodies plan to carry out during the next two years.

The question of the perfection of the Soviet state statistics were very extensively discussed at the All-Union Conference of Statisticians that was held in Moscow in April, 1968. Over 1400 people attended the Conference. The decisions made by the Conference indicate the ways and methods of the further improvement of Soviet statistics. With regard to the methods of collecting and processing statistical information, for example, the Conference recommended a number of measures that should be taken by the bodies of state statistics. The measures include, inter alia, the following activities:

improve the organization of recording and accounting at industrial enterprises and in organizations, reduce the volume and simplify statistical accounting and standardize its indicators in order to increase the effectiveness of statistical information, in collaboration with the ministries and departments concerned;

improve further the system of indicators by eliminating parallelism and excesses so as to meet, in to-day's planning conditions, the requirements of the national economy management and to provide a vivid picture of the process of the fulfilment of national economy plans and the economic and social processes that take place in the country;

further centralize accounting in state statistics bodies and simultaneously reduce the time needed for the compilation of accounting papers so that the accounting data could be used by ministries as background information for taking quick measures in the process of management in the individual branches of the national economy; in order to solve that task maximum use should be made of the mechanical means of recording and processing of accounting information by means of introducing most modern computing equipment including electronic computers.

We have covered briefly here only the principal tasks. The solution of those tasks will, doubtless, require great efforts aimed at the perfection of the programmes of elaboration of vast statistical information and maximum possible use of the method of grouping as the most important method of deep economic and statistical analysis. A comprehensive reflection of the processes that take place in the national economy and an intensive analysis of statistical data would require a wide introduction in the activities of statistical bodies of sample surveys which are based on the provisions of the theory of relativity and the use of mathematical methods of the processing of statistical information; such required steps are stipulated in the plans. ~~All such measures~~, in their turn, require that the science of statistics be further developed and that scientific methodology be further improved.

An accelerated elaboration of the data for the comprehensive analysis of the effects of the introduction of the new system of planning and economic incentives in different branches of the national

economy, for the determination of the factors contributing to increasing the effects of the introduction and use of new equipment and capital investments is of particular significance for the further improvement of state statistics in the USSR.

Particularly vital in the present conditions of administering the national economy are the research activities in the fields of labour statistics, new equipment, finance and prices, labour productivity, quality of output and public utilities serving the population. In connection with that, it is planned, as it will be shown later, to increase the volume of statistical activities aimed at characterizing manpower resources in different branches of the national economy and in separate areas of the Soviet Union, as well as that of the activities aimed at analyzing the data indicating the influence of different factors on the increase of labour productivity. It is planned to carry out a wider elaboration of the activities of enterprises and for the determination of the effectiveness of social production. There are also plans for the increase of the scope of activities dealing with the characteristics of financial resources, analysis of the process of the formation of prices and many other very important phenomena of the development of the economy of the Soviet Union.

When actually enumerating the new activities planned for 1969 and 1970, one should, first of all, mention the All-Union Population Census which will be held in January, 1970. Not much time is left till the beginning of this biggest statistical operation. Although the CSB of the USSR carried out in 1967 a pilot census of population in some areas of the country with the population close to 1 million, many things remain to be done during the remaining time in the course of the preparation for the census. Preparatory work is done by all state statistics bodies of the country. In addition to the regular programme, this census is expected to provide the data needed for a study of the "pendulum" migration of the population in many big cities. In the process of the preparation of materials for the census it is planned to obtain on a sample basis the data that would permit a deeper study of a number of demographic phenomena and processes. All the documents for the forth-coming census-taking - questionnaires, additional forms and instructions - were listed in the "Vestnik statistiki" ("Herald of Statistics") magazine.

The statisticians specializing in industrial statistics decided to carry out a number of sample surveys in 1969-1970. For example, a study of the factors influencing the productivity of labour of industrial workers will be undertaken in 1969. In the same year we intend to carry out the sample surveys of a number of industrial enterprises commissioned during the last few years in order to have information about the progress of utilization of the principal designed characteristics (designed production capacity, designed productivity

of labour, cost-price of output, returns and some other economic indicators). A further improvement of construction requires a wider use of prefabricated ferro-concrete sections for use by that industry. In this connection, statistical bodies of the USSR, in implementing the decision of the Government, held a census of the productive capacities of industrial enterprises and factories producing ferro-concrete sections and similar products, as well as enterprises producing prefabricated blocks for construction industry, enterprises producing materials for walls and non-metallic materials; the data obtained as a result of that census are processed at the present time.

A number of sample surveys covering the enterprises of a number of branches will be undertaken during the next two years in order to examine the problem of the improvement of the quality of industrial produce. A special sample observation will take place in 1969 (in September) at many enterprises of machine-building ministries in order to determine the degree of the use of equipment and working time during the same period of 24 hours.

It is also planned to carry out a number of episodic sample surveys for the purpose of studying the course of technological progress in the industry. They include such surveys as the study of the technical level of the output of machine-building industries, its replacement, the registration at machine-building enterprises of the basic means of mechanization and automation of production processes, the study of the expenses made by enterprises for the acquisition of new equipment, and the determination of the economic effects of the introduction of new machinery and equipment.

Some activities of a new kind will be carried out in the field of agricultural statistics. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is currently making a number of most important steps which are vital for the further development of agriculture. Soviet statisticians, naturally, must help in every way in carrying those measures into effect. During the 1969 and 1970 statistical bodies will carry out such episodic and sample surveys as, for example, a study of the questions of the utilization of manpower in state farms, the use of agricultural equipment in state and collective farms, the determination of the effects of "limited irrigation" in agriculture, the examination of the problem of laying in a supply of fodder for cattle and other animals in state and collective farms. A special sample survey will be dedicated to a study of the specialization within farms and the concentration of production in state farms. The question of manpower resources in collective farms will also be examined.

New studies will be made in the field of capital construction. There are plans to carry out a sample survey of construction sites with the view of studying specific capital investments (i.e. the volume of investments per unit of output) examining the length of the

period of construction of industrial and other productive projects. In connection with the introduction in construction of the new methods of planning and economic incentives the plans for 1969 and 1970 envisage a number of episodic and sample surveys to study the effects of the said economic reform and to find out the results of activities of construction organizations where the new system of the evaluation of their activities by the final results of construction was put into effect. A sample survey of construction sites will be also carried out in order to study the questions of the use of working hours, the reasons for the manpower turnover.

In the field of internal trade sample surveys will aim at the examination of such subjects as the geographic pattern of the deliveries of agricultural goods to city markets, the use of local raw materials for the production of consumer goods and their delivery for sale. The year of 1969 will see the studies of the pattern of turnover merchandise expenditures of goods, the profitableness of trade organizations, and other aspects of Soviet commerce. The studies of the population's demand for goods will be particularly vast and voluminous.

State statistical bodies will have to carry out great work during the years of 1969 to 1971 in the course of the preparation for the stocktaking and revaluation of the fixed assets of state, cooperative and public enterprises not financed by State as well as those financed from the budget which is to be made as of January, 1972. Simultaneously with the revaluation, the registration of the stocks of metal-working equipment will be carried out according to an appropriate programme. The last revaluation of the fixed assets of the USSR was made in 1961.

The balance of fuel and power of the country for 1969 is to be compiled in 1970. This kind of balance is compiled once during 2 or 3 years.

In the field of financial statistics several sample surveys have been planned mainly for the purpose of studying the questions of the formation and use of the funds for economic incentives at enterprises, the questions of spending the funds of money for social and cultural events; such funds consist of bonus funds, funds of wages and salaries, and other sources. Besides that, the subject of studies will be the reasons of the formation at enterprises and in organizations of excess stocks of goods and material values and stocks of equipment which is to be mounted or installed that are formed in the field of capital construction.

Particularly great amount of work will have to be done in connection with the examination of the questions of labour and wages and salaries. Certain jobs concerning labour statistics are carried out usually twice during the period of 5 to 6 years. Such activities

include the episodic registration of workers engaged in industry, construction, agriculture, transportation and communications according to trade or profession; the recording of the number of workers in the same branches of the national economy according to qualification scale, forms and systems of payment for the work done; the recording of the number of workers engaged in mechanized and manual labour in industry and construction; the recording of the number of subsidiary workers (by type of work) in industry. It is for 1969 that this vast programme is scheduled. In addition to that, several sample surveys will be directed at the study of the reasons for the manpower turnover in industry and construction, the volume of overtime work in those branches of the national economy; an overall registration of administrative and management personnel will be carried out, as well as some other studies.

A sample survey of libraries designed to find out what literature is read by young people has been planned in the field of the statistics of culture.

Statisticians-demographers intend to carry out during the next two years a thorough study of the trends of changes in the expected number and composition of the population, as well as factors influencing such trends. A sample approach will be used with regard to the intended study of the migration of the population within the areas of regions and republics and between regions and republics with the breakdown of the obtained data according to national and social groups. The same methods will be employed when the questions of marriages and divorces with the registration of the occupation and nationality of the parties will be subjected to study. Several sample surveys will be held to examine social and demographic changes in the family structure, to determine the current trends in birth-rate, and to study the effects of economic, demographic and other factors on infant mortality and some other demographic processes and phenomena in the country. The Institute of Scientific Research of the CSB of the USSR will carry out in 1969 a sample survey of families for the purpose of finding out their views on the best and desirable number of children and in order to determine the socio-economic factors that shape such views.

Another sample survey that will take place in 1969 will be dedicated to the study of the living conditions of the families of workers, employees and collective farmers, as well as to the study of the family composition and the income of the population.

The episodic overall enumerations, censuses and sample surveys that were listed above do not exhaust the whole list of the new activities which are to be carried out mainly in 1969. But already those operations that were mentioned show, doubtless, a great increase in the scope and volume of statistical activities in the Soviet Union.

Successful implementation of such a vast programme would require in its turn an elaboration of many methodological problems, an improvement of the system of indicators, as well as an improvement of the organization of statistical observation. In this connection, particularly great importance should be given to the recommendations made by the All-Union Conference of Statisticians as to the further improvement of mutual contacts between State statistics bodies and scientific and research organizations and institutions of higher learning. Scientific organizations, universities and colleges, ministries and departments will have to play a greater role and will have to be deeper involved in the search for the settlement of the problems of statistical methodology, in the elaboration of the programmes of major statistical activities. It will also be necessary to ensure their participation in the carrying out and processing of the results of a number of sample, episodic and monographic activities. The All-Union Conference suggested in its recommendations that the CSB of the USSR should compile a draft list of vital theoretical and methodological problems that arise from the tasks of the further improvement of statistics as the basis for the channelling of scientific research at the chairs of statistics, in universities and colleges and should regularly inform the chairs of the changes in the system of accounting and the methodology of the calculation of indicators.