

The Soviet-American Educational Conjuncture:
Progressive Education East and West, 1890s-1930s

By

Hannah Lindsay Rudderham

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of History

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Supervisor: Dr. Charles Shaw
Second Reader: Dr. Marsha Siefert

Budapest, Hungary

2020

Copyright Notice

Copyright in the text of this thesis rests with the Author. Copies by any process, either in full or part, may be made only in accordance with the instructions given by the Author and lodged in the Central European Library. Details may be obtained from the librarian. This page must form a part of any such copies made. Further copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the written permission of the Author.

Abstract

From 1918 to 1931, elements of progressive pedagogy originating in capitalist America were utilized in the Soviet Union's proletarian schools. The present thesis seeks to explore and explain this apparent contradiction. The development of the progressive education movement is examined with particular emphasis on the United States before turning to the Soviet case. This shows that American progressive and early Soviet educators shared a remarkably similar vision of the school as an institution that could enact positive social transformation. This similarity, combined with contemporary understandings of the United States and the post-World War I devaluation of German model, made American progressive education an attractive source of methods and philosophy for developing Soviet school programs. American educators' enthusiastic accounts of Soviet schools are then considered, revealing the main attraction of the Soviet school system was its experimental quality. The mutual interest and interaction between Soviet and American pedagogues are shown to be part of broader social issues and politics in both settings, illuminating the progressive education movement as a response to shared problems of mass education in the modern age.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	v
Note on Transliteration	vi
Introduction	1
The Interwar Period, Education, and Cultural Diplomacy	2
The Present Research.....	9
Chapter 1 – Education for a Modern, Industrial Society: The Progressive Education Movement in its First Decades, 1890s-1920s.....	16
Progressive Education in Europe	18
Progressive Education in the United States	20
The American School System to the 1920s.....	20
The Progressive Challenge and John Dewey’s Philosophy of Education	22
Progressive Methods and Experimental Schools	28
Progressive Education in Pre-Revolutionary Russia.....	37
Chapter 2 – The New Soviet Education: American Influences in Soviet School Programs and Pedagogical Writings, 1918-1931.....	40
Soviet Marxist Pedagogy: Progressive Values in the Educational Works of Anatolii Lunacharskii, Nadezhda Krupskaja, and Stanislav Shatskii.....	41
The Appeal of American Methods.....	51
Narkompros Programs and Practice.....	56
Chapter 3 – The ‘Educational Laboratory’: American Educators Visit the Soviet Union, Mid-1920s to Early 1930s.....	64
The Soviets Receive their Visitors.....	70
American Progressives Experience Soviet Schools	74
General Impressions	74
The Experimental Quality and Value of Soviet Schools.....	79
Propaganda and Indoctrination	81
Conclusion	87
The End of an Era in Progressive Education?.....	87
Appendix A: Dalton Laboratory Plan Grade Four History Assignment.....	97
Appendix B: Russian Language Translations of American Progressive Educators; Discussions of American Progressive Methods.....	101
Appendix C: Complex Themes for the First Grade of the Rural Unified Labour School (1927).....	104
Bibliography.....	107

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Charles Shaw, my second reader, Dr. Marsha Siefert, and my academic writing advisor, Dr. Borbála Faragó, for their support, guidance, and keen questions. I feel particularly indebted to Borcsa, who helped me find my real point of interest buried within my initial research proposal: the curious connection between American and Soviet pedagogy that is the subject of this thesis.

The spirit and scope of my research was in significant part informed and inspired by my classroom experience and classmates at CEU. As diversity is far too often a ‘buzzword,’ CEU’s genuine commitment to diversity in its student body, faculty, and courses, actively pursued if not yet perfectly realized, is refreshing and commendable. The range of perspectives offered by my classmates on both familiar and unfamiliar topics – and especially the self-reflection and interrogation of my own views they prompted – was a new and incredibly gratifying experience, which has confirmed my belief in the value of comparative, transnational, or entangled histories, pursued here. For this I am deeply grateful.

Last but by no means least, I have nothing but love and appreciation for my friends and especially my family, who have listened patiently to many lectures on Soviet and educational history, as well as the woes of locating sources, writing, and meeting deadlines, and whose pride in my studies and work has provided the oft-needed motivation and encouragement to complete this project.

Note on Transliteration

A simplified Library of Congress system is used to transliterate Russian. Endings -ый and -ий have been rendered as -yi and -ii rather than -yĭ and -iĭ, and letters ц, ю, and я are rendered ts, iu, and ia rather than $\widehat{ts}$, $\widehat{iu}$, and $\widehat{ia}$. Soft signs, represented by an apostrophe, have been removed in some cases. For example, Shul'gin is rendered as Shulgin and Al'bert as Albert.

Introduction

In 1927, Theodore Dreiser, author of *An American Tragedy*, visited the Soviet Union. Like many of the thousands of Westerners who traveled to experience the Soviet Experiment first-hand in the 1920s and 1930s, Dreiser reported on certain Soviet institutions with a degree of ambiguity. Enthusiasm and reservation often appeared side by side, and reflection or comparison with home was frequently entertained. Consider, for example, Dreiser's ruminations on the Soviet school:

... education, in its most direct or school forms, and being as it is in the hands of the State, is little more than a weapon or machine for the inculcation of the theories of Marx – a means for assuring the stability of the State and for creating a type of human being who will fit in with and continue the theories of Marx. In other words, all education is and must be class-conscious and Marxian ...

But, oh, those little schools! In the little cabins in the villages, tucked away in the snow and under the bleak, gray sky of Russia! I can see them now, with so many lumbering jackdaws in the trees outside. And the little Russian boys and girls, with their straps of books, coming and going, morning and evening. In a way to-day these same schools are really sub-branches of the Communist Party, with the children graduating from one sub-Communist organization to another until at last, if they can prove themselves worthy of it, they are taken into the Party itself. But what of it? Are not Americans being taught the perfection of capitalism, the Italians that of Fascism, the Spaniards that of Catholicism, and so on.”¹

Taken as Dreiser was with Soviet schools, it escaped his notice that much of the methods and philosophy employed in these schools was inspired by the American progressive education movement. Indeed, in the accounts of most non-expert visitors, Soviet education appears as something entirely new. Within the educative community, though, it was widely known that American methods were being used in the Soviet Union. Visiting teachers, principals, pedagogues, and theorists found little novel in Soviet education outside the massive scale on which progressive educational reform was being applied.

¹ Theodore Dreiser, *Dreiser Looks at Russia* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1928), 99–101.

These intriguing connections between early Soviet education and the American progressive education movement, noted by scholars discussed below but given little elaboration, form the subject matter of this thesis. Three key areas make up the backdrop against which this subject can be developed, with reference to its past scholarly treatment and the present research. First, our understanding of the interwar period, during which the bulk of the events discussed here took place, must be critically examined with the aid of Stephen Kotkin's concept of the interwar conjuncture. Second, the general state of education, the origin of the progressive education movement, and the position of education in the interwar conjuncture must be briefly surveyed. And third, Soviet cultural diplomacy will be considered with emphasis on tourism and Soviet-American relations.

The Interwar Period, Education, and Cultural Diplomacy

Though the progressive education movement began in the 1890s, its greatest popularity and the bulk of this narrative, investigating the involvement between the American progressive movement and early Soviet education, occurred during the interwar period, 1918-1939. Like all periodization, these date parameters are imperfect but provide a useful framework when used with careful consideration. In particular, it is important not to approach the interwar period with an assumption of uniformity. In many Western nations, the First World War was followed by a brief period of social unrest and economic recession as war industries demobilized and the job market was flooded by returning soldiers, displacing the new female workforce. The 1920s were generally a period of economic boom if not prosperity for all. This was brought to an abrupt end by the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. The early 1930s were marked by extreme poverty and unemployment, aggravated in

some areas like the American and Canadian prairies by natural disaster. Even after modest recovery around the mid 1930s, the rest of the decade was one of hardship for many.²

In the Soviet Union, the situation was much different. The new state entered the 1920s in the final years of a devastating civil war. Modest recovery began as the New Economic Policy replaced War Communism, introducing a mixed economy allowing some small private enterprise. Particularly with regards to gender, culture, education, and social services, early Soviet policies were characterized by a high degree of experimentalism and utopianism. They represented a genuine if sadly ineffectual attempt to create a new egalitarian society. After Vladimir Lenin's death in 1924, a power struggle among leading members of the Communist Party culminated in Joseph Stalin's consolidation of power in the late 1920s. In 1928, the First-Five Year Plan was launched setting fantastically high development targets in virtually every sector of industry, and the Cultural Revolution accelerated the drive to create a socialist culture and proletarian intelligentsia. The Soviet Union did not experience the Great Depression, but the same years were a period of acute suffering for a great many Soviet citizens. Forced collectivization began in 1929 with disastrous consequences. Dekulakization saw many peasants stripped of their belongings and resettled in remote regions, and famine in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, the Don region, and the North Caucasus killed millions. In 1934, repressive anti-terrorist measures were implemented after the assassination of prominent Bolshevik Sergei Kirov. A series of show trials in Moscow followed in 1936, and millions were arrested and executed or sent to labor camps for alleged counter-revolutionary activity between 1936 and 1938 during the Great Purges.³

However, these differences do not indicate that the Soviet Union was completely isolated during this period, nor that it was charting an entirely unique course – and historians

² See Charles Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

³ See David R. Marples, *Motherland: Russia in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2014).

should not approach the interwar Soviet Union with this assumption.⁴ Much more valuable is Stephen Kotkin's conception of the interwar conjuncture, which seeks to restore the interwar Soviet Union to its comparative context.⁵ In his article "Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture," Kotkin argues that the Soviet Union was unavoidably involved in processes that were not unique but present in all the Western democracies as well as the other emergent dictatorships, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. These processes were mass production, mass consumption, mass politics, and mass culture.⁶ Kotkin does not seek to homogenize vastly different socioeconomic systems and experiences of the interwar period by emphasizing this commonality. Rather, by acknowledging the common problems presented by production, consumption, politics, and culture following the mass mobilization and technological development of World War I, different solutions or responses are highlighted. This allows the specificity of the Soviet Union or any other nation to be fully appreciated.⁷ Here, I propose enlarging our understanding of this interwar conjuncture by advancing another common process or problem for consideration: that of mass education.

Of course, the issue of mass or popular education did not originate in the interwar period. Throughout much of Europe and North America, at least a few years of elementary schooling was made compulsory in the second half of the nineteenth century. Europe was dominated by the dual system of education. State schools provided the minimum, compulsory amount of education to the working class. The middle and upper classes meanwhile, attended private preparatory schools and secondary schools – the grammar school in Britain and the *gymnasium* in Germany – which led to the university. While the modern languages and sciences were increasingly taught in these schools, the classical languages and mathematics

⁴ For such an approach, see Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

⁵ Stephen Kotkin, "Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture," *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 113.

⁶ Kotkin, 113.

⁷ Kotkin, 114.

continued to be emphasized, conveying social prestige and qualification for certain professions and university faculties. There was only very limited mobility from the state system to the private system and higher education.⁸ Education in the United States, first established on the model of the European dual system, was quite similar. After the Civil War, public high schools challenged private academies on the model of the grammar school and *gymnasium* as the primary means of entrance to higher education. Educational opportunity was thus open to a wider stratum of the population, but in reality, higher education continued to be exclusive. Most children received only a minimum of elementary schooling by the turn of the century.⁹ In the United States as well as in Europe, common schools typically emphasized reading, writing, arithmetic, religious morals, and strict discipline. Classroom instruction was dominated by lectures, oral drills, and rote learning.

The progressive education movement began in the late 1880s and 1890s in Europe and the United States as a response to these common schools.¹⁰ Progressive education was never a unitary movement, but a range of pedagogical theories, programs, and methods. They were united by their fierce criticism of the traditional school as an outdated and elitist institution. The progressives desired a new school that could address the needs and interests of all children in the modern industrialized world.¹¹ Advocacy for educational reform was often closely connected to broader demands for social reform. Many of the first progressive educators were connected to the Anglo-American settlement movement, in which middle- and upper-class volunteers moved to low-income neighborhoods to share knowledge and

⁸ James Bowen, *A History of Western Education, Volume Three: The Modern West: Europe and the New World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 312, 323–27.

⁹ Bowen, 444; Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Battles over School Reform* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 19.

¹⁰ Bowen, *A History of Western Education*, 403.

¹¹ Hermann Röhrs, "Internationalism in Progressive Education and Initial Steps towards a World Education Movement," in *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 11.

culture and work to alleviate poverty.¹² Rather than imposing a rigid set of codified knowledge onto children, progressive educators sought to provide for the pressing, unanswered questions of childhood at various stages of development. To meet this goal, methods of instruction were developed that were concerned primarily with the activity of the pupils rather than the teacher. Activity methods that entailed problem solving, manual work, and group activities were widely promoted. In its broadest definition, progressive education was concerned with social, emotional, and physical education as well as intellectual education. It aimed to educate children within their whole social context rather than isolating them in the school.¹³ A wide variety of experimental schools, numerically inferior to traditional schools, were established across Europe and North America as the progressive movement gained followers and visibility in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century.

After World War I, the restriction of educational opportunity to the privileged classes was increasingly challenged. The issue of mass education, especially what type and how much education should be compulsory, received new emphasis and urgency after the mass mobilization of the war that similarly affected politics, culture, production, and consumption. During the war, there was a surge in nationalistic and patriotic content in the schools of all the belligerent nations. After peace, access to education, the quality of education, and the explicit politicization of education were debated widely. German schools were particularly criticized for generating militarism, and in the Entente nations, demands for social reform and welfare included greater access to education for all.¹⁴ Generally, education became more

¹² Elizabeth Townsend and Judith Friedland, “19th and 20th Century Educational Reforms Arising in Europe, the United Kingdom, and the Americas: Inspiration for Occupational Science?,” *Journal of Occupational Sciences* 23, no. 4 (2016): 489–90.

¹³ Röhrs, “Internationalism in Progressive Education and Initial Steps towards a World Education Movement,” 11–15.

¹⁴ See, for example, Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914-1918* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010); David H. Parker, “‘The Talent at Its Command’: The First World War and the Vocational Aspect of Education, 1914-39,” *History of Education*

complex and controversial, less uniform, and more entrenched in wider societal conflicts.¹⁵ Access to education was expanded but remained far from equal. In Britain, for example, the Education Act of 1918 raised the minimum school leaving age from eleven to fourteen and expanded the number of part-time vocational continuation schools. It did not, however, increase access to the grammar schools, reflecting a system that, as before, did not aim at educational mobility.¹⁶ The progressive education movement, with its emphases on equality and modernity, continued to gain in popularity during these years.

Much of the interwar period was also an era of non-recognition of the Soviet Union. As such, cultural diplomacy, the systematic inclusion of a cultural dimension in foreign relations, took on great significance. Foreign intellectuals were seen as an attractive alternative channel to conventional diplomacy.¹⁷ While the United States denied official recognition, significant contact took place through private American investment in Soviet industry, and, much more visibly, through active cultural relations. In 1925, VOKS (*Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul'turnoi svyazi s zagranitse* – All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) was formed to promote contact between intellectuals, artists, writers, and other cultural figures. In 1926, a parallel American branch was formed as the American Society for Cultural Relations with Russia. Among other activities, the Society sponsored exhibitions on Russian culture and facilitated travel from the United States to the Soviet Union.¹⁸ Soviet cultural diplomacy involved a significant domestic component of tourism and developed an unprecedented system of receiving foreign visitors.¹⁹ The number

Quarterly 35, no. 3 (1995): 237–59; and Thomas Fallace, “Reading Democracy and Education in the Context of World War I,” *Democracy & Education* 25, no. 1 (2017): 1–7.

¹⁵ Jürgen Oelkers, “Origin and Development in Central Europe,” in *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 40.

¹⁶ Bowen, *A History of Western Education*, 449, 459.

¹⁷ Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 14–17, 29.

¹⁸ Norman E. Saul, *Friends or Foes? The United States and Soviet Russia, 1921-1941* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2006), 157–60.

¹⁹ David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 16.

of visitors increased from 1922. A sharp increase occurred in the late 1920s and early 1930s, when the Great Depression and the First Five-Year Plan coincided to produce a massive peak in interest. Improved relations with left-wing European governments and the United States (recognition was granted in 1933) also facilitated travel at this time. Travel then dropped off in the late 1930s as the Purges became widely known. VOKS managed foreign visits until 1929 when Intourist (*Inostrannyi turist* – Foreign Tourist) was formed expressly for this purpose. Tourism was then promoted as cultural policy displayed a new militancy and tourists were recognized as a source of hard currency. In all, some 100,000 foreigners visited the Soviet Union during the interwar period, preoccupied with personally evaluating the Soviet Experiment and frequently publishing their impressions.²⁰

Soviet tourism is now notorious for its models or showcases. But to consider these sites as “Potemkin villages” built solely to dupe foreigners, as Michael David-Fox has convincingly argued, is to largely miss the point. “Model” sites were usually genuine but unrepresentative. And while the main goal of tourism was of course to create a positive image of the Soviet Union abroad, these sites also had an important domestic function as proofs of the system mapping the socialist future.²¹ Moreover, David-Fox has shown that many enthusiastic visitors were not dupes, but interested in the Soviet Union primarily for what it could mean, rather than what it was. The archives of VOKS and Intourist, containing fonds on prominent individual visitors, reveal reactions much less “naive” and uncritical than those often recorded in travelogues. For example, Theodore Dreiser, quoted above, presented in his published work only a fraction of the rather severe criticisms he recorded in his private diary.²² Many who advocated for social and economic reform in their home countries seem to have been eager not to prejudice their audiences against socialist policies and omitted

²⁰ David-Fox, 46, 175.

²¹ David-Fox, 98–99.

²² David-Fox, 109, 139.

accounts of poor living conditions and political repressions. Others acknowledged the severe shortcomings of Soviet society while emphasizing that the same problems existed at home. The real difference was that something was actually being attempted to resolve those problems in the Soviet Union.²³ American progressive educators who traveled to the Soviet Union during this period certainly fall under these categories.

The Present Research

These educators perceived what Dreiser did not – that American progressive pedagogy, particularly the philosophy of John Dewey and the programs that sought to realize it, had been employed widely in devising the Soviet educational program. After the October Revolution, the new Soviet educational authorities repudiated the schools they inherited from the Russian Empire and the short-lived Provisional Government. A new school was needed to realize the Revolution. But as Marxism provided no systematic theory of education, policy-making Soviet educators found the theory, methods, and support for their vision in American progressive education. The apparent contradiction of utilizing methods of bourgeois origin in the proletarian school is striking, especially when one considers the great importance allotted to the school as the institution that would form the new socialist generation and secure the Revolution. Yet these methods were indeed incorporated into Soviet school programs until a shift in educational policy occurred in 1931, and the pedagogues who discussed and advocated these methods did not attempt to obscure their origins. Additionally, this interest was far from one directional. As mentioned above, American progressive educators visited the Soviet Union from the mid 1920s to the early 1930s and generally wrote with enthusiasm on what they experienced. Their enthusiasm was not, or not merely, a sense of gratification that American methods were being utilized; rather, they stressed that there was much to learn from Soviet education and advocated its study. This exchange begs explanation.

²³ See, for example, Margaret Gould, *I Visit the Soviets* (Toronto: Francis White Publishers Limited, 1937).

There are substantial bodies of historical literature dedicated to American progressive education and early Soviet education. Unfortunately, though, few authors have considered both together in sufficient detail to account for the mutual interest, exchange, and interaction between Soviet and American progressive educators. When these groups do appear together, the treatment of one is typically cursory. For example, the Soviet tours of prominent progressives like John Dewey are usually present in histories of the American progressive education movement, often only anecdotally. In their best treatment, authors like Thomas Ewing have demonstrated a clear connection between educators' interest in Soviet schools and conditions under the Depression which had caused educational budgets to be slashed.²⁴ Though correct in pointing to the Depression as increasing the interest in Soviet schools, this argument does not account for educators' strong interest in the Soviet Union prior to the Depression. Nor does Ewing discuss how American methods were utilized in Soviet schools and perceived by visiting educators. In their worst treatment, progressive educators are reduced to dupes, blinded by their own idealism.²⁵ At times, the lack of a firm understanding of Soviet education is apparent in accounts of American progressives' Soviet tours. For example, Diane Ravitch, in a harsh criticism of progressive education as a whole, deems John Dewey's positive impression of Nadezhda Krupskaya rather comical. This, considering Krupskaya was only a "great man's widow" and a "political appointee" in education. In reality, Krupskaya was a trained teacher and pedagogue, an initiator of Soviet Marxist pedagogical literature, and one of the single most important individuals in directing the course of Soviet school policy until the early 1930s.

²⁴ E. Thomas Ewing, "The 'Virtues of Planning': American Educators Look at Soviet Schools," in *Education & The Great Depression: Lessons from a Global History*, ed. E. Thomas Ewing and David Hicks (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 41–61.

²⁵ Larry E. Holmes, "Western Perception of Soviet Education, 1918-1931," *Educational Forum* 39, no. 1 (1974): 26–32.

In literature dedicated to Soviet education, American progressive education is given a similarly cursory treatment. Works that masterfully chart the development of Soviet school policy or the embeddedness of the school in social transformation do little more than identify the origins of certain Soviet school practices and methods in the American progressive movement.²⁶ This borrowing is not accounted for, nor are the goals and philosophy of American progressive education examined. One exception to this trend is that the reception of John Dewey, a giant in the progressive movement, has received some sustained consideration in article-length studies. For example, Irina Mchitarjan's article "John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930" makes a valuable examination of the translation and discussion of Dewey's major works.²⁷ However, her conclusion that Dewey's philosophy of education was rejected in the early 1930s because it could not be sufficiently "politicized" misses the mark.²⁸ It fails to realize that the Soviet utilization of Dewey up until this point had been inextricably tied to revolutionary politics – and, indeed, that progressive education, with its close connection to social reform and progressive politics, was inherently political around the globe.

In order to provide full explanation of the connections between Soviet and American progressive education in the interwar period, the best literature of both fields, as well as key primary source texts, must be considered together. Regarding American progressive education, Lawrence Cremin's landmark study *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*, Herbert Kliebard's detailed, revisionist work *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958*, and Hermann Röhrs' and Lenhart Volker's thoughtfully assembled collection *Progressive Education Across the*

²⁶ See, for example, Larry E. Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse: Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indian University Press, 1991); and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

²⁷ Irina Mchitarjan, "John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930 - Report on a Forgotten Reception," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 19, no. 1 (2000): 109–31.

²⁸ Mchitarjan, 126.

Continents, and others are used to track the development of the progressive education movement and its involvement in broader social issues.²⁹ Key works by central members of the progressive movement, John Dewey, William H. Kilpatrick, and Helen Parkhurst, are explored to give the movement's goals and methods full expression. Regarding Soviet education, Larry Holmes' classic examination of school policy *The Kremlin and the School House: Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*, and essential works by Shelia Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917-1921* and *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934*, are used along with others to discuss Soviet school policy to the early 1930s.³⁰ The philosophy and motivation behind these policies are further elaborated through key articles and speeches from leading Soviet educators and educational policy makers, Anatolii Lunacharskii, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and Stanislav Shatskii.

This literature will be utilized to illustrate key intersections between Soviet and American progressive education. In doing so, I seek to provide answers as to why American methods were appealing and applicable in the Soviet context; how these methods were adapted in their socialist application; and why Soviet experimentation with American methods so enthralled American progressive educators. I argue that, despite the vast socioeconomic and political differences between the United States and the Soviet Union, American and Soviet progressive educators held a remarkably similar vision of what type of education was needed to solve the problems of mass education in the interwar period.

²⁹ Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Vintage, 1961); Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); Hermann Röhrs and Lenhart Volker, eds., *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).

³⁰ Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse: Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934*.

Finally, given the primary literature utilized, it is necessary to address the most common charged leveled against Soviet and American progressive educators alike. This charge is that they were naive: starry-eyed intellectuals whose sweeping dreams of reform showed they were hopelessly out of touch with reality. Utter utopians. This is a very poor understanding of their thought – unless we drastically re-evaluate the conventional meanings of utopia and utopians. Since Thomas Moore first used the term in the sixteenth century, utopia has been defined as a perfected world observable in imagination, hope, and desire, but not reality. After the Russian Revolution, utopianism frequently bore a negative connotation; utopians believed in their impossible visions so strongly that they attempted to force them on the world with terrible consequences.³¹ Mark Steinberg, however, has advanced a definition of utopianism to better understand the revolutionary policies and thought of early Bolsheviks that is wonderfully appropriate for progressive educators, too. Steinberg argues that utopianism is a “way of thinking and feeling about the possibility of living differently than given in the present.”³² It is a transformation of *the way we dare to try and what we dare to try for*. It challenges the realm of the possible, rejecting expectation based on what is rather than what might be. Jean-Jacques Rousseau has often been quoted for this utopian insight: “the bounds of possibility ... are less narrow than we might imagine: it is our weaknesses, our vices, and our prejudices that confine them.”³³ Progressive educators were indeed utopian, but they were far from out of touch with reality. Indeed, it was their knowledge of harsh social, economic, and educational inequities urged them to reform. They were utopian, not naive, in their visions that dared venture beyond the limits and inadequacies of their contemporary reality to an equitable future that might have been.

³¹ Mark D. Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution, 1905-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 290.

³² Steinberg, 291. For Steinberg’s full discussion of utopianism in Marxism, see chapter 8, “Utopians,” 289-349.

³³ Quoted in Steinberg, 292.

* * *

In Chapter 1, I chart the development of the progressive movement from its origins in the late nineteenth century through the 1920s. Progressive education initiatives in Europe and Pre-Revolutionary Russia are considered to give a sense of the breadth of the movement, while the United States, where progressive education developed to exert the greatest impact on domestic and foreign education, is the focus of the discussion. This chapter aims to make clear the American progressive philosophy and methods of education that were later utilized in the Soviet Union. Chapter 2 then seeks to account for this borrowing. Common values and beliefs as to the purpose of education held by Soviet and American progressive educators, as well as the advantages and shortcomings of the interwar United States as a model, are examined to explain the appeal and legitimacy of American methods in the Soviet context. How these borrowed methods were put into practice in the Soviet Union is then considered. Chapter 3 turns to look at American educators who traveled to the Soviet Union and visited its schools, investigating their enthusiasm and the perceived significance of Soviet schools. Finally, in conclusion, I briefly explore the demise of progressive education in both the Soviet Union and the United States, questioning whether some of the movement's key values did not survive – and whether they are not still relevant today.

As the abundant literature shows, these topics are hardly new, nor are the primary sources previously unutilized. But their meaningful synthesis is novel. Dewey's *The School and Society* and *Democracy and Education* are among the most cited works in the history of education, but when considered alongside the works of key Soviet educators, they are still able to offer new insights. Interrogating the connection between Soviet education and American progressive education helps to illuminate the broader progressive education movement as an attempt to meet the challenges of mass education and modern society that was not limited by borders. Though their ideal society was not identical, Soviet and

American progressive educators sought to reform society and reach their ideals through a school that provided all with the knowledge and ability to participate in social, political, and economic life to collective benefit. As such, they were deeply interested in each other's work. Furthermore, recognizing these individuals as part of such a global movement and appreciating the commonalities between sections of the Soviet Union and the American left combats the isolation of the Soviet Union in interwar history, and sheds light on a yet underappreciated aspect of Soviet-American relations.

Chapter 1 – Education for a Modern, Industrial Society: The Progressive Education Movement in its First Decades, 1890s-1920s

The purpose of the experiment is not to devise a method by which the teacher can teach more to the child in the same length of time, or even prepare him more pleasantly for his college course. It is rather to give the child an education which will make him a better, happier, more efficient human being, by showing him what his capabilities are and how he can exercise them, both materially and socially, in the world he finds about him ... [it] aims to help the whole of society by helping the whole individual.

John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of To-morrow*.*

In the late 1880s and early 1890s, some educators in Europe and the United States began to question the existing school and advance new theories and programs of education that would become known as the progressive education movement. This chapter aims to outline the general characteristics and development of the progressive education movement from its origins to roughly the 1920s. First, I will examine the movement in Europe, where it was generally pursued by individual reforming educators in private schools, and then move to consider the educational situation in the United States in greater detail. In the United States, progressive education originated in the theories of university professors and was then taken up by interested teachers and school boards, attracting considerable attention. Here, I will weigh in on the on-going historical debate over how great an impact progressive education had on public schools, arguing that if progressive education did not transform the common American school, it did significantly impact the common understanding of the purpose of education. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a brief examination of the educational

* John and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of To-morrow* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1915), 58-59.

Progressive educators frequently referred to the child exclusively as “he/him/his.” This reflects only the linguistic conventions of the time. Progressive educators universally supported equal access to education for both genders. Most advocated for co-education, and some specifically emphasized that activity methods should not be gendered.

situation in pre-Revolutionary Russia, where progressive ideas were beginning to be taken up by educational reformers.

It should be noted at the outset that while this chapter takes a geographic approach for the sake of clarity, the progressive education movement was by no means so neatly compartmentalized. While the first developments in the 1890s tended to be more isolated, the early twentieth century was a period of unprecedented international exchange in education. In 1921, the New Education Fellowship (NEF) was formed and provided an international forum, holding well-attended biennial conferences. By 1930, the NEF had 7,400 members. In 1932, The Progressive Education Association (PEA), founded in Washington in 1919, was incorporated as the American section of the NEF. The NEF published a remarkable journal, *The New Era*, which covered a wide variety of educational topics from around the globe. *The New Era* had a large readership and by 1930 published quarterly-to-monthly editions in fourteen countries.¹ Many progressive educators also traveled widely. Some undertook so-called “missionary trips” to nations such as China and India to spread progressive educational ideas. Others visited and studied progressive schools in Europe, the United States, and later the Soviet Union to glean first-hand information.² Such a degree of cross-border dialogue should be kept in mind throughout this chapter’s discussion of the progressive education movement took in Europe, the United States, and Russia. This international exchange also supports the interpretation of progressive education as a response to the problems of mass education that was not confined to a single socio-economic or political system.

¹ *The New Era* 11, no. 41 (January 1930). These countries were: England, France, Germany, Argentina, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Yugoslavia, Romania, Spain, and Sweden. *The New Era* was not published in an American edition as the PEA maintained its own journal. See also James M. Wallace, “The Origin and Development of Progressive Education in the United States of America: New World Progressives in the Old World,” in *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 140.

² Wallace, 136; Röhrs, “The New Education Fellowship: An International Forum for Progressive Education,” 183.

Progressive Education in Europe

European progressivism developed in sectors of society that felt a deepening social consciousness, often sought religious or spiritual renewal, and were attracted to elements of socialist and new scientific thought.³ Traditional schools were criticized for their exclusions as well as their lifeless teaching methods, excessive subject matter demands, and failure to accommodate individual differences among pupils. Endeavoring to reduce social and economic inequities, many progressive educators were involved in the emerging field of social work. Improved access to education was promoted as a means to better employment and daily living skills related to food, safety, and sanitation were taught to promote better standards of living in Europe's industrial slums. This connection between social work and education is exemplified by the work of Octavia Hill. With the support of eminent art and social critic John Ruskin, Hill addressed issues of housing reform and community development by acquiring homes for poor and immigrant families in London. She then taught the families finance management and craft production as a means of support. Hill was also involved in the establishment of one of the first houses of the settlement movement.⁴

The early work of Maria Montessori, the most famous and most emulated European progressive educator, was also connected to a deep concern for social reform in Italy, where the division of wealth and accompanying social issues were extreme. From 1907-1908, Montessori was involved in a resettlement plan of San Lorenzo, a desperately disadvantaged quarter of Rome, which aimed to make the abysmal tenement buildings more habitable and give the largely unschooled child population basic care. Montessori developed a scientific theory of pedagogy which she applied to the *Casa dei Bambini* (Children's House) she

³ James Bowen, *A History of Western Education, Volume Three: The Modern West: Europe and the New World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 403.

⁴ Elizabeth Townsend and Judith Friedland, "19th and 20th Century Educational Reforms Arising in Europe, the United Kingdom, and the Americas: Inspiration for Occupational Science?," *Journal of Occupational Sciences* 23, no. 4 (2016): 489–90.

established in San Lorenzo.⁵ Montessori held that human knowledge and culture were best acquired by following the child's natural processes of biological and psychological development. The curriculum, therefore, could be worked out well in advance as a series of developmental tasks. Particularly important in Montessori's approach to education were educational objects or materials, such as fabric frames with buttons to develop dexterity, colored beads to promote numeracy, and cut-out letters to facilitate literacy.⁶ In 1912, Montessori published *The Montessori Method: Scientific Pedagogy as Applied in the Children's Houses*. It was an instant success, and Montessori foundations, societies, and schools appeared across Europe and the United States. The Montessori Method was particularly promoted by the NEF after its formation in 1921.⁷

Educators who were more concerned with reforming the methods of instruction than society at large founded innovative private schools. These schools were fee-paying and often quite exclusive. Mainly located in England and in smaller numbers on the Continent, they were progressive in their stress on individual learning, practical activities, excursions, library and laboratory lessons, and giving pupils a more active role in the classroom. The most prominent English progressive school, Abbotsholme, was founded in 1889 by former socialist Cecil Reddie on a large country estate in Derbyshire. Championing the values of rural life, care for the estate made up a large part of pupils' work at the school, though traditional subjects as well as modern languages and fine arts were also taught.⁸ Other progressive schools, such as Franz Čizek's school in Vienna and the Dalcroze School in Dresden, emphasized children's free expression through arts, crafts, music, and dance.⁹

⁵ Bowen, *A History of Western Education*, 395.

⁶ Bowen, 398–400.

⁷ Bowen, 397, 406.

⁸ Brian Holmes, "The Origin and Development of Progressive Education in England," in *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 56–57.

⁹ Bowen, *A History of Western Education*, 403–4.

These progressive schools, however, existed only in very small numbers. They stood in stark contrast to the dominant traditional schools operating on the dual system described in the Introduction. The most celebrated traditional schools were located in Germany, where the Prussian model had come to dominate schooling after unification. Elementary education had been compulsory in Prussia from the early nineteenth century, but educational opportunity for the working class was severely limited. In the late 1870s, state middle schools were established extending the years of schooling popularly available. Graduation from these middle schools, however, did not qualify students for university entrance. University could only be reached through preparatory schools and the *gymnasium* which were restricted to the bourgeoisie. Even in Europe's most comprehensive school system, education remained a means to control social mobility.¹⁰ The generally exclusive character of education was maintained even after the upheavals of World War I, though it was increasingly challenged. In Weimar Germany, for example, though a common elementary school was established and the middle school was expanded in 1919, state schools continued to adhere to the conservative tradition and the *gymnasium* remained exclusive.¹¹

Progressive Education in the United States

The American School System to the 1920s

In the first half of the nineteenth century, education in the United States largely followed the model of the European dual system. Only a narrow elite had access to higher education through private, fee-paying academies akin to the grammar school or *gymnasium*.¹² Around mid-century, a movement for a common elementary school for all children (initially meaning white boys, later extended to girls and only much later children of color) that was compulsory, secular, and free spread from east to west. Between 1852 and 1900, thirty-three

¹⁰ Bowen, 323–27.

¹¹ Bowen, 459.

¹² Bowen, 266–79.

states enacted compulsory attendance laws for elementary schooling; the remaining sixteen states made elementary education compulsory by 1918.¹³ These were mainly the Southern states where legislation was delayed in the deliberate effort to deny African Americans public schooling. High schools first emerged as extensions of elementary schools, and after the Civil War they became the primary means of entrance to higher education. Given the possibility of educational advancement through the public elementary school and high school, the American school system was perceived as an educational ladder, providing all with equal opportunity to raise themselves from humble origins.¹⁴ At the end of the nineteenth century the school system was dominated by the Herbartian philosophy of education. Herbartianism was an American pedagogical intellectual tradition derived (but in actuality quite divergent) from German philosopher and pedagogue Johann Fredrich Herbart. It dictated sequential instruction in the great taxonomies of knowledge through a systematically structured curriculum. Children were disciplined to sit still during instruction, due to a dualist understanding of mind and body.¹⁵

Though by the turn of the twentieth century the United States was an educational pacesetter statistically, there was much left to be desired in the provision for mass education during this period. It has been aptly said that there were several missing rungs in the educational ladder.¹⁶ The number of children who attended high school remained a minority until the 1940s – in 1920, for example, high school enrollment made up only 10% of total school enrollment. Most working-class children received only six to eight years of

¹³ Bowen, 444.

¹⁴ Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Battles over School Reform* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 19.

¹⁵ Bowen, *A History of Western Education*, 371–73 The divergence between American Herbartianism and Herbart may be explained by the first translation of Herbart into English, which was abridged, removing Herbart's holist framework. For more on this divergence, see Bowen 366-369. Control of children's bodies received great emphasis in schools during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - pupils' desks were designed with open fronts, for example, so teachers could see and enforce children's leg were not crossed. See Ning De Coninck-Smith, "Geography and the Environment," in *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family in the Age of Empire*, ed. Colin Heywood, vol. 5, *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 73–90.

¹⁶ Ravitch, *Left Back*, "The Missing Rung of the Ladder" 25-38.

elementary education.¹⁷ In the 1890s, only a third of African American children received any schooling at all. Many immigrant children also had poor access to education, and when it was accessible, they faced intense assimilationist pressures in the school.¹⁸ Teachers had little pedagogical training; they frequently began their careers at only sixteen or seventeen after a year or two in a Normal School or a teachers' college. In rural schools, all eight grades were usually assigned to a single teacher. In 1900, the average pupil to teacher ratio was about thirty-seven to one.¹⁹ Given these conditions, instruction was typically reduced to verbalization, repetition, and memorization from textbooks.²⁰ In 1892, Joseph Rice, a pediatrician devoted to educational reform, visited schools in thirty-six cities and published his observations in *The Forum*, a popular New York journal. His articles, reporting almost uniformly poor-quality teaching and lifeless schools, met with no small amount of indignation from teachers and school administrators, who defended themselves passionately. But to many others, unwilling to join in their defense, this portrait of the American school indicated an urgent need for reform.²¹

The Progressive Challenge and John Dewey's Philosophy of Education

The demands for school reform were increasingly numerous and varied from the 1890s on. The central figure of American progressivism was undeniably John Dewey (1859-1952). His educational philosophy, which gained enormous popularity in the first three decades of the twentieth century, is key to understanding the development of the progressive education movement in the United States and around the world. Part of Dewey's popularity lay in his ability to give synthesis to many demands, or at least articulate a vision for

¹⁷ Bowen, *A History of Western Education*, 444.

¹⁸ Ravitch, *Left Back*, 38.

¹⁹ Thomas D. Snyder, ed., *120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait* (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1993), 29.

²⁰ Bowen, *A History of Western Education*, 373.

²¹ Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 20-21.

education that was sufficiently broad to appeal to many. The situation around the turn of the century could not be better or more concisely expressed than by Lawrence Cremin in *The Transformation of the School*:

All about [Dewey], a cacophony of voices was demanding educational reforms of every sort and variety. Businessmen and labor unions were insisting that the school assume the classical functions of apprenticeship. Settlement workers and municipal reformers were vigorously urging instruction in hygiene, domestic science, manual arts, and childcare. Patriots of every stripe were calling for Americanization programs. And agrarian publicists were pressing for a new sort of training for country life that would give youngsters a sense of the joys and possibilities of farming – and incidentally, keep them from moving to the city. Now note the common implication running through these proposals: educational functions traditionally carried on by family, neighborhood, or shop are no longer being performed; somehow they must get done; like it or not, the school must take them on ... It remained for Dewey to give classical statement to this notion of the school.”²²

John Dewey was born in 1859 in Burlington, Vermont. After graduating with high honors from the University of Vermont in 1879, he briefly taught elementary and high school before entering graduate studies in philosophy at John Hopkins University. He then taught philosophy and psychology at the University of Michigan from 1884 until 1894, when he joined the new University of Chicago as head of the Department of Philosophy and Psychology (shortly thereafter renamed the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy). Dewey resigned from the University of Chicago in 1904, and moved to New York to join Columbia University, where he was a professor of philosophy until he retired in 1930. During his retirement, Dewey remained an active and influential personage in the public sphere and a prolific writer until his death in 1952, with eleven of the thirty-seven volumes that make up his collected works written after 1930.²³

²² Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Vintage, 1961), 116–17; for vocational education, see Joseph F. Kett, “‘Theory Run Mad’: John Dewey and ‘Real’ Vocational Education,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 16, no. 4 (October 2017): 500–514; for the Settlement movement and education, see David Schaafsma, *Jane Addams in the Classroom* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014); for Americanization in education see Rosemary C. Salomone, *True American* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

²³ Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995) see “Overview” 19-34 for basic biographical information.

It was during his Chicago period, 1894-1904, that Dewey became a prominent figure in philosophy and pedagogy. At this time, Dewey became part of the new philosophical tradition of Pragmatism, which contends that the truth of an ideology or theory can only be measured in its success or failure. Dewey is credited with orienting Pragmatism explicitly towards politics, social reform, and education.²⁴ In 1897, Dewey wrote his first statement on education to become widely known, a short article titled “My Pedagogic Creed,” published in the University of Chicago’s *School Journal* and later as a pamphlet that enjoyed wide circulation among teachers. Here, Dewey famously declared that “education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform,” – a belief that would remain at the core of his pedagogy over the next five decades.²⁵ During his time at the University of Chicago, Dewey also founded and directed the Laboratory School from 1896 to 1904, an experimental primary school where he tested his ideas in practice.

In 1899, Dewey published *The School and Society*. Expanding on the ideas of “My Pedagogic Creed,” *School and Society* remains one of the clearest expressions of Dewey’s philosophy of education. Originally delivered as a series of three lectures to the parents of the Laboratory School’s pupils, the book became immensely popular. Between November 1899 and August 1913, it underwent eleven printings in the United States to a total of nearly 20,000 copies,²⁶ and was translated into a dozen languages. Dewey’s primary argument in *School and Society* was that industrialization, which had transformed every other aspect of life, also necessitated the transformation of the school.²⁷ Prior to the Industrial Revolution, the entire economic process had stood revealed as the economy centered around household production. Children had inevitably become socialized in the economic order through

²⁴ Catherine Legg and Christopher Hookway, “Pragmatism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatism/>.

²⁵ John Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed* (New York: E.L. Kellogg and Co., 1897), 16.

²⁶ Data from the copyright page of a copy from the eleventh impression, August 1913.

²⁷ John Dewey, *The School and Society, Being Three Lectures, Supplemented by a Statement of The University Elementary School* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1907), 22.

participation in household work and firsthand acquaintance with natural materials, their manipulation, and their social necessities and uses. Industrialization and urbanization had destroyed these bonds and the educational opportunities of the rural household. The school, then, needed to be recalled from isolation and take its place as the center of community life.²⁸ School life needed to be organized on a social basis and revolve around occupations, or active work. Children, Dewey argued, were naturally active and social. These instincts needed to be given direction. The mere absorption of facts could only be individual and promote selfishness, while practical work encouraged cooperation. Moreover, occupations supplied children with genuine motives for action and experience, through which larger scientific, social, and historic phenomena could then be illuminated.²⁹ By becoming a part of society, the school would become a means of improving it:

When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious.³⁰

Another of Dewey's most significant works, frequently regarded as his magnum opus, is *Democracy and Education*.³¹ A profound belief in democracy underpinned all of Dewey's works. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey articulated the centrality of proper education to the realization of true democracy. Democratic society was defined as one committed to change and betterment – a society that was deliberately progressive. Education was defined as the “reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.”³² A democratic society, then, should endeavor to shape the experiences of youth so that they

²⁸ Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, 24–27.

²⁹ Dewey, *The School and Society*, 29–30, 37, 53.

³⁰ Dewey, *The School and Society*, 44.

³¹ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916).

³² Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 90.

would form better habits rather than reproduce current habits, and thus improve the future adult society of which they would be a part. But this, Dewey stressed, was no reflection of the American educational system, which was “far from realizing the potential efficacy of education as a constructive agency of improving society.”³³ The vast majority of American schools, adhering to a set body of knowledge and instructional procedure, were institutions of reproduction, not progression. They were geared to the past rather than the future. Dewey particularly abhorred the dual system of education for its dualism of culture and vocation (and their associations with class). He advocated instead for the combination of academic and vocational pursuits in the school with a broad view of culture that encompassed all of human affairs.³⁴ With regards to the separation of vocation and culture, Dewey particularly criticized the German school system – and the German influences of the American school system.³⁵ Finally, in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey emphasized both the individual and the social. In addition to developing progressive habits and values, education in a democratic society must give the individual personal interest in society at large.³⁶ This could be achieved through the school-as-community, the argument for which Dewey had initiated in *School and Society*.

By the time Dewey published *Democracy and Education* in 1916, he was well-known in the public sphere and guaranteed a large audience. From its founding in 1914, Dewey was a regular contributor to *The New Republic* magazine, through which he became familiar to the broader progressive public. Within a few years he was regarded as the leading spokesman of progressivism.³⁷ World War I increased Dewey’s celebrity. His long-standing reservations on German pedagogy were given full expression in *German Philosophy and Politics* (1915),

³³ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 92.

³⁴ Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 124–26.

³⁵ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 108–9; see also Thomas Fallace, “Reading *Democracy and Education* in the Context of World War I,” *Democracy & Education* 25, no. 1 (2017): 1–7.

³⁶ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 115.

³⁷ Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 120.

as well as in *Democracy and Education*. He used wartime anti-German sentiment as a tool to communicate his ideas on democratic education to a receptive audience.³⁸ Dewey supported the war as a pragmatist – though he preferred non-violent means of international conflict resolution, if the war could succeed in safeguarding democracy it was just. He had wholeheartedly supported Wilson’s Fourteen Points and was thus bitterly disappointed by the outcome of the Paris Peace Conference.³⁹ He believed the League of Nations in its current form was not worth having, and his politics became more isolationist. Ironically, his international prestige soon reached its greatest heights. He traveled widely, visiting among other countries China, Japan, and Turkey, when he surveyed schools and made formal suggestions for educational reform at the government’s behest.⁴⁰ In 1928, Dewey visited the Soviet Union.

Dewey remained active in domestic politics throughout the 1920s. He was a reconstructionist. In some of his most prominent political works, *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) and *Individualism Old and New* (1930) he argued that present society, divided by individualism, needed to become a coherent community for democracy to succeed. Collective or social values needed to be emphasized.⁴¹ Neither major party, Dewey believed, could serve the interests of the new public of the modern industrial world. He wrote in *The New Republic* that they were out of date and had cowed to big business: the Republicans were all too happy to let the rich flourish, and the Democrats were so keen to persuade business interests they were “safe” that they did not act much better.⁴² In 1928, he joined the League for Independent Political Action, which encouraged the formation of a third party along the

³⁸ Fallace, “Reading Democracy and Education in the Context of World War I,” 2.

³⁹ Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, 170, 203.

⁴⁰ Ryan, 208. Dewey’s recommendations to the Turkish government can be accessed here: https://archive.org/stream/RecommendationsForTurkishEducation-JohnDewey/Dewey_on_Turkish_Education_reforms_djvu.txt

⁴¹ Jay Martin, *The Education of John Dewey: A Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 387–93; see also John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927); and John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New* (New York: Minton, Balch, & Company, 1930).

⁴² Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, 287.

lines of the British Labour Party. While some thought the Socialist Party of America or the Communist Party – USA could fill this role, Dewey strongly disagreed. His politics were always geared to reform, not revolution. He denied the universal applicability of Communism, arguing that with its strong democratic tradition and middle class, revolution in the United States could only be a blood bath and fail to achieve social and economic transformation.⁴³ Dewey also believed that the socialist-minded policies he favored would never be accepted by Americans under the banner of Socialism or Communism, which were widely identified as fanatical and doctrinaire.⁴⁴ He was, however, extremely interested in the Soviet Union, open to separating means from ends and learning from their experiment in socialism. In 1928, Dewey co-founded The People's Lobby, an organization that demanded socially responsible economic policies and aid for the disadvantaged who had been left behind during the age of prosperity. The People's Lobby also advocated for birth control legislation and funding for child welfare.⁴⁵ The onset of the Great Depression in 1929 confirmed many of Dewey's concerns about contemporary American society and government. He continued his work at The People's Lobby and the League for Independent Political Action, advocating for reform from the left with increasing urgency.

Progressive Methods and Experimental Schools

Returning to progressive education from closely related progressive politics, Dewey, for all his writing on education, never dictated a formal program or methodology. His was more a theory of the place of education in modern society.⁴⁶ Dewey never devised nor endorsed one particular school program or curriculum that could realize all he believed the

⁴³ David C. Engerman, "John Dewey and the Soviet Union: Pragmatism Meets Revolution," *Modern Intellectual History* 3, no. 1 (2006): 53, 62; Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, 301–2.

⁴⁴ Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, 289.

⁴⁵ Mordecai Lee, *The Philosopher-Lobbyist: John Dewey and the People's Lobby, 1928-1940* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 63–64.

⁴⁶ Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, 149.

school should be. Indeed, though his work at the Laboratory School has been criticized as impossible to implement widely in public schools, this was never his intention. Reporting on the progress and activities of the Laboratory School, he stated emphatically in *School and Society*: “we do not expect to have other schools literally imitate what we do. A working model is not something to be copied.”⁴⁷ In his experimental work Dewey aimed to demonstrate only the feasibility of his principles; the development of methods and programs that could be widely applied was left to his followers and students at Teachers College, Columbia, widely recognized as the center of American progressive education. Two such programs that gained prominence in the 1910s and 1920s were the Project Method, developed by William H. Kilpatrick (1871-1965), and the Dalton Laboratory Plan, developed by Helen Parkhurst (1887-1973).

William H. Kilpatrick, born in White Plains, Georgia in 1871, had experience teaching at the elementary, high school, and university levels before he began his life-long association with Teachers College in 1907. Here, he was a graduate student of Dewey until 1909, and thereafter his colleague and friend. He was arguably Dewey’s most ardent follower, and did much to popularize, extend, and apply Dewey’s ideas in his methodology and writing, as well as his courses at Teachers College (where throughout his career he taught an estimated 35,000 students).⁴⁸ Kilpatrick agreed with Dewey that the sweeping social and economic changes that had occurred due to industrialization necessitated a transformation of the school. Because of the continuing rapid pace of change, he opposed fixed-in-advance subject matter. Schools needed to teach methods of investigating and confirming truth rather than truth itself. In 1914, Kilpatrick published a successful and rather severe criticism of the Montessori Method, which he assessed as detrimental to the development of children’s

⁴⁷ Dewey, *The School and Society*, 110; For a typical criticism along these lines, see Ravitch, *Left Back*, 59.

⁴⁸ Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 215, 220.

imaginative faculties and problem-solving abilities.⁴⁹ In 1918, he put forward his own methodology of education in an essay titled “The Project Method: The Use of the Purposeful Act in Education,” which catapulted him to national and international fame. His pamphlet underwent eleven printings in tens of thousands of copies in just over ten years, and, in 1925, he elaborated the Project Method in *Foundations of Method*, thereafter an essential manual for progressive teachers.⁵⁰

The Project Method is essentially a child-centered method based on problem-solving, in which children plan, execute, and evaluate projects with the guidance of teachers. Kilpatrick believed that learning best occurred through “wholehearted purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment.”⁵¹ He identified four types of project that should be pursued in the school by their purpose: to embody an idea or plan in external form, to enjoy an esthetic experience, to solve a problem or unravel an intellectual difficulty, and to obtain a skill or item of knowledge. In order to obtain the maximum educative value from such projects, Kilpatrick argued, it was absolutely essential that they were undertaken voluntarily by pupils according to their interests. He believed that willingness, success, satisfaction, and learning were inherently connected. Undertaking an interesting activity would, with suitable guidance from the teacher, lead the pupil to success and enjoyment and, directly or indirectly, on to further fruitful activity.⁵² This did not mean subordinating the school to childish whim; rather, children were to be able to choose or purpose their actions within large limits. A very limited amount of coercion could be tolerated as a temporary device to overcome dispositions

⁴⁹ Röhrs, Hermann, “International Response to the Educational Ideas of M. Montessori as Exemplified by Their Influence on Progressive Education in the United States,” in *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 210–11; For Kilpatrick’s full critique, see William Heard Kilpatrick, *The Montessori System Explained* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914).

⁵⁰ Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 216–17; William Heard Kilpatrick, *Foundations of Method: Informal Talks on Teaching* (New York: Macmillan, 1925).

⁵¹ William Heard Kilpatrick, *The Project Method: The Use of the Purposeful Act in the Educative Process* (New York: Teachers’ College Columbia University, 1929), 4.

⁵² Kilpatrick, *The Project Method*, 11–13.

and foster new interests.⁵³ Kilpatrick also believed that with children naturally social and the skillful teacher to guide their purposing, this type of education would be character building. The constant sharing of purposes in pursuing projects could only facilitate social behaviour and combat selfish individualism. Kilpatrick concluded “The Project Method” by inviting his readers to consider what such an education, producing citizens who were alert, intelligently critical, and able to think and act to mutual benefit, would mean for democracy.

Another prominent methodology of progressive education was the Dalton Laboratory Plan (frequently referred to as simply the Dalton Plan), developed by Helen Parkhurst in the 1910s. In this program, pupils chose how to spend their time executing assignments in subject laboratories rather than classrooms. Parkhurst, born in 1887 in Durand, Wisconsin, graduated from Wisconsin State College in 1907 and Teachers College, Columbia in 1909, where she studied under Dewey. She also studied with Montessori in Rome around 1913, and though she was an early proponent of the Montessori Method in the United States, she credited Dewey for a large part of the inspiration of her own program.⁵⁴ Parkhurst’s educational approach, which highlighted pupils’ capacity and need for freedom, responsibility, and independence in the classroom, was also impacted by practical teaching experience. When she was only sixteen, she taught at a rural school in Wisconsin where she was responsible for forty children in eight grades. In order to manage her classroom, Parkhurst set various grades at independent work and often had older children work with the younger while she attended to a single grade at a time.⁵⁵ Her plan was first applied in full in a school in Dalton, Massachusetts in 1920 and accordingly named the Dalton Laboratory Plan. The same year, Parkhurst founded the now-famous Dalton School in New York.

⁵³ Kilpatrick, *The Project Method*, 16.

⁵⁴ Susan F. Semel, “Helen Parkhurst and the Dalton School,” in *Founding Mothers and Others: Women Educational Leaders During the Progressive Era*, ed. Alan R. Sadovnik and Susan F. Semel (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 77–78, 81.

⁵⁵ Helen Parkhurst, *Education on the Dalton Plan* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1922), 9.

The Dalton Plan was designed for the fourth through eighth grades, children aged eight or nine to thirteen or fourteen. The curriculum was planned according to children's capabilities, interests, motivations, and difficulties at various ages. Parkhurst insisted that

the child must be fortified to solve the problems of childhood before he comes face to face with the problems of youth and maturity ... [and he] can only do this if education is designed to give him such freedom and responsibility as will permit him to tackle them for and by himself.⁵⁶

Under the Dalton Plan, children were still organized into grades, but worked and moved freely in laboratories devoted to subjects rather than grade-designated classrooms.

Schoolwork was given to pupils in the form of "contract-jobs", specifying monthly assignments (subdivided into weekly assignments for younger pupils) in each subject. In consultation with teachers, who were also assigned to subjects rather than grades, pupils planned how divide their time among subjects. They could choose, for example, to complete the work they enjoyed first and then devote more time to their difficult subjects. Students were free to work individually, but the subdivision of the large class group and the furnishing of laboratories with tables rather than desks aimed to promote small group work, discussion, and pupil cooperation. Pupils were allowed to move through their contract-jobs at their own pace; a system of graphs charted their progress. Periodically, larger groups at the same level met for set lessons from teachers and for "conferences" during which pupils discussed their problems and progress.⁵⁷ The ideal, Parkhurst emphasized, was freedom rather than license – children in Dalton schools were not to run wild, as their critics alleged, but make choices within a richly planned environment.⁵⁸

Detailed literature on the Dalton Plan appeared soon after it was applied in Dalton, New York, and several experimental schools in England. The first systematic exposition of

⁵⁶ Parkhurst, 6; Edwards, June, *Women in American Education, 1820-1955: The Female Force and Educational Reform* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 132.

⁵⁷ Parkhurst, *Education on the Dalton Plan*, "Chapter III: The Plan in Practice," 34-44.

⁵⁸ Parkhurst, 18; Edwards, June, *Women in American Education*, 133.

the plan was written in 1922 by Evelyn Dewey, John Dewey's daughter and a significant promoter of educational reform in her own right. Parkhurst published *Education on the Dalton Plan* later the same year, discussing the plan in principle and practice. Here she also emphasized that the success of the plan hinged on well-designed assignments, and provided several samples.⁵⁹ Within six months, *Education on the Dalton Plan* had been translated into fourteen languages. Parkhurst travelled widely in Europe and Asia during the 1920s and 1930s to speak on the Dalton Plan and visit schools. She was decorated by the Republic of China, the Emperor of Japan, and the Queen of the Netherlands for her contributions to education.⁶⁰ In the United States, the Dalton School in New York was visited frequently by progressive educators and gained national prominence, becoming a school for the children of the elite.⁶¹

Though the Project Method and the Dalton Plan gained prominence, the American progressive movement remained characterized by a high degree of experimentalism. No text could better express this diversity than *Schools of To-morrow*, a survey of more than a dozen progressive schools across the United States co-authored by John and Evelyn Dewey in 1915. As Cremin has noted, the book is invaluable as a record of what progressive education, and the spirit that animated it, actually was:

The text abounds in vivid descriptions of the physical education, the nature studies, the manual work, the industrial training, and the innumerable "socialized activities" in the schools of tomorrow. There is exciting talk of freedom for children, of greater attention to individual growth and development, of a new unity between education and life, of a more meaningful school curriculum, of a vast democratizing of culture and learning. *Nowhere is the faith and optimism of the progressive movement more dramatically conveyed.*⁶²

⁵⁹ See Appendix A for a sample assignment for fourth grade history provided by Parkhurst in *Education on the Dalton Plan*, 85-90.

⁶⁰ Semel, "Helen Parkhurst and the Dalton School," 79; Edwards, June, *Women in American Education*, 143.

⁶¹ Semel, "Helen Parkhurst and the Dalton School," 84.

⁶² Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 153. My emphasis.

Schools of To-morrow is generally journalistic in tone, aiming to show that there was no single path to educational reform. Nonetheless, it becomes clear to the reader that not all progressive programs were equal. For example, the Deweys could not fully endorse the Montessori Method, as Montessori's educational materials were all designed for a single purpose allowing no freedom to create, no opportunity for the child to bend the materials to their own needs – which they would constantly have to do in real life.⁶³ The further one reads, the more comprehensive the examples become, concluding with a rapturous account of Gary, Indiana, where the “problem of general public-school education [was] not to train workers for a trade, but to make use of the whole environment of the child in order to supply motive and meaning to the work.”⁶⁴

Gary was founded to accommodate the workforce of Gary Works, the US Steel Corporation's newest (and then the world's largest and most modern) steelmaking facilities on the southern shores of Lake Michigan. Construction began in 1906 and thousands of workers flooded into the area.⁶⁵ Gary's school system was designed from the bottom-up by its first superintendent, William Wirt, appointed in 1907. Wirt designed what was later called the platoon system. The Gary schools had only classrooms and desks enough for half the student body: pupils rotated between classroom lessons and engagement in the schools' shops, laboratories, playgrounds, and auditoriums. The Indiana curriculum was followed, but strong efforts were made to relate content to the community's social needs and dominant economic activities, and to encourage active, hands-on work wherever possible. Like other progressives described above, Wirt had been an admiring student of Dewey, and his approach was straight from *School and Society*: education of the industrial economy through the school

⁶³ John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of To-Morrow* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1915), 154–58.

⁶⁴ Dewey and Dewey, 252. For the full discussion on Gary, see 175–202, 251–266, 309.

⁶⁵ For more information on Gary, its demographic, and urban planning, see Anthony Brook, “Gary, Indiana: Steeltown Extraordinary,” *Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 1 (April 1975): 35–53.

replaced the now-absent economic education of the agrarian home.⁶⁶ Randolph Bourne, a progressive intellectual interested in educational reform, wrote a series on the Gary schools in *The New Republic* in 1915 that generated wide awareness and discussion of Wirt's program. He wrote that Gary's schools were "the first consistent and whole-hearted attempt to apply Dewey's educational philosophy."⁶⁷ In 1918, the General Board of Education conducted a systematic survey of the Gary schools. They found that though there was merit in their organization, the quality of student work and instruction in formal subjects was far from adequate.⁶⁸ This somewhat dampened enthusiasm for the Gary school system, but nonetheless, its popularity continued to grow, and by 1929 schools in two hundred cities in forty-one states had adopted it in part or whole.⁶⁹

While this is an impressive number of schools, it is important to note that it still represents only a small minority of American schools. The Project Method, the Dalton Plan, and other experimental methods that endeavored to implement progressive philosophies of education were never employed in the majority of American public schools. Progressive programs were sometimes employed in public schools, as in Gary, and some progressive schools, those most closely connected to the settlement movement, attended specifically to underprivileged urban populations.⁷⁰ Most progressive schools, though, were private, fee-paying, and exclusive due to their experimental nature. They often served the children of the avant-garde cultural elite, as the group of parents most willing to give their children a non-

⁶⁶ Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 154–56.

⁶⁷ Randolph S. Bourne, "Schools in Gary," *The New Republic* 2, no. 21 (March 27, 1915): 199.

⁶⁸ Abraham Flexner and Frank P. Bachman, *The Gary Schools: A General Account* (New York: General Board of Education, 1918). The General Board of Education Published a further six subject-based volumes on the Gary schools (Household Arts, Industrial Works, Costs for the School Year 1915-1916, Science Teaching, Physical Training and Play, and Measurement of Classroom Products) that are accessible via HathiTrust here: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006577379>.

⁶⁹ Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 160.

⁷⁰ An excellent example is Public School No. 26 in Indianapolis, described in *Schools of To-morrow*, which was located in one of the poorest neighborhoods of the city. The school took over three adjacent dilapidated tenement buildings, repaired them with the aid of pupils and community members, and then used them to offer social clubs and vocational training to children, as well as night classes to their parents. Dewey and Dewey, *Schools of To-Morrow*, 207–21.

traditional education. However, the public visibility and discussion of progressive education was vastly disproportionate to the number of progressive schools. Indeed, such was the vogue of John Dewey's name that it was applied to all sorts of school reforms during this period, whether or not they really reflected his ideas.⁷¹

Accordingly, the impact of progressivism on American education has been a matter of debate among educational historians for decades. Lawrence Cremin's *The Transformation of the School*, as the title can only convey, attributes high importance to the progressive movement. Though still recognized as a key text in the history of American progressivism, it has been subject to much criticism and revision. Diane Ravitch, for example, agrees that progressivism had a large impact, but judges it to have been dominantly negative. At times, she seems to almost willfully misunderstand the progressives in her staunch defense of the academic curriculum.⁷² Herbert Kliebard has (in a rather more judicious manner) challenged the degree of influence exerted by progressive education. He divides progressive and traditional educators into various interest groups, who squabbled over the curriculum until the post-World War II period, preventing the development of a coherent school policy.⁷³

I, however, am inclined to argue that if progressive education did not transform school policy, it did transform the ways in which the purpose of popular education was commonly understood. This position is based largely on the approach of Sol Cohen, who

⁷¹ Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 31.

⁷² Ravitch, *Left Back*. For example, Ravitch quite unfairly deems the progressives "anti-intellectual" for their criticism of the classical curriculum and traditional school (16). She fails to recognize that Dewey and others did not oppose academic knowledge – quite the opposite – but rather asked that it be relevant to modern life, and that pupils arrive at this knowledge largely by means of investigation rather than instruction (or indoctrination). Elsewhere, she charges the Lincoln School at Teachers College, which employed the Project Method, as hypocritical for allowing students to choose their reading material from a screened selection of books of high literary value (185) – ignoring that Kilpatrick specified choices should be offered within limits that should beneficially direct the child's interests. And for all her quite right critiques of progressive schools as highly exclusive in practice, her own understanding of culture and education is surprisingly elitist – she concludes that a "society that does not teach youngsters to appreciate great works of literature and art ... can expect a dumbed-down culture that honors celebrity and sensation rather than knowledge and wisdom" (466). It is just such a deference to high culture that progressive educators opposed.

⁷³ Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 27–29.

examines the rhetoric surrounding education rather than the curriculum itself. Cohen identifies two languages of education in use in the first decades of the twentieth century. The traditional language of education was initially dominant, characterized by terms and phrases such as character, discipline, self-control, order, morality, the faculties of the mind, and the accumulated wisdom of the past.⁷⁴ The progressive language of education was used by a small community of educators in the 1910s. It contrasted with characteristic phrases like freedom, creativity, growth, self-expression, interest, learning by doing, and educating the whole child. By the 1920s, the progressive language of education was found in the discourse of the National Education Association, and by the 1940s, it had become dominant.⁷⁵ Though methods of progressive education were never adopted wholesale in American schools, the ideas of the movement had a large impact, since, as Cohen argues, “[by] changing the way we talk about education, we change what we value in education and what we think the ends and purpose of education should be.”⁷⁶ The progressive movement helped shift the goal of education from the acquisition of culture through a set body of knowledge to the development of the child – both in the United States and beyond its borders.

Progressive Education in Pre-Revolutionary Russia

In Russia, though the absolute number of schools increased steadily through the nineteenth century, state policy generally acted to limit the growth of popular education until the turn of the twentieth century. This was especially true in the reactionary years of the 1880s. No single school system existed, with various types of schools falling under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Education, the Ministry of Public Domains and Interior Affairs, the Holy Synod, and zemstvo boards. Between 1900 and World War I some significant progress was made. The Ministry of Education gradually gained full control over

⁷⁴ Sol Cohen, “The Influence of Progressive Education on School Reform in the U.S.A.,” in *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 326.

⁷⁵ Cohen, 328–29.

⁷⁶ Cohen, 326.

schools, and in 1908 the Universal Primary Education Law was passed. This legislation mandated that all children aged eight to eleven living within a two-mile radius of a school must attend four years of primary school, and that there must be one teacher to every fifty pupils. Given the vastly inadequate number of teachers and schools then available, a ten-year introduction period was set. Secondary schools, on the model of the German *gymnasium*, were opened to all but in practice were attended by very few children of peasant and worker origins. Some secondary schools for girls were also established. By 1914, the literacy rate had been raised to about 40%.⁷⁷

A small progressive movement developed in Russia amid discussion and demand for educational reform that intensified after the 1905 Revolution. The journal *Free Education*, published 1907-1918, served as a rallying point for educators interested in child-centered instruction, learning from experience, and work or active education as a means of development rather than productivity.⁷⁸ European and American progressives had a large impact on these educators: Dewey's *School and Society* first appeared in Russian translation in 1907, and Georg Kerschensteiner, a German progressive who promoted vocational education, was widely translated and reviewed.⁷⁹ A notable institution of the Russian progressive movement was the Settlement, established by Aleksandr Zelenko, Louise Schleger, and Stanislav Shatskii, where educators and child specialists lived and worked with the children of Moscow's urban poor. The Settlement, established on the Anglo-American settlement model (Zelenko had visited Hull House in Chicago several years earlier), carried out its work for only three years. It was deemed a subversive institution and closed by tsarist

⁷⁷ Bowen, *A History of Western Education*, 492–96.

⁷⁸ Oskar Anweiler, "Origin and Development of Progressive Education in Eastern Europe," in *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*, ed. Hermann Röhrs and Lenhart Volker (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 122; Irina Mchitarjan, "John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930 - Report on a Forgotten Reception," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 19, no. 1 (2000): 113.

⁷⁹ Mchitarjan, "John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930," 112–13.

authorities in 1908. Shatskii later noted that around this time, after his work at the Settlement, he began to be conscious of Dewey's influence on his own educational thought.⁸⁰

In 1914, Count Paul Ignatiev became the Minister of Education. The following year, he put forward a dramatic program of school reform which sought to eliminate social stratification in education by creating a unified system of schools where practical learning would be widely applied. These reforms met the main demands of Russian progressives, and Ignatiev himself acknowledged that Dewey's *School and Society* had provided their theoretical basis.⁸¹

Sadly, Ignatiev's reforms were never implemented. Other high officials opposed his liberal tendencies, and at the end of 1916, Ignatiev was forced to resign. It is very likely, though, that these reforms could not have been successfully implemented even if Ignatiev remained. World War I had wreaked havoc on Russian education. Hostilities and evacuations ripped many children from school, teachers' already low salaries were ruined by inflation, and primary schools throughout the Empire, not just those close to the front lines, lost their teachers as they were not exempted from the draft.⁸² Few changes were made in the realm of education following the February Revolution. After the October Revolution, though, the Ministry of Public Education's cautious progress was abandoned as the new Soviet educational authorities attempted the complete transformation of the school, and, through it, society. These efforts, and their connection in theory and practice to American progressive education, are explored in the next chapter.

⁸⁰ William Partlett, "Bourgeois Ideas in Communist Construction: The Development of Stanislav Shatskii's Teacher Training Methods," *History of Education* 35, no. 4/5 (September 2006): 453–556; Stanislav Shatsky, "A Teacher's Path," in *A Teacher's Experience: A Collection*, trans. N.P. Kuzin and D.J. Latishina (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 29.

⁸¹ Mchitarjan, "John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930," 116; See also Bowen, *A History of Western Education*, 497.

⁸² Bowen, *A History of Western Education*, 497.

Chapter 2 – The New Soviet Education: American Influences in Soviet School Programs and Pedagogical Writings, 1918-1931

We want to educate a human being as harmonious as possible morally and spiritually, one who has received a full general education and can easily acquire full skill in some particular field. We likewise have in mind the creation of a true, well-disposed fellow-worker to his fellow-citizens, we want to produce a comrade to all men and a fighter, so long as the fight lasts, for the socialist ideal.

Anatolii Lunacharskii, “The Philosophy of the School and the Revolution.”*

Within a year of the October Revolution, Narkompros (*Narodnyi Komissariat Prosveshcheniia* – the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment) had articulated an appropriately revolutionary vision for the school. In October 1918, the State Commission on Education published the “Basic Principles of the Unified Labor School,” in *Izvestiia*, expressing this vision. Various levels of school were to be united into a single system, from kindergarten leading to the university, enabling equal access to equal education for all. The basis of the school was labor. It was absolutely essential that labor training was polytechnical, aimed to provide students with a practical acquaintance of all basic forms of labor rather than a specific profession. A healthy role was also allotted for aesthetic education which would develop the ability to admire and create beauty as the ultimate aim of labor and science. Children would be expected to participate in all aspects of school life and therefore would be given the right of self-government.¹ The traditional or bourgeois school was firmly repudiated: exams, grades, homework, formal discipline, formal subjects, and rote learning were abolished. The new school that would take its place, the Unified Labor School, had been envisioned. But exactly how this vision would be made a reality, what methods and programs would be used to implement these principles, remained to be determined.

* Anatoli Lunacharsky, “The Philosophy of the School and the Revolution,” speech delivered May 22, 1923, Tomsk, in *On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 162-163.

¹ State Commission on Education, “Basic Principles of the United Labor School,” in *Bolshevik Visions: First Phases of the Cultural Revolution*, ed. William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis Publishers, 1984), 301-8.

Leading Soviet pedagogues and figures at Narkompros searched the world over for such methods and surprisingly found the most promising model for their proletarian school in their ultimate capitalist foe, the United States. American progressive pedagogy, known largely through the translated writings of John Dewey, Evelyn Dewey, Helen Parkhurst, and William H. Kilpatrick published in the Soviet Union, was incorporated into Narkompros school programs through the 1920s to the early 1930s. This chapter seeks to account for this apparent contradiction between the bourgeois origins of progressive methods and their socialist application. Through the writings of Anatolii Lunacharskii, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and Stanislav Shatskii, I will first examine Soviet Marxist pedagogy of this period to highlight key ideological similarities with American progressives. Next, I will turn to the appeal of the “American”, considering how various images and understandings of the United States allowed the capitalist stigma to be disregarded in some cases. Finally, I consider how American methods were actually incorporated into Soviet school policy and practice, and how policies and practices evolved over a decade. Small but significant adaptations were made to these methods to complete their transfer to socialist society and orient them toward Soviet goals. When these factors are considered, the applicability of American progressive education in the Soviet Union, with so near a parallel vision of the purpose of education held by Soviet and American progressives, becomes quite clear.

Soviet Marxist Pedagogy: Progressive Values in the Educational Works of Anatolii Lunacharskii, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and Stanislav Shatskii

There was essentially no Marxist theory of education. Marx and Engels had touched on the topic only infrequently. The basic Marxist legacy concerning education was that it should be polytechnical, teaching a variety of practical skills. Engels had written that education should give mastery of the whole system of production, thus freeing workers from the constraints of the division of labor and enabling them to transfer from one branch of production to another. But this was only a very ambiguous guide. For some educators, this

meant that the essential purpose of the school was the liberation of the individual through broad, polytechnic education. But ultimately interpretation and elaboration of the polytechnic principle remained open.² Immediately after Narkompros was formed it was divided into two main schools of thought which have been termed the Petrograd School and the Moscow School. In its interpretation of the polytechnic, the Petrograd School was close to European and especially American progressives on the principle of active work in the school – essentially that basic technical skills should be taught for their educative value, and specialized training not be introduced until later adolescence. The Moscow School found this interpretation too academic, emphasizing the importance of labor skills for practical purposes and promoting the idea of school communes that would form the child’s complete environment. The Moscow school denounced the Petrograd School as too liberal in its emphasis on freedom of individual development, while the Petrograd School accused the Moscow School of glorifying physical labor for its own sake.³ Within a year, the Petrograd School, led by Commissar Anatolii Lunacharskii and supported by Lenin, emerged victorious to declare the “Basic Principles of the Unified Labor School” and directed Soviet school policy for a little more than the next decade.

In *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*, Sheila Fitzpatrick commented in passing that if the polytechnic principle was derived from Marxism, its elaboration owed more to John Dewey than to Marx or Engels.⁴ Soviet works on education from the late 1910s through the 1920s display strong similarities to American progressive pedagogy in values, the projected purposes of education, and even language. Direct references to Dewey and others are not infrequent. Three key similarities – the centrality of education to democracy; the

² Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 5–6.

³ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 29–30.

⁴ Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 7.

attitude towards individualism, individuality, and collectivism; and the emphasis on children's interests – can be clearly seen in the works of three key figures at Narkompros, Anatolii Lunacharski, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and Stanislav Shatskii. In these similarities, it can be easily discerned what great societal responsibility was assigned to education by these Soviet educators and their American counterparts. Without properly progressive education, they all believed, a harmonious, democratic society could not be possible.

Anatolii Lunacharskii was Commissar of Enlightenment from 1918 to 1929.

Lunacharskii deeply valued the arts and philosophy and emphasized what he understood to be the emotional and ethical aspects of Marxism, particularly the individual's need for emotional expression and communion with others, over pure rationalism and scientism.⁵ In his view, Narkompros had particular importance “in a revolutionary government whose historical mission was to achieve the enlightenment of the people.”⁶ As such, though he was not a trained educator, he wrote and spoke frequently on education during his tenure as Commissar. He remained firm in his belief that the essential purpose of the polytechnical school was the liberation of the individual through enlightenment.⁷

A close colleague of Lunacharskii, Nadezhda Krupskaya was briefly deputy commissar of Narkompros in 1918, and then head of Glavpolitprosvet (*Glavnyi politiko-prosvetitel'nyi komitet* – Chief Political Education Committee) of Narkompros from 1921-1930 as well as the scientific pedagogical section of the State Academic Council of Narkompros (GUS – *Gosudarstvennyi uchenyi sovet*), the body responsible for devising curricula, from 1921-1932. Krupskaya had worked as a teacher during the 1890s. While in exile in Geneva during the 1910s, she conducted extensive research into historical and contemporary global pedagogy. The result of this research, *Public Education and Democracy*

⁵ Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 1-8; see especially 3-4 on the emotional aspects of Marxism.

⁶ Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 1.

⁷ Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 5.

(*Narodnoe Obrazovanie i Demokratiia*, 1916, 1921), has been credited with initiating the body of Soviet Marxist pedagogical literature of the post-Revolutionary period.⁸ Like Lunacharskii, Krupskaya believed strongly in the centrality of the school to the Revolution. She was committed to a polytechnic labor school that would impart the major branches of knowledge and production to all, thereby creating a cultured, intelligent people who would be liberated by their commitment to advancing socialist society.⁹

Stanislav Shatskii, whose pre-Revolutionary activities were discussed in Chapter 1, is not typically classified as a Marxist pedagogue despite his work at Narkompros alongside Lunacharskii and Krupskaya. He should, however, be considered among this group, and he occupies a central position in this narrative. Shatskii was a key figure in determining the course of Narkompros school policy during the 1920s. From 1919 to 1932, he was the director of the First Experimental Station of Narkompros (FES), whose findings shaped curricular development, as well as a member of GUS from 1921 to 1932. Additionally, as a prominent member of the pre-Revolutionary Russian progressive movement, he himself was a means of transmission of progressive ideas after the Revolution.

Given the continuity of his pedagogy, and the fact that he initially opposed the Bolshevik seizure of power, William Partlett has portrayed Shatskii as something of a “pure” progressive educator. His goals and interests overlapped with those of Narkompros for a time, but he was never a Bolshevik. Partlett further argues that Shatskii’s increasing adaptation of his pre-Revolutionary pedagogy to Marxism from the mid-1920s on was a forced legitimization of his ideas in a Marxist-Leninist framework, rather than a genuine conversion to socialism.¹⁰ Certainly, this was a time of mounting political pressure, and

⁸ N.V. Zikeyev, “N.K. Krupskaya’s Work on the Book, ‘Public Education and Democracy,’ and First Reviews of This Book,” *Soviet Education* 1, no. 7 (1959): 59.

⁹ Larry E. Holmes, “Magic into Hocus-Pocus: The Decline of Labor Education in Soviet Russia’s Schools, 1931-1937,” *The Russian Review* 51, no. 4 (1992): 549.

¹⁰ William Partlett, “Bourgeois Ideas in Communist Construction: The Development of Stanislav Shatskii’s Teacher Training Methods,” *History of Education* 35, no. 4/5 (September 2006): 471, quote 473.

Partlett's argument would be convincing if it adequately accounted for Shatskii's close relationship with Krupskaya. After meeting for the first time in 1918, Shatskii and Krupskaya worked closely together at GUS. Her work came to have a large impact on Shatskii's own educational views and their implementation at the FES. Writing in 1928, Shatskii noted that Tolstoi, Dewey, and other progressives, as well as Marx, Engels, and Lenin, had been all-important teachers, but concluded: "to a considerable extent I see myself as Krupskaya's pupil."¹¹ And this, even though he had known her for less than a third of his career. It seems likely that under Krupskaya's tutelage Shatskii came to support the goals of the Bolsheviks, at very least those pertaining to education. He may have begun with progressive education rather than Communism, but his synthesis of progressive views and Marxism-Leninism in his pedagogy – a microcosm of Soviet pedagogy as a whole during this period – should be taken seriously.

Having established these key figures, it is possible to turn to the aspects of their writing that bear close connection to American progressivism, beginning with democracy. In his works on education, Lunacharskii demonstrated a deep ideological affinity with Dewey as to the centrality of education in ensuring true democracy. In his speech at the First All-Russian Congress on Education, delivered August 26, 1918, Lunacharskii expressed an understanding of true democracy or people's government as dependent on the availability of free education. This understanding is evocative of Dewey's belief that significant educational reform to suit modern industrial life was required to ensure mass participation in democratic government. Strikingly, Lunacharskii used the American example to articulate this understanding at the outset of his speech: "in the United States of America," he said, "when they had gained their independence, their very first president noted that if the people did not

¹¹ Stanislav Shatsky, "A Teacher's Path," in *A Teacher's Experience: A Collection*, trans. N.P. Kuzin and D.J. Latishina (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 38.

have a sufficient scope of knowledge at command, then democracy would not be free.”¹² He went on to say that people’s government in the United States as it currently existed was an illusion:

Every citizen of America says that in their country the people rules. He says this, even after his eight-hour working day watering a machine with the sweat of his brow ... he will say it in front of a mansion belonging to, say, a Rockefeller, where wealthy folk spend thousands in a day. Even there he will say that yes, they have real government by the people. And this only because in America the bourgeoisie ... has succeeded in exploiting science to make the people ... see only as far up as the shoulders, and not see the head.¹³

By controlling access to education through various levels of schooling, the bourgeoisie had created two grades of people, the rulers and the ruled. This was why, Lunacharskii emphatically declared, there could only be a single, unified school under socialism. With the path to enlightenment opened to all, true democracy or the workers’ government would no longer be an illusion nor an ideal, but a reality. And if Dewey’s school could not succeed in the United States where the bourgeoisie ruled, his philosophy of the school and experimental methods were, as Lunacharskii stated elsewhere, “more or less correct,” and could be employed in the Soviet Union.¹⁴

Both Lunacharskii and Krupskaya were also remarkably similar to Dewey in their attitudes towards individualism, individuality, and collectivism. They shared a belief that there was no necessary antagonism between the individual and the social. In his address to the First All-Russian Congress on Education Lunacharskii spoke not only on people’s democracy but on the role of the school in combatting individualism and promoting collectivism. The school, he said, should produce “not just individualists, but people who will

¹² A.V. Lunacharsky, “Speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Education,” in *Anatoli Lunacharsky On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, ed. E. Dneprov, trans. Ruth English (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 10.

¹³ Lunacharsky, “Speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Education,” 20.

¹⁴ A.V. Lunacharsky, “What Kind of School Does the Proletarian State Need?,” in *Anatoli Lunacharsky On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, ed. E. Dneprov, trans. Ruth English (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 127–28.

be an element in the sum of human justice.”¹⁵ Like Dewey, who believed that rugged, “pioneer” self-interest was incompatible with modern democracy,¹⁶ it was individualism, not individuality, that Lunacharskii opposed. He expanded on his views surrounding the individual in a speech “On Social Education,” given in Petrograd later in 1918. Though individualism, acting in one’s own self-interest, was to be guarded against, individuality should be encouraged, in Lunacharskii’s argument, because the construction of socialism would require a multitude of talents and abilities. Socialist society was like an orchestra: “not everyone playing the same thing, [but] a social grouping in which each plays his own instrument.”¹⁷ A decade later, in a 1928 lecture delivered in Leningrad, Lunacharskii reasserted the same values. He returned to the orchestra, declaring that “extremely original individualities can develop, capable each of contributing something to the general concert, as each voice in an orchestra takes its own line and all in concert can sound together in symphony.”¹⁸ Individual human wills needed to become united if the Revolution was to succeed, and such a transformation from petty individualism could only be achieved through general enlightenment and the unified school. Here Lunacharskii was in complete agreement with Dewey, who maintained that the school was the key to creating a future society more prosperous for all.¹⁹

Krupskaia echoed these sentiments. In a 1927 article in *Uchitel'skaia gazeta* (The Teachers’ Newspaper) she discussed the importance of developing individuality in direct connection with the promotion of a collective way of life or societal responsibility, as did Lunacharskii and Dewey. In the following passage, Krupskaia demonstrates both her

¹⁵ Lunacharsky, “Speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Education,” 21.

¹⁶ John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of To-Morrow* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1915), 165, 174.

¹⁷ A.V. Lunacharsky, “On Social Education,” in *Anatoli Lunacharsky On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, ed. E. Dneprov, trans. Ruth English (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 40.

¹⁸ A.V. Lunacharsky, “Education of the New Man,” in *Anatoli Lunacharsky On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, trans. Ruth English and E. Dneprov (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 239.

¹⁹ John Dewey, *The School and Society, Being Three Lectures, Supplemented by a Statement of The University Elementary School* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1907), 19, 44.

unwavering support of polytechnical education, in her emphasis on all-round development, and a belief in the importance of the individual *and* the collective:

The Soviet system of education aims at developing every child's ability, consciousness, personality, and individuality ... The bourgeoisie tries to bring up its children as individualists who set their ego above all else, who oppose the masses ... We are for the all-round development of our children – we want to make them strong physically and morally, teach them to be collectivists and not individualists, bring them up not to oppose the collective but on the contrary to constitute its force and raise it to a new level. We believe that a child's personality can be best and most fully developed only in a collective. For the collective does not destroy a child's personality, and it improves the quality and content of education.²⁰

To achieve this cultivation of both individuality and collective mentality, Krupskaya advocated collective studies and a careful combination of individual and collective labor. Schoolwork needed to combine children's individual interests with the aims of the class, fostering friendship and mutual assistance. Most importantly, the knowledge and habits acquired through this collective work and study should then be applied through voluntary socially useful work in the community, chosen, planned, and carried out by children with the guidance of their teacher.²¹ Krupskaya carried Dewey to his logical conclusion – the school was not merely an embryonic society, but a full, active member of society.

Children's interests also received emphasis. The importance of recognizing and utilizing children's interests in the school was a key theme in Krupskaya's works on education until her death in 1939.²² In *Public Education and Democracy*, Krupskaya favorably assessed Dewey, emphasizing that he correctly understood children's individuality as the sum total of their energies, instincts, and impulses which could be beneficially channeled through interest. While traditional education had attempted to suppress the child's

²⁰ N.K. Krupskaya, "The Young Pioneer Movement as a Pedagogical Problem," in *N.K. Krupskaya on Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, trans. G.P. Ivanov-Mumjiev (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), 119–20.

²¹ Krupskaya, "The Young Pioneer Movement," 120–21.

²² For a later work, see, for example, N.K. Krupskaya, "All-Round Development of Children," in *N.K. Krupskaya on Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, trans. G.P. Ivanov-Mumjiev (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957), 127–31.

individuality, the progressive educator would foster its development through attention to and promotion of the child's interests, thus developed, extended, and reorganized.²³ Krupskaya agreed with Kilpatrick and Parkhurst that work conducted according to the interest and initiative of children had superior educative value, and, elsewhere, she reviewed both the Project Method and the Dalton Plan favorably.²⁴

Shatskii, too, believed that education should follow children's interests and development. It should enable them to make their own progress and discoveries, rather than drilling children with a preordained set of knowledge to prepare them for adult life. Shatskii stated these views emphatically in a 1918 article, writing: "children in school must be given the chance to learn how to acquire knowledge, to practice the techniques of work itself, instead of acquainting themselves exclusively with the dubious results of other people's work ... *All we need to learn at school is how to work.*"²⁵ In a 1922 article, "Which Comes First: The Children or the School?" Shatskii reinforced these views. The new school should allow children to live the rich emotional and intellectual lives of which they are capable rather than forcing them to prepare for adult life. Additionally, he believed that the interests and needs of children should be developed only as they presented themselves in life, and not artificially introduced, affirming the need for the school to be integrated with society.²⁶ Here, Shatskii is remarkably close to Dewey's *The Child and the Curriculum*, where he argued that the adult mind could not be forced on the child but must be adapted to the intellectual and emotional development and interests of children if learning is to be fruitful.²⁷ *The Child and the*

²³ Nadezhda Konstantinova Krupskaya, *Narodnoe Obrazovanie i Demokratiia* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izd-vo R.S.F.S.R., 1921), 110–11.

²⁴ See N.K. Krupskaya, "Evelyn Dewey. Daltonsky Plan Laboratornoi Raboty v Shkole. Helen Parkhurst. Vospitanie Pri Pomoschi Daltonskogo Plana," *Na Putiakh k Novoi Shkole* 2–3 (1922): 163–68; and N.K. Krupskaya, "Metod Proektov v Politprosvetrabote," *Kommunisticheskoe Prosveschenie* 3, no. 9 (1923): 25–31.

²⁵ Stanislav Shatsky, "First Steps Towards Education Through Work," in *A Teacher's Experience: A Collection*, ed. D.J. Latishina, trans. N.P. Kuzin (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 188–89. Italics in original.

²⁶ Stanislav Shatsky, "Which Comes First: The Children or the School?," in *A Teacher's Experience: A Collection*, ed. D.J. Latishina, trans. N.P. Kuzin (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 203–4, 208, 229.

²⁷ Douglas J. Simpson and Michael J.B. Jackson, "John Dewey's View of the Curriculum in *The Child and the Curriculum*," *Education and Culture* 20, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 27.

Curriculum was first translated into Russian in 1922, the same year Shatskii's article was published. Unfortunately, the precise dates of publication are unclear. But regardless of which came first, the book could only have reinforced views Shatskii had been developing since his work at the Settlement, and the common ground between Dewey and Shatskii is indisputable.

This last point raises a key issue – whether these shared values and ideas indicate similar conclusions arrived at independently from the issue of mass education in the modern era, or the wholesale importation of American progressive ideas to fill the Marxist educational void. This issue could not be resolved conclusively without a detailed investigation into the intellectual trajectories of each major Soviet educator, which is beyond the scope of the present research. The reality, though, was very likely somewhere between these two extremes. Some, like Shatskii, explicitly acknowledged their indebtedness to Dewey and other progressives – though it would be wrong to conclude that where there is influence there is no originality.²⁸ In the cases of Lunacharskii and Krupskaiia, who believed only mass enlightenment could secure the Revolution, it is almost certain that their views concerning education and democracy, individuality, and collectivism did not originate with Dewey, though he may have helped sharpen or shape them. These connections may have even lent a certain support to the Petrograd School's interpretation of the polytechnic, given the international prestige of Dewey in the educational sphere.

Additionally, while some, like Krupskaiia, read Dewey's works in the original English soon after they were published, most read him and other progressives in Russian translations which began to appear only after 1907. Three of Dewey's works were published in Russian before the Revolution (*The School and Society*, *How We Think*, and *Schools of To-morrow*). After the Revolution, these works and others (*Democracy and Education* and *The Child and*

²⁸ See chapter 1, 38-39.

the Curriculum) became much more widely available, published by *Gosizdat* (State Publishing House) and *Rabotnik Prosvesheniia* (The Enlightened Worker), the state academic publishing house, often in several printings.²⁹ Kilpatrick, Parkhurst, and Evelyn Dewey were also translated.³⁰ These works likely provided news ideas as well as reinforced those already held, and may have given a certain synthesis to pre-existing views and demands for reform as Dewey had earlier done for many in the United States. Wherever these ideas originated, the striking similarities between key values held by Soviet and American progressive educators are undeniable. These values, and the accompanying visions of the school, made experimental American progressive schools and programs promising models for Soviet schools.

The Appeal of American Methods

But these shared values alone, while compelling, cannot fully account for the appeal of American progressive education. First, why American methods were perceived as the “most advanced” of the global progressive movement, as several historians of Soviet education have noted,³¹ remains to be explained. After all, the progressive education movement was by no means limited to the United States. It was particularly well-developed and impactful on the public school system there, but nonetheless, there were significant theories, experimental schools, and famous progressives educators in Britain, Italy, Germany, and other nations. Furthermore, how the bourgeois, capitalist, American origins of these progressive methods did not serve as an impediment to their use in the Soviet Union must be

²⁹ Irina Mchitarjan, “John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930 - Report on a Forgotten Reception,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 19, no. 1 (2000): 113, 117.

³⁰ For a list of all Russian translations from this period known to this author, as well as a selection of Russian-language works discussing American progressive methods that unfortunately could not be accessed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, see Appendix B.

³¹ See, for example, Mchitarjan, “John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930”; Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*; Larry E. Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse: Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indian University Press, 1991).

considered. Both these questions can be clarified by turning to the international context and perceptions of the United States in the Soviet Union.

First, German education, which had been held up as a model around the world before World War I, had been seriously devalued by the experience of the war. This was particularly true in the Soviet Union, where an association with defeated Tsarist Russia, which had often admired Imperial Germany, was added to condemnations of German militarism.³² And second, the United States was not only a capitalist scourge – it was also a republican democracy, an industrial power, and a nation of comparable size and population to the Soviet Union. Having gained independence from an imperial power, the United States was a more attractive model than the imperialist European democracies. Additionally, its new technical and industrial dominance in the Interwar period created a perception that everything American, including its education, was modern and first-rate. Any shortcomings of American education, meanwhile, could be blamed on capitalism, thus enhancing the appeal of the methods if not their previous applications.

Prior to the First World War, German schools were held up as a model by nations east and west. Prussian schools and the dual system had influenced the development of public school systems throughout the developed world from the early-mid nineteenth century.³³ However, there were also prominent German progressive educators, like Georg Kerschensteiner, who advocated both incorporating manual activities and handicrafts into academic schools and expanding the system of vocational schools. Kerschensteiner was by far the most popular Western educator among the pre-Revolutionary Russian progressives.³⁴ However, after the beginning of hostilities in 1914, conservative and progressive intellectuals

³² Kendalle E. Bailes, “The American Connection: Ideology and the Transfer of American Technology to the Soviet Union, 1917-1941,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, no. 3 (July 1981): 429.

³³ Thomas Fallace, “Reading Democracy and Education in the Context of World War I,” *Democracy & Education* 25, no. 1 (2017): 3.

³⁴ Mchitarjan, “John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930,” 112–13.

alike in the Entente nations quickly abandoned their admiration of German schools. Some even went as far as to argue these authoritarian schools were to blame, having created a “population hungry for subservience, efficiency, and war.”³⁵

As discussed in Chapter 1, the war created an enlarged sympathetic audience for Dewey’s pedagogical vision in the United States. This was also true in the Soviet Union, where the devaluation of the German ideal led educators to look elsewhere. After the Revolution, translations and discussions of Dewey and other Americans surpassed those of Kerschensteiner.³⁶ In their approbation of American progressive educators and schools, Soviet authors sometimes contrasted them directly with their German counterparts. Krupskaja, for example, wrote that she favored American schools over German because they were far more democratic: German classrooms were still characterized by social standing or class, whereas, in the United States, “Roosevelt’s son and the unskilled worker’s son [sat] at the same bench.”³⁷ Narkompros pedagogue Albert Pinkevich allowed Kerschensteiner to be a significant theorist of the labor school, but identified Dewey as the all-important figure. *School and Society*, he said, was essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the modern labor school and educational reforms in the Soviet Union.³⁸ Dewey’s preference for polytechnical education and emphasis on industrialism had trumped Kerschensteiner’s emphasis on handicrafts and vocational schools, which, after the experience of World War I and the Revolution, appeared tied to a hopelessly outdated and defeated imperialist order.

Considering the image of the United States in the Soviet Union during this period further explains the turn towards American progressive education. Throughout the interwar world, the United States stood for a generally plebian democracy (though, of course, its

³⁵ Fallace, “Reading Democracy and Education in the Context of World War I,” 3.

³⁶ Mchitarjan, “John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930,” 117.

³⁷ Krupskaja, *Narodnoe Obrazovanie i Demokratiia*, 112. My translation from original, “na odnoi skam'e sidiat i syn Ruzvel'ta, i syn chernorabocheho.”

³⁸ A.P. Pinkevich, *Osnovnye Problemy Sovremennoi Shkoly: Shest' Leksiy Po Pedagogike (The Main Problems of the Modern School: Six Lectures in Pedagogy)* (Petrograd: Proboj, 1924), 72, 78.

exclusions were in reality significant) and modernity in industry, technology, and mass culture.³⁹ This understanding was prominent in the Soviet Union, as Jeffrey Brooks' examination of Soviet media coverage of the United States in the 1920s and early 1930s demonstrates. Since it did not fit into the narratives of the progress of the Revolution abroad or the threat of foreign invasion, media coverage of the United States differed significantly from that of Western Europe. The Soviet press presented two dominant narratives of the United States during this period. The first, predictably, was a condemnation of capitalism which highlighted negative aspects of American life, particularly racism and poverty. The second, though, enthusiastically discussed cutting-edge American technology and industrial organization, like Taylorism and Fordism, that could be used to herald in the Soviet future and promised socialist society.⁴⁰ The adjective "American" denoted modernity and quality and could be attached to anything new or useful. Energetic or innovative workers were even christened "Russian Americans."⁴¹ In this promotion of American technology and qualities, as Brooks argues, no condemnation was required, as the rejection of capitalism was implicit in their instrumentalization for the socialist cause.⁴²

This media enthusiasm was closely connected to the wide technological transfer from the United States to the Soviet Union that occurred during this period, and educational borrowing and modeling is similarly connected and should be understood in the same light.⁴³ One key difference between technological and educational borrowing, though, was the fact that the educational methods borrowed were still experimental in the United States as the agenda of a small but significant reform movement, in contrast to the well-established and

³⁹ Stephen Kotkin, "Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture," *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 136.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Brooks, "The Press and Its Message: Images of America in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Richard Stites, and Alexander Rabinowitch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 235–39.

⁴¹ Brooks, 241.

⁴² Brooks, 239.

⁴³ See Bailes, "The American Connection: Ideology and the Transfer of American Technology to the Soviet Union, 1917-1941."

widely-used industrial processes like Fordism that were borrowed. As discussed in Chapter 1, progressive schools that utilized the Project Method, the Dalton Plan, and other experimental methods were only a small fraction of American schools, and even fewer were public schools. Most, ironically, were private schools attended by the children of the American social, economic, and especially cultural elite. Often when Soviet educators wrote about American progressive education, they wrote about “American schools” generally, as if they were all progressive. There seems to have been an assumption that American schools were not characterized by social standing or class, that they adapted quickly to social and economic development, and that they cooperated with public organizations as per the progressive movement.⁴⁴ Consider, for example, Krupskaya’s above mentioned comments about Roosevelt’s children attending school alongside those of unskilled workers (the President’s children had actually attended a number of prestigious private college preparatory schools, including Buckley School and Groton School). Or, Lunacharskii’s statement that “a very great deal has been done by the Americans” in giving precedence to activity methods.⁴⁵ It is possible that many Soviet educators simply knew more about progressive rather than traditional or conservative American education, given the materials widely available in translation. Thus, these methods may have appeared far more “tried and true” than they actually were.

However, the most prominent educators, who were responsible for devising the new school programs, certainly knew that the methods of Dewey, Kilpatrick, and Parkhurst were experimental, and that the average American school left much to be desired. Such generalizations, then, can be read as promotions of progressive techniques rather than ignorance. The relatively marginal status of progressive educators within the United States,

⁴⁴ Mchitarjan, “John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930,” 118.

⁴⁵ A.V. Lunacharsky, “The Philosophy of the School and the Revolution,” in *Anatoli Lunacharsky On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, ed. E. Dneprov, trans. Ruth English (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 161.

and the criticisms of their own socioeconomic system inherent in their pedagogy, may have even been an added attraction. When shortcomings of American education were recognized, they could be conveniently blamed on capitalism. The bourgeoisie, the argument ran, would never allow a truly scientific and democratic education, since this would inevitably lead to the workers' revolution. Regardless of how sound the methods, progressive education would never be fully accomplished under capitalism in the United States – but it could be with proper application in the Soviet Union. “Only in socialism,” as Lunacharskii said, “does pedagogy find its natural expression.”⁴⁶

Narkompros Programs and Practice

With the appeal thus accounted for, it remains to be seen how the borrowed methods were put into practice. From 1918 to the early 1920s, Narkompros avoided publishing a mandatory curriculum, opposing as they did a conception of learning as the imposition of a predetermined set of knowledge. Instead, they issued series of guidelines and instructions to provincial education departments. The Unified Labor School was to serve children aged seven to seventeen and was divided into two grades or stages. The first stage, corresponding to elementary school, contained the first four grades, and the second stage, corresponding to secondary or high school, contained a further five grades. The first three of these grades were accepted as a temporary norm in the 1920s (a seven-year school in total) and the last two set out as an ideal that would be attained later (a nine-year school).⁴⁷ The Complex Method, largely based on Kilpatrick's Project Method but also incorporating aspects of the Dalton Plan, was implemented as the method of instruction.

Under the Complex Method, instruction was organized not according to subjects but themes or complexes which fit under three broad rubrics: nature, labor, and society. This

⁴⁶ Lunacharsky, “On Social Education,” 39.

⁴⁷ A.I. Podzemsky, *Public Education in the Russian Socialistic Federation of Soviet Republics* (Moscow: State Publishing House, 1928), 12–13.

organization aimed to prevent division of knowledge into artificial, academic categories. Themes would link disciplines, offering opportunities to acquire and practice literacy and numeracy as well as various sciences, geography, or history, and thus demonstrate the interconnectedness of these topics in reality.⁴⁸ Activity methods were promoted in the study of themes: like in the Project Method, children were to observe and experience concrete phenomena, and acquire knowledge in working towards solving real problems. When possible (that is, when schools had multiple rooms) classrooms were sometimes organized by themes or subject matter as in the Dalton Plan. For example, rooms dedicated to social studies and history of the Revolution were decorated with red banners, portraits of revolutionary heroes, and newspaper clippings. These classrooms made a particularly strong impression on visitors. In one room schoolhouses, a corner of the class, the so-called “red corner”, was similarly outfitted for the same purpose.⁴⁹

Slight but notable adaptations were made to American methods. The key adaptation the Complex Method made was to give the Project Method greater thematic coherence. Under Kilpatrick’s Project Method, projects were required to be interesting to children and have genuine educative value, but there was no need for individual projects to be related to each other. Under the Complex, all topics related to the overarching themes of nature, labor, and society. Following the child’s progress through the school, topics expanded in scope and complexity, beginning with the familiar and progressing to the more abstract. For example, studies relating to labor in the elementary school would begin with the household and domestic chores and progress to the major economic activities of the community and major industries of the region. In the higher grades, students would progress to the major industries

⁴⁸ Larry E. Holmes, “Soviet Schools: Policy Pursues Practice, 1921-1928,” *Slavic Review* 48, no. 2 (1989): 236; Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*, 32; Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 19–20. For a sampling of Complex themes for the first grade of rural schools, see Appendix C.

⁴⁹ See, for example, George S. Counts, “Education in Soviet Russia,” in *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade: A Joint Survey by the Technical Staff of the First American Trade Union Delegation* (New York: The John Day Company, 1928), 283.

of the Soviet Union and world economic relations.⁵⁰ The thematic coherence of the content wedded the method to historical materialism and the Soviet worldview. The Complex Method also promoted a significant degree of community involvement, in field trips and participation in socially useful work. For example, under the theme “Health,” after studying the pollution of drinking water, experimenting with various filtering materials, and arriving at how water sources might be kept clean, pupils might participate in a campaign to cover their village’s wells.⁵¹ In schools that experimented with the organization of the Dalton Plan, pupils worked in small groups to contribute to a single class project or goal, rather than having the freedom to work individually or cooperatively on their own assignments.⁵² Despite the emphasis of Shatskii, Krupskaya, and others on the importance of meeting children’s interests, the Complex Method gave pupils far less choice in subject matter and the use of their time than either the Project Method or the Dalton Plan stipulated. Finally, the work or activity principle was unequivocally interpreted in terms of labor, though, with some debate, there was general agreement with American progressivism that work in the school was free from the pressures of production.⁵³

These adaptations may appear insignificant or difficult to discern. It is essential to appreciate, though, that to contemporary American and other progressive educators who visited Soviet schools, they were obvious, quickly apprehended, and widely commented on. For example, *The New Era*, the journal of the New Education Fellowship, reported that

⁵⁰ Holmes, “Soviet Schools: Policy Pursues Practice, 1921-1928,” 326.

⁵¹ “Health Complex from the Program for the First Grade (8-12 Years) – Rural Schools,” in Lucy L.W. Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1928), 177–78.

⁵² Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*, 35.

⁵³ Dewey, *The School and Society*, 32; Lunacharskii wrote that anyone who argued the school needed to be productive “displays utter lack of understanding that the school does not produce goods, but people with knowledge. That is the product ... everything else is subsidiary.” See A.V. Lunacharsky, “On the Class School,” in *On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, ed. E. Dneprov, trans. Ruth English (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 101.

Soviet educators were wise in their realisation that no scheme or method could be imported from another country. They culled the essence from all progressive thought and then sought something that would be suited to their own country ... The plan they have built up, and which has been found the most suitable so far, is known as the Complex method. It is a blend of the Project method and the Dalton Plan and founded on the Soviets' ideal of co-operative society.⁵⁴

Within the progressive education community, there was wide recognition that American methods had been utilized in the Soviet Union, but a keen sense that something different – and, to many, something extremely exciting – was happening in Soviet education.

Contrary to the assessment of *The New Era*, the implementation of the Complex Method was disastrous. Practice strayed dangerously far from policy. The majority of teachers, without knowledge of American progressive education, were bewildered by the Complex Method. They were given neither thorough training nor clear instruction in the new methods. The school system had undergone enormous upheaval during the Civil War, and after 1921, schools suffered acute shortages in the essential materials for basic, let alone innovative, instruction. Most teachers, therefore, refused to try to implement the Complex Method. Those who did were largely unsuccessful. Frequently, they faced the harsh opposition of communities; peasant parents withdrew their children from schools that seemed to rate alien progressive values above literacy and numeracy. For its part, Narkompros lacked the funds to provide the needed material support and the inspectors to guide and monitor local schools. The inspectors were not only few in number, but often as unfamiliar with the new program and methods as teachers. Moreover, Narkompros was frequently unable to reach all schools with its directives and circulars.⁵⁵ Central offices were flooded by local requests for help. Academic standards plummeted, and by the mid 1920s, 50% of school children were illiterate.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Beatrice Ensor, "Outlook Tower: Russia," *The New Era* 9, no. 33 (January 1928): 5.

⁵⁵ Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*, 14–16, 37–38, 44–46.

⁵⁶ Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*, 97.

It is also important to note that Narkompros' vision of education was never uncontested. The Young Communist League (Komsomol) and the Technical Lobby, made up of the Commissariats of Trade and Industry, Finance, Agriculture, and Communications; the Supreme Economic Council (Vesenkha); and the Central Council of Trades Unions, consistently advocated that specialized vocational training begin at an earlier age. Given the desperate condition of industry following the Civil War, Narkompros' insistence on polytechnic education, with specialized training not to begin until age seventeen, was viewed as a luxury that could not be afforded. The various entities that made up the Technical Lobby also demanded that the Central Committee transfer existing vocational schools and technical colleges from Narkompros to their jurisdictions.⁵⁷ Interestingly, though, the American origins of much of the new school programs does not appear to have been a point of criticism. Lenin provided crucial early support for the polytechnic principle and Narkompros managed to retain control of the entire system of schools throughout this period. This control, however, was becoming increasingly tenuous, as the Central Committee demanded improvements in instruction and clearer guidelines.⁵⁸

Faced with abysmal results and mounting criticism, key figures at Narkompros agreed that their programs needed to be made more practical. In 1925, lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic separate from complex themes were sanctioned. In 1926 and 1927, Narkompros issued new, mandatory curricula and syllabi that made further concessions to traditional instruction and reintroduced tests and homework. The Complex Method was recommended for elementary schools while high schools essentially returned to traditional subject-based organization. Labor became a separate subject rather than the guiding principle of all others. These programs, however, continued to use progressive language, and the

⁵⁷ Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment*, 60–62; Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*, 20.

⁵⁸ Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*, 76.

Complex Method remained the ultimate goal for both stages of the Unified Labor School. Factory Seven-Year Schools and Schools for Peasant Youth promised the option of earlier vocational training to appease the Komsomol and Technical Lobby, but essentially still offered broad education.⁵⁹ These reforms were generally well-received by teachers. Narkompros now seemed reconciled to more gradual progress towards its ideal school.

The Cultural Revolution and beginning of the First Five-Year Plan, however, marked a re-radicalization of school policy and a new, brief period of experimentation in method and organization. In the fall of 1928, after the Shakhty Trial initiated an intense campaign against class enemies and “wreckers,” children were expelled or denied admission into schools on the basis of socially undesirable parentage. This policy continued until 1930 despite the vehement opposition of Lunacharskii and Krupskaya.⁶⁰ Schools were criticized for their bourgeois elements – not the American inspirations of the Complex Method, but tests, homework, and subjects that had been reintroduced. In 1929, Narkompros was purged, and Lunacharskii was replaced by Andrei Bubnov as Commissar. While leaving many of the so-called old guard in place to pursue familiar policies, the purge also brought younger, more radical pedagogues into positions on Narkompros’ collegium. These pedagogues included Viktor Shulgin, who reasserted the centrality of labor in school policy and theorized the eventual withering away of not only the state but the school. Shulgin believed that children’s environment was central to their learning capacity, and favored the laboratory organization of the Dalton Plan. He advocated a complete transfer of schoolwork to a reinvigorated Complex Method. Themes or projects now became explicitly connected to the First Five-Year Plan.⁶¹ In 1930, the final years of the high school were converted to technicums that would give

⁵⁹ Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*, 75–77, 80–82; Holmes, “Soviet Schools: Policy Pursues Practice, 1921–1928,” 251–52.

⁶⁰ Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 122.

⁶¹ Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 140–42, 150–51.

industrial qualification, and factories and other enterprises acted as patrons to individual schools, expected to offer training to students.

Again, though, implementation was far from successful. Most schools were still unprepared and ill-equipped for progressive methods and labor instruction. Factories had accepted their roles as patrons quite unwillingly and avoided putting students on machinery out of concern for filling their outrageously high quotas.⁶² Given this record, and failing confidence in Narkompros, the Central Committee passed a resolution in 1931 which denounced the Complex Method and mandated a return to systematic instruction in basic subjects. This resolution marked the beginning of a period of greater involvement of the Central Committee in education. Shulgin quickly fell from grace and was forced to repudiate his theory on the withering away of the school. In 1932, the laboratory method was denounced, and regular examinations and lectures as the primary method of instruction were reintroduced. Though the polytechnic principle was formally upheld, labor instruction was quietly and gradually dropped: in 1934 and 1935, the budget and time allotted to labor instruction were significantly reduced. In 1936, the Central Committee ruled to eliminate labor from the curriculum entirely.⁶³

* * *

The postwar situation, in which German ideas were delegitimized and the United States was a powerful industrial leader, closely associated with modernity and democracy, made the United States an attractive source of not only technology, but educational models to be used in the construction of the new socialist civilization. In American progressive educators, notably John Dewey, William H. Kilpatrick, Helen Parkhurst, and Evelyn Dewey, leading figures in Soviet education like Lunacharskii, Krupskaya, and Shatskii found a

⁶² Holmes, "Magic into Hocus-Pocus: The Decline of Labor Education in Soviet Russia's Schools, 1931-1937," 552.

⁶³ Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*; Holmes, "Magic into Hocus-Pocus: The Decline of Labor Education in Soviet Russia's Schools, 1931-1937," 556-59.

philosophy of education that deeply resonated with their own. All of these individuals wished to utilize the school and mass education to create a prosperous, equitable future society.

Given this commonality, American progressive methods and programs appeared promising models on which to base Soviet schools that would make this vision a reality. The next chapter examines the accounts of American educators who visited these Soviet schools, where they saw familiar methods being applied on a massive scale, and explores the significance of their reservations and enthusiasm.

Chapter 3 – The ‘Educational Laboratory’: American Educators Visit the Soviet Union, Mid-1920s to Early 1930s

While an American visitor may feel a certain patriotic pride in noting in how many respects an initial impulse came from some progressive school in our own country, he is at once humiliated and stimulated to new endeavor to see how much more organically the idea is incorporated in the Russian system than in our own.

John Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World*.

Russia is not an educational utopia, it is an educational laboratory ... no educator can afford to ignore its existence.

Lucy L.W. Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*.^{*}

The sheer scale and novelty of the Soviet experiment, combined with pre-existing romanticized and exoticized understandings of Russia, generated enormous interest in the Soviet Union from the Revolution throughout the interwar period.¹ From the mid 1920s, travel to the Soviet Union became increasingly accessible and popular. Union and youth delegates, politicians, artists, writers, social workers, teachers, and sympathizers and critics of all stripes flocked to experience the Soviet Union for themselves. In doing so, they gained considerable clout as eyewitnesses in the raging debates over socialism and the Soviet Union in their home countries.² As mentioned in the Introduction, we should be careful not to consider all visitors dupes and Soviet guides masterminds of an elaborate set-up – though visitors undeniably experienced a filtered version of the Soviet Union. They were encouraged to generalize from exceptional sites and usually had to rely on guides and translators fo

^{*} John Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World* (New York: New Republic Inc., 1929), 106-107; and Lucy L.W. Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1928), xiv-xv.

¹ See Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Choi Chatterjee and Beth Holmgren, eds., *Americans Experience Russia: Encountering the Enigma, 1917-Present* (New York: Routledge, 2013); and David S. Foglesong, *The American Mission and the “Evil Empire”: The Crusade for a “Free Russia” Since 1881* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

² For one excellent account of this debate, see Paul Flewers, *The New Civilization? Understanding Stalin’s Soviet Union 1929-1940* (London: Francis Boutle Publishers, 2008).

r interpretation and communication with the people they encountered. If their accounts do not accurately portray the realities of life in the Soviet Union at this time, they do shed considerable light on Soviet cultural diplomacy, as well as visitors' relations to their home societies and social reform. While some scholars have argued that domestic dissatisfactions warped visitors' perceptions of the Soviet Union beyond use,³ it is precisely this preoccupation with contemporary issues that makes their travelogues so interesting.

Though it is impossible to arrive at a hard number, progressive educators were not infrequent visitors to the Soviet Union. Indeed, in a 1928 issue dedicated to Soviet education, the prominent progressive journal *The New Era* included a list of travel resources for teachers who wished to make the trip. It included contacts at VOKS and Narkompros, recommended modes of transportation, expected living costs (five dollars a day), and not-to-be-missed sites.⁴ In this chapter, I examine the accounts of six American progressive educators who traveled to the Soviet Union between 1925 and 1929. Among these educators were John Dewey and William H. Kilpatrick. Helen Parkhurst was also invited to visit the Soviet Union in 1928 but declined due to a previous commitment to visit Japan.⁵ The other four individuals – Scott Nearing, Lucy L.W. Wilson, Carleton Washburne, and George S. Counts – were all connected to the progressive education movement. They were familiar Dewey's work and/or were his or Kilpatrick's previous students or colleagues at Teachers College, Columbia. I argue that their enthusiasm for Soviet schools, which appeared alongside recognition of their serious shortcomings, shows they were primarily interested in Soviet education for its experimental quality. They sought to draw lessons from Soviet schools for the benefit of the wider progressive movement and educational and social reform. Before considering how the

³ See Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); and Larry E. Holmes, "Western Perception of Soviet Education, 1918-1931," *Educational Forum* 39, no. 1 (1974): 26–32.

⁴ "Hints for Teachers Visiting Russia," *The New Era* 9, no. 99 (January 1928): 39.

⁵ Edwards, June, *Women in American Education, 1820-1955: The Female Force and Educational Reform* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 143.

Soviets received these educators and then delving into their impressions of Soviet schools, it is useful to consider the circumstances of their travel and their published accounts, and introduce those who have not appeared in previous chapters.

Kilpatrick and Dewey, familiar to the reader from the discussion of their pedagogy in Chapter 1 and its utilization in the Soviet Union in Chapter 2, visited the Soviet Union in 1927 and 1928, respectively. Kilpatrick visited the Soviet Union for several weeks as part of a world tour of schools and universities that spanned 1926-1927 and included China, Japan, Egypt, India, England, Germany, and Poland.⁶ While in the Soviet Union, Kilpatrick was accompanied by Nucia P. Lodge, a Russian-born American, fluent speaker of Russian, and private secretary of George S. Counts, who was then also in the Soviet Union. Unlike most travelers, Kilpatrick did not publish any account of his experiences in the Soviet Union. His impressions will thus be considered here using a biography written by Samuel Tenenbaum, which discusses Kilpatrick's trip based on his unpublished diaries.⁷ Dewey spent about a month in the Soviet Union in 1928, heading a delegation of twenty-eight American educators and scientists. They traveled on private initiative rather than invitation, but were accompanied by Lucy Branham, secretary of the American Society for Cultural Relations with Russia, and greeted warmly by Lunacharskii upon their arrival.⁸ Dewey published six articles on his experience in *The New Republic*, collected and published later that year with his writings on Turkey, Mexico, and China as *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World*.⁹

⁶ James M. Wallace, "The Origin and Development of Progressive Education in the United States of America: New World Progressives in the Old World," in *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 138.

⁷ For Tenenbaum's full treatment of Kilpatrick's Soviet tour, see Samuel Tenenbaum, *William Heard Kilpatrick: Trail Blazer in Education* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951), 263–69.

⁸ "Delegation of American Professors in U.S.S.R.," *Soviet Union Review* 6, no. 9 (September 1928): 134.

⁹ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*.

Scott Nearing (1883-1983) was a radical economist and educator. During his graduate studies in economics, Nearing served as the secretary of the Pennsylvania Child Labor Committee, marking the beginning of his interest in children's issues and education. From 1917 until 1923, Nearing was a member of the Socialist Party of America and taught at the Party's Rand School of Social Science in New York.¹⁰ In 1924, Nearing applied to join the Workers' Party of America (WPA), the legal party organization used by the Communist Party – USA. Initially rejected, he remained sympathetic with the organization and traveled to the Soviet Union in 1925. He spent two months touring educational institutions and wrote *Education in Soviet Russia* the following year, one of the first sustained treatments of Soviet education to be published in North America or Europe. In 1927, Nearing was admitted to the WPA, only to resign in 1930 to publish *The Twilight of Empire: An Economic Interpretation of Imperialist Cycles*, which had failed to pass the Party's scrutiny.¹¹

Lucy L.W. Wilson (1864-1937) was a proponent of progressive education, especially nature study, having received her Ph.D. in biology in 1897.¹² From 1916 to 1934, she was the principal of South Philadelphia High School, where laboratory methods and excursions were made an integral part of instruction in all subjects. She later lectured at Temple University until 1936.¹³ Wilson studied education in more than a dozen countries in the Americas, Asia, Africa, and Europe, visiting the Soviet Union in 1925 and 1927.¹⁴ The length of these trips is unfortunately unclear. In 1927, she published *The New Schools of New Russia* as part of Vanguard Press' Studies of Soviet Russia series, which, in the words of series editor Jerome Davis, aimed to bridge “the Atlantic Ocean of prejudice, misunderstanding, and propaganda,”

¹⁰ Stephen J. Whitfield, *Scott Nearing: An Apostle of American Radicalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 66–69.

¹¹ John A. Saltmarsh, *Scott Nearing: An Intellectual Biography* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 2; Scott Nearing, *The Twilight of Empire: An Economic Interpretation of Imperialist Cycles* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1930).

¹² William Gould Vinal, “Mrs. Lucy Langdon Williams Wilson,” *Science Education* 42, no. 5 (1958): 457.

¹³ Vinal, 458–59.

¹⁴ Lucy L.W. Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1928), vi.

that had separated the Soviet Union and the United States for a decade.¹⁵ Nearing also wrote for this series on Soviet economic organization.¹⁶ Aiming to provide the most up-to-date information available, Wilson's *New Schools of New Russia* focuses mainly on observations from her 1927 trip, though the book's final chapter, taking stock of the improvements made over the past two years, does make reference to conditions observed in 1925. Wilson also wrote on Soviet schools in *The New Era*.¹⁷

Another proponent of progressive education in the United States, Carleton Washburne (1889-1968) was, after several years of teaching in California, the Superintendent of schools in Winnetka, Illinois from 1919 to 1943.¹⁸ There, he developed the Winnetka Plan, a program of individualized learning that emphasized the mastery of essential skills on a personal rather than set timeline, and participation in creative group activities without fixed achievement standards.¹⁹ Washburne was a founding member of the John Dewey Society in 1935, dedicated to the scholarly and scientific study of the relations between school and society, and was the president of the Progressive Education Association from 1939 to 1943.²⁰ In 1925-1926, Washburne toured twelve progressive schools in Europe. He then spent about a month in the Soviet Union in 1927, traveling with the First American Trade Union Delegation and acting as the representative of the New Education Fellowship (NEF). He

¹⁵ Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, vii.

¹⁶ Scott Nearing and Jack Hardy, *The Economic Organization of the Soviet Union* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1927).

¹⁷ Lucy L.W. Wilson, "Rural Schools in the Soviet Union," *The New Era* 9, no. 33 (January 1928): 29-34.

¹⁸ Stuart Chase, Robert Dunn, and Rexford Guy Tugwell, eds., *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade: A Joint Survey by the Technical Staff of the First American Trade Union Delegation* (New York: The John Day Company, 1928), vii.

¹⁹ Jenny L. Lee, "1919 Winnetka Plan," *History of Education: Selected Moments of the 20th Century*, edited by Daniel Shugarensky, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, 2002, <https://archive.is/i8WhD>.

²⁰ For more on these associations, see Daniel Tanner, "The John Dewey Society and the Progressive Education Association," in *Crusade for Democracy: Progressive Education at the Crossroads* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 53-68.

published his experiences and assessment of the Soviet education system in the collection *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade* as well as in *The New Era*.²¹

George S. Counts (1889-1974) was an educator, activist, and educational theorist, teaching at several universities before arriving at Teachers College, Columbia in 1927, where he taught for nearly thirty years. Combining the study of education with sociology (rather than psychology, which was then most common), Counts was most interested in the role of the school in society, like Dewey. But unlike Dewey, was willing to make the school explicitly political – he argued that educators should act like statesmen.²² He criticized the progressive education movement's lack of a guiding social theory in education, though he supported many of its methods of instruction. Counts made two study trips to the Soviet Union sponsored by the International Institute at Teachers College, spending three months in 1927 and seven months in 1929 in the Soviet Union. In 1927, Counts was accompanied by Lodge, other than during the several weeks she joined Kilpatrick. Counts wrote extensively on the Soviet education system, and especially its relation to the First Five-Year Plan. He published several articles and book chapters in the late 1920s.²³ In 1930, his published a travelogue recounting his 1929 trip, *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia*.²⁴ In 1931, he put forward *The Soviet Challenge to America*, a comprehensive treatment of Soviet education, culture,

²¹ Carleton Washburne, "The Common Schools of the R.S.F.S.R.," in *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade: A Joint Survey by the Technical Staff of the First American Trade Union Delegation* (New York: The John Day Company, 1928), 304–23.

²² Gutek, Gerald Lee, *George S. Counts and American Civilization: The Educator as Social Theorist* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 17.

²³ George S. Counts, "Education and the Five-Year Plan of Soviet Russia," *The Journal of Educational Sociology* 4, no. 1 (September 1930): 20–29; George S. Counts, "The Educational Program of Soviet Russia," in *Addresses and Proceedings of the National Education Association of the United States, 1928* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association of the United States, 1928); George S. Counts, "Education in Soviet Russia," in *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade: A Joint Survey by the Technical Staff of the First American Trade Union Delegation* (New York: The John Day Company, 1928), 268–303.

²⁴ George S. Counts, *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia* (Boston: The Stratford Co., 1930).

and the First Five-Year Plan. He also translated *The New Russian Primer* with Lodge (originally titled *The Story of the Great Plan* in Russian).²⁵

The Soviets Receive their Visitors

By the early 1930s, Intourist made firm a set of standard travel itineraries, tailored to the major interests of various groups of visitors (with twelve itineraries in 1931 and thirty-six in 1933).²⁶ From the mid to late 1920s, though, as Soviet tourism practices were still being developed, itineraries were significantly more flexible and tourists were allowed limited if closely monitored freedom of movement. Nonetheless, as far as can be gleaned from their accounts, the tours of the six educators discussed here appear to have been quite similar. Most spent about two months in the Soviet Union. Shatskii's First Experimental Station, a complex of schools in Moscow and Kaluga Province which experimented with cutting-edge progressive methods, appears to have been a standard stop.²⁷ There foreign educators frequently met with Shatskii and Valentina Shatskaia (née Demianova), the principal of the Station's secondary schools and Shatskii's wife. They also often met with Krupskaia and lower-ranking figures at Narkompros and less frequently with Lunacharskii. Unfortunately, these educators usually only identified the nurseries, kindergartens, pre-schools, and first and second stage schools of they visited by city or region, so it is difficult to pinpoint other standard sites. It is very likely, though, that they visited many of the same institutions. Their tours seem to have been confined to the RSFSR and in some cases the Ukrainian SSR; most seem to have spent the majority of their time in Moscow and the surrounding countryside,

²⁵ George S. Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America* (New York: John Day Company, 1931); M Ilin, *New Russian Primer: The Story of the Five-Year Plan*, trans. George S. Counts and Nucia P. Lodge (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931).

²⁶ David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 108.

²⁷ For accounts of the FES, Shatskii, and Shatskaia, see Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 62–64, 122–25; Wilson, "Rural Schools in the Soviet Union," 30; Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 15–17; Scott Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia* (New York: International Publishers, 1926), 27–28; Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America*, xii–xiii; Carleton Washburne, "The Good and Bad in Russian Education," *The New Era* 9, no. 33 (January 1928): 11.

and also made trips to cities including Leningrad, Nizhnii Novgorod, Rostov, Kyiv, and Kharkiv. They relied on representatives from VOKS or Intourist as guides and translators (of this group, only Counts had a working knowledge of Russian). Guides were instructed to answer visitors' questions and, more importantly, lead them to ask the "correct" questions that would best illuminate Soviet progress, always emphasized against the dark tsarist past. Guides kept extensive records on all their interactions with foreigners, which were accessible to the secret police.²⁸

Despite the similarities of their trips, these educators generally appear to have been convinced what they saw was genuine. Dewey said that the best Soviet schools could only be called showpieces in that they were worthy of being shown. He insisted the Soviets had "enough to do on their own account without bothering to set up show establishments to impress a few hundred – or even thousand – tourists."²⁹ But, he added, he had seen enough mediocre and poor schools to know the best were unrepresentative; he hoped they were representative of what the Soviet state was aiming for. The other educators similarly acknowledged that the impressive schools they saw were real but could not account for the whole education system.³⁰ This view is confirmed by David-Fox. The educators also emphasized that they were not forced to adhere to strict itineraries and visit only model schools, but freely chose the schools they visited. Here they were likely less correct. Washburne, for example, insisted he moved about freely, accompanied only by a VOKS translator, and rarely indicated where he wanted to go in advance – sometimes he pointed randomly on a map.³¹ But given that these randomly selected locations usually had excellent or at least adequate schools, it is not hard to imagine that he may have been taken elsewhere

²⁸ David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment, 1921-1941*, 47–55, 60.

²⁹ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 26.

³⁰ See, for example, Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 12; Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 170; Washburne, "The Common Schools of the R.S.F.S.R.," 304.

³¹ Washburne, "The Good and Bad in Russian Education," 9; Washburne, "The Common Schools of the R.S.F.S.R.," 305.

unbeknownst to him if the selected a location was known to guides to have very poor schools. He could hardly have differentiated and identified villages and towns he had never visited before. This, however, is pure conjecture. The educators did report some extremely poor schools, in material conditions and quality of instruction, which may have been the result of unplanned visits and relative flexibility.

In one case, that of George S. Counts' 1929 trip, freedom of movement can hardly be denied, as he drove for several months according to his own itinerary in a Ford he had imported to Leningrad (hence the title of his travelogue, *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia*). In the introduction to *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia*, Counts told his readers his greatest worries during this trip were Russian roads and securing gasoline, since the "dangers of bandits, kulaks, and the Gay-Pay-Oo [he] regarded as fairy tales."³² He was quite positive "the agents of the Gay-Pay-Oo did not follow [him]" – completely unaware that this surveillance took place through the pleasant representatives of VOKS who accompanied him throughout his trip.³³ Most visitors failed to grasp the extent of the secret police effort to monitor them; educators like Counts were clearly no exception.³⁴

As David-Fox has shown, Soviet tourism was not only a matter of foreign relations but also played a significant domestic role. The reception and impact within the Soviet Union of visiting educators in particular has not yet been explored. To do so in adequate detail would require an examination of the Soviet press in general and educational journals in particular, as well as VOKS and Intourist dossiers kept on individual visitors. Such an

³² Counts, *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia*, iii. Counts referred to the OGPU as the "Gay-Pay-Oo."

³³ Counts, *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia*, vi–vii. There are other amusing incidences of visitors quite incorrectly thinking they had thwarted surveillance. Theodore Dreiser, for example, quoted in the introduction, refused a VOKS translator for fear of surveillance, and instead hired Ruth Epperson Kennel, an American who had been living in Moscow for five years, as his private secretary and translator. But Dreiser was a known hypochondriac, and he did accept a nurse kindly offered by VOKS, who preceded to monitor his visit. Kennel, who was a committed socialist, also provided VOKS with a copy of Dreiser's private diary which he had dictated to her. See David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 128; and Ludmilla Stern, *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union, 1920-1940* (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007), 115.

³⁴ David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 59.

investigation is beyond the scope and resources of the present investigation. However, extrapolating from the broader literature on travel and hints in the primary sources considered here, some general observations can be advanced. First, considering that tourism was linked with the goals of gaining diplomatic recognition and shaping public opinion, visits by prominent Western intellectuals and other public figures were extremely important given their clout within their home societies. Such celebrities were treated attentively and often met with prominent Soviet leaders.³⁵ Those who proved sympathetic to the Soviet Union – and thus implicitly or explicitly critical of the capitalist West – were widely celebrated and propagandized. Gaining the support or even just interest of world-famous educators like Dewey and Kilpatrick, then, must have been a matter of great prestige and lent much legitimacy to Soviet education. The importance of such figures, for example, accounts for Lunacharskii's reception of Dewey immediately upon his arrival in Moscow. But there is evidence that just the volume of lesser-known educators who visited likewise bestowed legitimacy and prestige. For example, when Lunacharskii spoke of Dewey's delegation a month before its arrival at a lecture in Leningrad, he did not mention the delegation's prominent personages but emphasized its size. This "big commission," he said, indicated that Soviet schools had "aroused enormous interest in the progressive teaching world, [and] have won a leading place there."³⁶

Second, for Soviet teachers, foreign visitors may have served as an important source of information on new teaching methods. Some travelers' accounts show that some that teachers were as eager as their visitors to ask questions. Nearing, for example, reported that there "was hardly a school person with whom I talked in any detail who did not say: 'Is that

³⁵ David-Fox, 30, 227; For methods of hospitality, see Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*.

³⁶ A. V. Lunacharsky, "Education of the New Man," in *Anatoli Lunacharsky On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, trans. Ruth English and E. Dneprov (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 218.

all you wanted to ask? Well, since you have finished with your questions, I should like to ask some myself.”³⁷ These questions included:

Just how is the Dalton plan succeeding in the United States? Where is the project method being tried? What is being done with intelligence tests in America? Who is your best man on physiological psychology? How much self-government do you have among the children in your schools?³⁸

Nearing added that after asking these questions, Soviet teachers then applied for his opinion and recommendations for their classes. “All of the school people seemed to be searching for knowledge and very eager to get new ideas,” he concluded.³⁹ Of course, as Nearing himself acknowledged, not all teachers asked these questions and were so enthusiastic. Though most visiting educators reported they were met with hospitality (if a certain astonishment in remote schools) some teachers must certainly have found the barrage of foreign visitors a nuisance.⁴⁰ Additionally, many Soviet teachers had so little familiarity and training in progressive methods that it is unlikely they could have asked questions such as the ones Nearing received. However, this is not reason to think these encounters were ingenuine, scripted, or fabricated by quick translators. There were certainly some very excellent progressive Soviet teachers, and it is likely that many of the teachers visitors encountered were as real but unrepresentative as their schools.

American Progressives Experience Soviet Schools

General Impressions

The published accounts of Dewey, Nearing, Wilson, Washburne, and Counts, and the diaries of Kilpatrick as represented in Tenenbaum detailed above convey quite business-like reports of their experiences in the Soviet Union. Unlike Dreiser in the passage quoted in the

³⁷ Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 15.

³⁸ Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 14.

³⁹ Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 15.

⁴⁰ For the account of one such astonished teacher in a remote school, who was “barefoot” but knowledgeable in progressive methods and dedicated to her work, see Washburne, “The Good and Bad in Russian Education,” 10–12.

Introduction, they did not wax poetic on snowy schoolhouses, the gray skies of Russia, or book-toting little comrades. They recorded only a few conversations with precocious Soviet pupils who so captivated, endeared, or alarmed other visitors; interviews with teachers, principals, pedagogues, and even prominent individuals like Krupskaja and Shatskii were discussed with only scarcely more detail. Rather, most of these educators described in painstaking detail the bureaucratic structure of Narkompros, the principles and structure of various levels of the Unified Labor School, the Complex Method and classroom practices, and enrollment and other school statistics. While now certainly offering less entertainment than the highly personal, anecdotal travelogues others produced, the contemporary appeal of these types of reports is obvious given that this was the information that was then desperately unavailable in the West. Nearing even wrote that his trip was specifically motivated by the lack of Western literature on Soviet education.⁴¹

While the others confined their comments to education, Dewey and Counts also spoke on Soviet society and the economy, offering some broader observations. Dewey's general impression of the Soviet Union was one of movement, vitality, and energy, and he found it "impossible to believe that the communicated sense of a new life was an illusion."⁴² Counts agreed wholeheartedly. He wrote:

One of the most striking results of the revolution has been an extraordinary release of energy. No one, I think, can visit Soviet Russia without being amazed at the amount and the quality of creative work which has been done ... nothing [has] been overlooked from fashioning an alphabet for some primitive tribe to the formulation of the Five-Year Plan."⁴³

The other educators offered no such sweeping impressions, and all refrained from predicting the eventual success or failure of the Soviet experiment. But in their overall enthusiasm for Soviet education, it is clear they were impressed by the vast scope of Soviet educational

⁴¹ Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 11.

⁴² Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 4.

⁴³ Counts, *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia*, 185–86.

reform and the passion with which it was pursued – the dynamism, energy, and comprehensiveness of reform that Counts and Dewey identified more broadly. The experience of Soviet schools, where progressive ideals and values found in few American schools were generally employed, was obviously exhilarating. Each educator's general impression of Soviet education follows, according to the chronological order of their trips.

In *Education in Soviet Russia*, Nearing wrote that Soviet schools were not a paradise, but a battleground where an entire people was fighting ignorance.⁴⁴ He reported that American progressive educators like Dewey and Kilpatrick were almost as well-known in the Soviet Union as they were in the United States, and discussed the usages and adaptations of the Project Method and the Dalton Plan.⁴⁵ Nearing was also interested in the extensive student organization and government he observed, and noted that discipline through the social pressure of peers appeared to be quite effective.⁴⁶ Though acknowledging that material conditions in the schools were on the whole incredibly poor, Nearing asserted that in his twenty-two years of teaching and studying education, he had never seen “anything that paralleled the educational work that [he] saw going on in the Soviet Union.”⁴⁷

In *The New Schools of New Russia*, Wilson identified the main aim of the Soviet school system as educating children so that they could live effectively, cooperatively, and creatively in a collective society.⁴⁸ She reported that the quantity and frequently quality of schools was still far from adequate, but described incredible improvements that had taken place between her visits in 1925 and 1927. She proclaimed that she had never, except perhaps in the best German private schools, “seen as large a proportion of capable, happy, and eager children,” as in Soviet elementary schools.⁴⁹ She considered the Project Method improved in

⁴⁴ Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 13.

⁴⁵ Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 8, 40–41, 46.

⁴⁶ Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 112, 119.

⁴⁷ Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 13.

⁴⁸ Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 34.

⁴⁹ Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 39.

its Soviet application, since Complex themes were connected to children's everyday realities and involved work in the community.⁵⁰ Finally, though acknowledging that teaching was far from uniform, Wilson insisted that Narkompros' high ideals were being carried out in schools and not just on paper.⁵¹

Similar to Wilson, Washburne defined education in the Soviet Union as the "deliberate, conscious attempt to prepare the coming generation for the effective, intelligent, and sympathetic participation in the affairs of a socialist state."⁵² He described the Complex Method and noted with approval widespread pupil self-government. He recorded the following anecdote about preschool self-government that would certainly have been read with delighted astonishment by many progressive educators:

"The children were working in their garden when we reached the school. A little boy of five took me by the hand and led me from row to row. "These are carrots; these are cabbages; these are potatoes," he explained to me. "He is chairman of the garden committee," said the teacher."⁵³

Washburne also discussed the many weaknesses of Soviet education. Material conditions were incredibly poor; the introduction of the Complex Method had been too hasty, and the Dalton Plan's key feature of adaptation to individual differences had been omitted.⁵⁴ Despite his scruples, though, Washburne found the progressive spirit of Soviet schools outstanding, and believed the Soviet Union was "clearly on the road to an extremely interesting and efficient system of universal education."⁵⁵

Kilpatrick's diary entries recount his travel in the Soviet Union, where he found his own work in vogue. He determined the greatest difference between the Complex and his Project Method was that complex themes were assigned by central educational authorities.

⁵⁰ Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 17.

⁵¹ Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 70.

⁵² Washburne, "The Common Schools of the R.S.F.S.R.," 304.

⁵³ Washburne, "The Good and Bad in Russian Education," 9.

⁵⁴ Washburne, "The Common Schools of the R.S.F.S.R.," 318.

⁵⁵ Washburne, "The Common Schools of the R.S.F.S.R.," 323.

He disapproved, believing that this would curb teacher and pupil initiative and reduce the ability to take advantage of local needs or differences. However, he seems to have been reassured that teachers and pupils at least had freedom in how they chose to study these themes.⁵⁶ Kilpatrick found Soviet pupils generally eager, earnest, and enthusiastic, and was himself enthusiastic about the school's engagement in socially useful work and real societal problems. The best American progressive schools, Kilpatrick judged, had not yet been matched, but "on the whole [the Soviet Union] had a very good school system" that was certainly more forward-looking than many.⁵⁷

In *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, Dewey was more concerned with identifying the underlying spirit or aim of Soviet education than he was with describing the school system itself. He identified this aim as the effort to connect the school to life and transform tendencies of individualism to those of collectivism.⁵⁸ Though he did not comment on his own reception, he did consider the use of American progressive methods in the Soviet Union. He argued that they had been given a decidedly socialist character in interpreting the active work principle in terms of labor and production, and agreed with Wilson that the Project Method had been improved.⁵⁹ He identified the main advantage as the single, overarching theme of the Complex Method, the study of human work in natural, social, and political history, which was sorely lacking in the Project Method.⁶⁰ He expressed deep regret over the barriers that separated American teachers from the "educational system in which our professed progressive democratic ideas are most completely embodied."⁶¹

Like Dewey, Counts was more preoccupied with the overall character of Soviet education rather than the particulars of classroom education. Throughout his body of

⁵⁶ Tenenbaum, *William Heard Kilpatrick: Trail Blazer in Education*, 264–65, 267.

⁵⁷ Kilpatrick quoted in Tenenbaum, 267.

⁵⁸ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 72, 84–85.

⁵⁹ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 92.

⁶⁰ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 101.

⁶¹ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 108.

literature on the Soviet Union, he argued that the breadth and comprehensiveness of Soviet education was its most striking feature.⁶² Counts attributed the Soviet expansion education to a broader effort to transform society through social planning. As Thomas Ewing has effectively shown, social planning was understood by educators as not just a planned economy that would reduce waste but a broader process of state-directed social mobilization.⁶³ Counts emphasized the connection between the First Five-Year Plan and education: schools and other educational institutions were responsible not only for training the needed specialists, but for propagating the Plan and maintaining morale.⁶⁴ He applauded the Soviet school system for its receptiveness to new educational ideas and its purposeful orientation towards social objectives.⁶⁵

The Experimental Quality and Value of Soviet Schools

For these educators, little in Soviet schools was novel. Indeed, some, like Dewey, had little to say about teaching methods and classroom subject matter. All of the observers discussed here, though, agreed that what was truly novel and noteworthy about Soviet education was the scale of the experimentation in progressive education that was being conducted. As Wilson said, “Soviet Russia is actually giving to the masses in its state supported public schools the kind of education that progressive private schools in [the United States] and in Europe have been striving earnestly to give to the relatively few who come to them.”⁶⁶ Washburne agreed, stating that “no other large country can show an entire State school system which embodies as many progressive elements as does that of Russia.”⁶⁷ It was the sheer number of experimental and progressive schools and engaged children, and

⁶² Counts, “Education in Soviet Russia,” 289.

⁶³ E. Thomas Ewing, “The ‘Virtues of Planning’: American Educators Look at Soviet Schools,” in *Education & The Great Depression: Lessons from a Global History*, ed. E. Thomas Ewing and David Hicks (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 44–46, 51.

⁶⁴ Counts, “Education and the Five-Year Plan of Soviet Russia,” 26–27.

⁶⁵ Counts, “Education in Soviet Russia,” 269.

⁶⁶ Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 2.

⁶⁷ Washburne, “The Good and Bad in Russian Education,” 12.

therefore the ability to test educational theories on a scale not possible in North America or Europe that attracted educators to the Soviet Union. In trying to impress the importance of Soviet education on his readers, Nearing neatly expressed this attraction:

To the scientific student of education the Soviet schools present a rare opportunity. There his pet theories and programs are being tried out on an immense scale. The Soviet Union, is, at the moment, the world's largest and most important educational laboratory, and the educational organizations, institutions and departments of the leading countries should have their experts in the Soviet Union now, collecting information and making suggestions.⁶⁸

These comments are remarkably similar to those Randolph Bourne made concerning the Gary schools a decade earlier. In Gary, Bourne had said, “there is not a single idea that is not being applied in some school in the country. The novelty is the synthesis, and the democratic spirit that motivates it.”⁶⁹ Bourne never visited the Soviet Union; he died in 1918 in the Spanish Flu Pandemic. But one can only surmise that he would have been captivated by Soviet schools, which attempted to apply principles remarkably similar to the Gary schools on an incomparably vast scale.⁷⁰

The educators were equally impressed with the importance afforded to education in the Soviet Union. More than a decade earlier in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey had written that the potential of education to be used as a constructive agency in the improvement of society had yet to be realized.⁷¹ But now, it seemed that such a realization had been made in the Soviet Union. Counts wrote that the educational system was equally central to the construction of a new social order as was state economic planning and industrial

⁶⁸ Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 15.

⁶⁹ Randolph S. Bourne, “Schools in Gary,” *The New Republic* 2, no. 21 (March 27, 1915): 199.

⁷⁰ There is some reason to believe Gary may have offered some inspiration for Soviet schools – Narkompros pedagogue Albert Pinkevich highlighted the Gary schools as the most noteworthy in Dewey and Dewey’s *Schools of To-morrow*. Gary also served as a model for the remodeling of Magnitogorsk. See A.P. Pinkevich, *Osnovnye Problemy Sovremennoi Shkoly: Shest’ Lektsij Po Pedagogike (The Main Problems of the Modern School: Six Lectures in Pedagogy)* (Petrograd: Proboj, 1924), 79; On Magnitogorsk, see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

⁷¹ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 92.

development.⁷² Dewey even believed that the most significant change occurring in the Soviet Union was not economic or political, but a change in the mental and moral disposition of the people that was being carried out through education. Every educational procedure was controlled with reference to this single social purpose.⁷³ They also noted the state's support for progressive education – Washburne was particularly impressed with the system of experimental schools and the fact that their findings actually impacted general school programs.⁷⁴ Through these educators' accounts runs a common thread of frustration that education was regarded far too lightly in the United States. In the Soviet Union, by contrast, it was taken admirably seriously. In its schools, as Washburne eloquently stated, the Soviet Union saw its future. The very success or failure of Communism depended on the educational system. With a note of envy, or perhaps desperation, Washburne wondered when “the other nations of the world will realize equally profoundly the fact that in the world's state schools the world's future is being determined.”⁷⁵

Propaganda and Indoctrination

The most common charge laid against these educators and other travelers who formed positive impressions of the Soviet Union, by contemporaries and by historians, was that they were naive (some, perhaps willfully so). They failed to recognize both the repressive aspects of the Soviet system, and that the institutions they frequently admired were models at worst or genuine but unrepresentative at best.⁷⁶ And if they did recognize negative aspects, so the criticism runs, this recognition was fleeting, “often grudging, usually limited, and always conditional.”⁷⁷ However, this is quite an unjust treatment of the educators considered here.

⁷² Counts, “Education and the Five-Year Plan of Soviet Russia,” 22.

⁷³ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 59, 76.

⁷⁴ Washburne, “The Good and Bad in Russian Education,” 11. For more on state support of progressive education, see Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 67-69.

⁷⁵ Washburne, “The Good and Bad in Russian Education,” 12.

⁷⁶ Holmes, “Western Perception of Soviet Education, 1918-1931,” 30-31; Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, 3, 12, 142.

⁷⁷ Ewing, “The ‘Virtues of Planning’: American Educators Look at Soviet Schools,” 50.

As mentioned earlier, they recognized that best schools they visited could not be considered broadly representative. All six commented on the fact that schools were quite unabashedly being used to inculcate Communism in the rising generation.⁷⁸ Kilpatrick recorded particular discomfort over war propaganda and anti-American propaganda (one child had asked him if it was true if American pupils were expelled from school for believing in evolution, and if there were really separate schools for laborers' children) that he encountered in some schools.⁷⁹ The fact none made an extended denunciation of these aspects of the Soviet school system does not indicate that they were naive; rather, it reaffirms that they were most interested in Soviet education not for its own sake, but for its status as an "educational laboratory." This way of thinking is a hallmark of Steinberg's definition of utopianism – looking beyond what is to what might be.⁸⁰ Desiring to learn from Soviet experimentation and inform and interest American readers, educators tended focused on the form rather than political content of Soviet education, the positives rather than the negatives. As Wilson told her readers in *New Schools of New Russia*:

We may not agree with many or any of [the Soviet Union's] social objectives, but we must acknowledge that her educational program is unusually significant ... *The recognition and the remembrance of her failures and her errors will be more helpful to her than to us. What we need is the knowledge of the things in which she has been successful and right.*⁸¹

Though Dewey has been most heavily criticized for his "naivety,"⁸² his *Impressions of Soviet Russia* shows that he was in fact an astute observer. He was particularly perceptive with regards to the character of Bolshevik propaganda. Propaganda in the Soviet Union, said Dewey, was conducted on behalf of the burning faith of the Bolshevik leaders. The object of

⁷⁸ Washburne, "The Common Schools of the R.S.F.S.R.," 308; Counts, "Education in Soviet Russia," 269; Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 151–52; Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 32; Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 166; Tenenbaum, *William Heard Kilpatrick: Trail Blazer in Education*, 265–67.

⁷⁹ Kilpatrick, diary entries quoted in Tenenbaum, *William Heard Kilpatrick: Trail Blazer in Education*, 266–67.

⁸⁰ Mark D. Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution, 1905-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 290. See Introduction, 13-14.

⁸¹ Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, xv-1, my italics.

⁸² See, for example Paul Kengor, *Dupes: How America's Adversaries Have Manipulated Progressives for a Century* (Wilmington, Delaware: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2014).

their belief could be questioned, but their sincerity could not. Given this sincerity, they believed they were propagating solely the truth, and therefore, “propaganda [was] education and education [was] propaganda.”⁸³ Peter Kenez has argued that this desire to educate, along with its all-encompassing ideology, was in fact the distinguishing feature of Bolshevik propaganda.⁸⁴ Dewey acknowledged that he found many elements of Soviet propaganda “obnoxious,” but nonetheless argued that the “broad effort to employ the education of the young as a means of realizing certain social purposes” was not in itself reprehensible.⁸⁵ Besides, Dewey argued in his conclusion that if the excellent educational work in the Soviet Union was continued, indoctrination would become subordinate to the “awakening of initiative and power of individual judgement,” as well as an evolving cooperative mentality.⁸⁶ If this was not Dewey’s most perceptive moment, it does indicate his own burning faith in the power of education.

Washburne and Counts are also notable in their reactions to indoctrination and propaganda in Soviet schools. Washburne alone appreciated a certain hypocrisy in the discomfort of foreign educators over these issues and the politicization of the school. He pointed out that the concern of many over indoctrination in Soviet schools was less about freedom of thought than it was dislike of the specific system of thought being imposed. After all, all states reserved the right to preserve themselves through education:

[Soviet] thrusting of communism and materialism down the throats of her children seems to some of us criminal. It is true, of course, that all countries have to a greater or lesser degree been similarly culpable. American schools try to give children reverence for the Constitution and our form of government. English children must all sing “God Save the King,” and attend prayers in school. Children in all capitalistic countries are taught to respect private property. *Yes, we indoctrinate our children with our kind of civilization as truly, even if not as ardently and efficiently, as does Russia.*⁸⁷

⁸³ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 54.

⁸⁴ Peter Kenez, “The Soviet Concept of Propaganda,” in *The Birth of Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 10.

⁸⁵ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 81–82.

⁸⁶ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 128–29.

⁸⁷ Washburne, “The Good and Bad in Russian Education,” 12. My italics.

Washburne maintained, though, that it must be the goal of progressive education to oppose such propaganda. Truly progressive schools should teach children to think clearly and come to their own conclusions freely. He admitted that this ideal was extremely difficult to achieve in practice, and in all likelihood, it would never be achieved in full. But Washburne maintained that it must remain the goal. Commitment to freedom of thought in progressive education was in his view essential.⁸⁸

Of course, progressive education was itself inherently political. Its championing of equal access to education and a more equitable society can hardly be separated from left-wing politics and social reform agendas that promised its accomplishment. Not all progressive educators, it seems, were as aware this fact as Washburne. Dewey's ideal of education, for example, was undeniably political with its fierce commitment to liberal democracy and rejection of laissez-faire capitalism and individualism. But Dewey did not conceive his philosophy in this way. His belief and confidence in his views were such that he thought they could only prevail in open discussion, rendering completely unnecessary indoctrination in the school.⁸⁹ Progressive education fostering freedom of thought and knowledge would, in Dewey's view, reform society without a deliberate program or doctrinal ideology.

Counts' stance on Soviet indoctrination was much different. He was not opposed to the idea of deliberately shaping social consciousness and reforming society through the school. Quite to the contrary. Soviet education was fascinating to Counts not necessarily in the society it was aiming to create; Counts had argued that capitalism had failed and should be replaced, but never explicitly that it should be replaced with Marxism-Leninism. Rather, it was fascinating to him simply for the fact that it was consciously endeavoring to shape

⁸⁸ Washburne, "The Common Schools of the R.S.F.S.R.," 319–20.

⁸⁹ Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 185.

society at all. The following passage from the conclusion of Counts' *Soviet Challenge to America* (1931) deserves to be quoted in full:

The school, the press, the theater, the cinema, and life generally in Russia are full of excesses and of imbecilities and of sound conceptions poorly executed. But back of it all, even the excesses and the imbecilities, there stands a great and challenging ideal which the rest of the world cannot continue to ignore and which may in time serve to bring art, science, and philosophy into essential harmony. In the meantime, the leaders in American industry, politics, and thought, instead of dissipating their energies in the futile attempt to erect barriers against the spread of Communist doctrines, would do well to fashion an alternative program of equal boldness and honesty to discipline the energies and humanize the spirit of industrial civilization.⁹⁰

Counts clearly believed that the Soviet experiment, most notable to him for social planning and its broad conception of education, had issued a challenge to the industrialized nations of the world to enact meaningful change of their own. This challenge was particularly relevant to the United States. He believed the school should play a meaningful role in enacting change. Counts' interest in investing education with a social goal is a prime example of educators being more interested in the form rather than content of Soviet education, in the lessons that could be drawn from the experiment rather than its actual results in the Soviet Union.

* * *

In Soviet schools, American educators often found conditions of extreme poverty. The quality of instruction and implementation of new methods was incredibly uneven; even rudimentary education was not yet universal. Schools were blatantly being used to develop a Communist worldview in young children. And yet, they were on the whole enchanted and exhilarated by their experience of Soviet schools. In the United States, their efforts in progressive education had attracted ample publicity, but had failed to bring about large-scale educational reform. Progressive education was still available only to a small minority of American children. In the Soviet Union, by contrast, progressive values and methods had

⁹⁰ Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America*, 338–39.

been made the guiding principles of the entire school system, reaching millions of children. The importance of education to society was recognized at the highest levels. The Soviet school system was no paradise – but it was a laboratory where essential work was being carried out, where solutions to severe problems were being actively pursued. It was thus the experimental value of Soviet schools, what lessons could be drawn from their progressive programs, that visiting progressive educators most valued. This view fits with broader understandings of the Soviet Union as the “Soviet Experiment,” as well as progressive educators’ utopian programs of educational and social reform. Some, like Dewey, admitted they were relieved that such vast experimentation in socialism, the result of which would be of utmost importance around the globe, was happening first in the Soviet Union and not in their own country.⁹¹ But others were less content to wait. After the Great Depression began, many progressive educators became increasingly involved in politics and demands for social reform. Representative of these educators was Counts, who pressed teachers to accept their responsibility and dare to build a new social order through the school, as was being done in the Soviet Union.⁹²

⁹¹ Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 114.

⁹² See George S. Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (New York: John Day Company, 1932). For his full argument. This was Counts’ best-known and most controversial work, which used the Soviet example implicitly to urge social reconstruction through the school in the United States.

Conclusion

The End of an Era in Progressive Education?

During the Great Depression, social consciousness once again came to the fore of the progressive education movement in the United States.¹ Regularly between 1927 and 1934, and intermittently between 1934 and 1938, a group of progressive pedagogues chaired by Kilpatrick met to discuss social issues. The group included Counts, Dewey, and other faculty members from Teachers College. They agreed on a general conception of the welfare state and continued to promote the progressive goal of meaningfully integrating the school with society. The characteristic progressive journal of this period was *The Social Frontier*, edited by Counts from 1934 to 1937. The journal was dedicated to “making education discharge its full responsibility in the present age of social transition,”² and its pages were a veritable who’s who of the progressive movement. Though it had little practical impact on the practice of teaching, it is notable for its broad conception of education and polemical, energetic journalism.³

The Depression, however, also marked the beginning of the progressive education movement’s decline in popularity in the United States. Demands for educational reform were overshadowed by demands for economic reform. Progressive schools were viewed as superfluous at best. Their expensive playgrounds, shop facilities, learning materials, and excursions were luxuries that simply could not be afforded among drastic budget cuts. At worst, they were viewed as potentially subversive institutions. Just as socialist policies became more appealing to many during the Depression, they became more threatening to

¹ L. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Vintage, 1961), 228.

² Eugene F. Provenzo, ed., *The Social Frontier: A Critical Reader* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 21–22.

³ For a selection of the journal’s most significant articles, see Provenzo, *The Social Frontier: A Critical Reader*.

others. In 1933, New York Local No. 5 of the American Federation of Teachers attained a Communist majority in its membership, causing the group to splinter into several sections.⁴ This led the alarmist press to prophecy a “Red” takeover of American schools which was not taken lightly by some sections of the public and state educational authorities. By 1935, twenty-two states had enacted legislation requiring teachers to sign loyalty oaths.⁵ Progressive educators’ recent positive accounts of the Soviet Union, as well as the passionate language found in *The Social Frontier*, could only have added weight to the caricature of the radical educator trying to subvert the American way of life – “a sardonic commentary on a group that spent the best of its energies seeking to preserve that way of life amidst the chaos of the Depression.”⁶ The movement faced scathing criticism after World War II amid the general swing towards conservatism in political and social thought, and by the late 1950s, unable to keep pace with continuing societal change, it essentially collapsed.⁷

The 1930s were also a period of changing fortunes for progressive education in the Soviet Union. In 1931, the Central Committee’s Resolution on Education repudiated the withering away of the school and project-style methods and mandated systematic programs of instruction in basic subjects. The progressive school of the 1920s and the Cultural Revolution was rejected in favor of a much more traditional school. This shift was framed as a restoration of order, rather than a repudiation of revolutionary enlightenment.⁸

Lunacharskii’s successor Andrei Bubnov defended the last vestige of the Soviet progressive school, labor instruction, but failed to save it. Labor was formally eliminated from the school in 1936, and Bubnov himself was soon a victim of the Purges, arrested in 1937 and executed

⁴ Allan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 297.

⁵ Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Battles over School Reform* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 232.

⁶ Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 233–34.

⁷ L. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 347–51.

⁸ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 221–24, 230.

in 1938.⁹ Children were now expected to study their school subjects diligently and individual rewards replaced group recognition. The changes in the school reflected a larger shift in the state-promoted ideal of childhood: the politically aware child activist of the 1920s became a happy, obedient child in the early 1930s, a model to adults in his or her devotion to Stalin.¹⁰

These changes in school policy were partially motivated by the failures of the progressive school. Factories strongly disliked their roles as school patrons and pupils rarely received practical training. Institutions of higher education reported that incoming students' knowledge and abilities were shockingly below expected levels.¹¹ But these changes were also part of a broader societal shift away from revolutionary politics and values. Nicholas Timasheff has termed this shift the Great Retreat, in which Communist values such as asceticism, libertinage, equal remuneration for all work, and Internationalism were consciously abandoned.¹² The cult of national heroes and traditional nuclear family values were revived, revolutionary art and some scientific positions were repudiated, and the tempo of industrialization was slowed.¹³ We need only look as far as John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* to understand why progressive education ceased to be applicable at this time. Progressive education, as Dewey had argued, was only suited to progressive societies – ones that sought to recreate rather than reproduce themselves through the school and their future citizens. The Great Retreat ultimately sought the security and reproduction of the Stalinist state: the dictatorial state structure and position of the leader and inner circle were reinforced whenever possible, and antagonistic forces were appeased, neutralized, or eliminated.¹⁴

⁹ Larry E. Holmes, "Magic into Hocus-Pocus: The Decline of Labor Education in Soviet Russia's Schools, 1931-1937," *The Russian Review* 51, no. 4 (1992): 559–64.

¹⁰ Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007), 76, 93–94.

¹¹ Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 221.

¹² Nicholas S. Timasheff, *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1946), 354.

¹³ Timasheff, 356.

¹⁴ Timasheff, 356–57.

Sheila Fitzpatrick's chronology of the Revolution is also useful in understanding this shift. During the 1930s, she argues, the Revolution was both accomplished and betrayed. After the First Five-Year Plan, the withering away of the state was essentially repudiated through the argument that it could not be achieved in a world of antagonistic states, but only after world revolution. With the abandonment of Internationalism and the promotion of Socialism in one country, it was clear the state was there to stay. Class struggle was declared ended and the Revolution victorious in the Soviet Union almost as an afterthought. This was followed by the emergence of an elite, more sober economic planning and material incentives, and emphasis on motherhood and family virtues.¹⁵ The Revolutionary school had no place in Soviet society once the Revolution was thus "achieved"; the traditional school was much more suited to generating loyalty, patriotism, and support for a static rather than dynamic society.

The interactions and mutual interest between Soviet and American progressive educators that have been explored in the previous chapters also withered away. In the Soviet Union, American progressivism ceased to be an appropriate model under Stalinism. In the United States, many progressives began to distance themselves from their enthusiasm for Soviet education in the mid to late 1930s as Stalinist repressions became more widely known (though some, like Nearing, were supporters their whole lives).¹⁶ Dewey, who had been greatly annoyed by his characterization as a fellow traveler by American Communists and a Bolshevik dupe by American conservatives following *Impressions of the Soviet Union*, became a fierce and persistent critic of the Stalinist Soviet Union.¹⁷ After he chaired the Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Made against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow Trials in 1937, Dewey came firmly to believe that means and ends could not be separated; only

¹⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 153–63.

¹⁶ Nearing traveled to the Soviet Union again in the 1950s and once again made a positive assessment. See Scott Nearing and Helen Nearing, *The Brave New World* (Harborside, ME: Social Science Institute, 1958).

¹⁷ Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, 208.

democratic means could bring about an equitable, democratic society. He urged Americans desirous of reform to stop looking to the Soviet Union as a model.¹⁸ Counts continued to be interested in the Soviet model, arguing it should spur and inspire reform in the United States, through most of the 1930s. His recognition of repressions and disillusionment came later but were equally full as Dewey's; in 1949, he authored a scathing indictment of the Soviet system with Nucia P. Lodge, *The Country of the Blind: The Soviet System of Mind Control*.¹⁹ International cooperation in the progressive movement as a whole declined as the Progressive Education Association and the New Education Fellowship became divided over politics and disheartened by the experience of World War II.²⁰

In both the United States and the Soviet Union, though, it can be legitimately questioned whether these considerable changes in policy and attitudes towards progressive education can be deemed a complete break or decisive end to progressive education. Progressive values and methods continued to be present in schools and pedagogy, even if they ceased to be explicitly identified as progressive. In a detailed investigation of Shatskii's First Experimental Station, for example, William Partlett has opposed the common characterization of Soviet education in the 1920s as a period of experimentalism that gradually regressed to a traditional approach. Rather, he argues that this period should be seen as one of evolution that helped determine the nature of Stalinist education, since there were some significant continuities. Extracurricular activities and community engagement continued to receive emphasis through the Young Pioneer organization, which became firmly entrenched in the school system during the 1930s. Above all, collective values continued to

¹⁸ Agnes E. Meyer, "Significance of the Trotsky Trial: Interview with John Dewey," *International Conciliation* 19 (February 1938): 55–57. Originally published in *The Washington Post* on December 19, 1937.

¹⁹ George S. Counts and Nucia P. Lodge, *The Country of the Blind: The Soviet System of Mind Control* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970). Originally published in 1949.

²⁰ Hermann Röhrs, "The New Education Fellowship: An International Forum for Progressive Education," in *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 188.

the emphasized in the school.²¹ In the United States, much of what the progressive education movement had advocated had become accepted as conventional wisdom by the 1950s. Thus even as the movement itself fell out of favor, active methods and play in the younger grades, as well group work, projects, and independent or guided studies, were widely incorporated into schools.²² Indeed, the best kindergartens and elementary schools of the post-World War II period bore no small resemblance to some progressive schools of the early twentieth century.²³

Nor did the connection between Soviet and American education disappear entirely – though the nature of this relationship changed dramatically, from collaboration to competition, during the Cold War.²⁴ In 1957, for example, the successful launch and orbit of Sputnik prompted a rather hysteric crisis in American education. Americans’ assumption of their superiority over the Soviets in science, technology, and the general educational system was shattered. Sputnik thus prompted not only increased investment in the space race, but also educational reform and increased federal spending on education.²⁵ There is also evidence of continued interest in, if not emulation of, American education in the Soviet Union. The journal *Soviet Education* (1958-1991, *Russian Education and Society* since 1992), which published selections of Soviet professional literature on education in English translation, indicates an ongoing discussion with a variety of articles concerning American schools published throughout the Cold War.²⁶

²¹ William Partlett, “Breaching Cultural Worlds with the Village School: Educational Visions, Local Initiative, and Rural Experience at S.T. Shatskii’s Kaluga School System, 1919-1932,” *Slavonic & East European Review* 82, no. 4 (October 2004): 882–83.

²² Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 352.

²³ Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, 135.

²⁴ See Margaret Peacock, *Innocent Weapons: The Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

²⁵ See Walter A. McDougall, *The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1997) chapter 6 and chapter 7.

²⁶ For a full index of *Soviet Education*, see <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/mres20>.

Even during the Cold War, there were still those who were interested in education across the Iron Curtain in a more positive sense. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was renewed constructive interest in Soviet education, particularly among child developmental psychologists. One such individual was Urie Bronfenbrenner, whose comparative study *Two Worlds of Childhood: U.S. and U.S.S.R.* was based on a remarkable seven study trips to the Soviet Union between 1960 and 1967. Bronfenbrenner's position was remarkably similar to those of the progressive educators who traveled fifty years before him. He wondered if American individualism had reached a point of diminishing returns, and if the collectivism instilled in Soviet schools and homes might not be more desirable. Though he thought too much conformity was forced on Soviet children, he argued they were much less likely to be "anti-adult, rebellious, aggressive, and delinquent" than American children.²⁷ The principles of Soviet collective upbringing that positively directed the socialization process, Bronfenbrenner insisted, "belong to science, not only to the Soviets ... they should certainly be applicable to Western society."²⁸

* * *

The 1930s certainly mark the end of an era in progressive education, though not its definitive end. They likewise saw the close of a remarkable chapter in Soviet-American relations through education, defined by mutual interest rather than competition. After the October Revolution, Soviet educators sought a school that would transform society: turning individualists into collectivists, enlightening every individual, and securing the Revolution and people's government. With the appeal of the German model temporarily devalued by the experience of World War I, Soviet educators found the most promising model for this school in American progressive education. American progressives also sought to transform society –

²⁷ Urie Bronfenbrenner, *Two World of Childhood: U.S. and U.S.S.R.* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1970), 95.

²⁸ Bronfenbrenner, 155–56.

enabling all to participate and flourish in a truly democratic society with a socialized economy – and viewed the school as the primary means of social reform. This similar vision for the school was reinforced by Soviet understandings of American democracy, technological and industrial prowess, and the similar size and population of the nations. These factors made the United States an attractive model despite its capitalist economy. The Complex Method, an adaptation of the American Project Method and Dalton Plan, was applied on a massive scale in Soviet schools in the early 1920s. Though the implementation of the Complex Method was nothing short of disastrous, Narkompros was fiercely committed to this method and its accompanying progressive philosophy of education, and with certain revisions it remained in place until 1931.

In Soviet and American progressive education, we can see one response to the most glaring questions posed by mass education in the interwar period: how much education should be popularly available? And, what type of education should be popularly available? Progressive educators rejected limitations on educational opportunity based on class. They believed that all education, kindergarten to university, should be open and practicably accessible to all. In the Soviet Union, this manifested as the Unified Labor School, a single system of schools that could present no impediment to advancement. This contrasted with the dual system in, say, Germany, where state middle schools did not matriculate to the university. Equal access to education was not only morally right, but necessary in the progressive view. True democracy required the intelligent participation of all citizens, which required education. This education could not consist of the stagnant, codified bodies of knowledges of the classical curriculum. It needed to be relevant to the modern world and keep up with the rapid pace of change. In American and Soviet progressive schools emphasis was thus placed on the modern sciences and methods of inquiry and investigation. Viewing progressive education as one response to mass education, applicable in more than one

socioeconomic system, is further supported by the deep interest American progressives had in Soviet schools. Though they had certain qualms about the explicitly Communist political content of Soviet schools, they felt certain there was much to learn from them, particularly from what they got right. The vast differences between the United States and the Soviet Union did not prevent Soviet schools from being modeled on certain American progressive principles and methods, nor did they prevent these schools from being useful models to American progressives in turn.

These Americans' tours of Soviet schools were enabled by the Soviet Union's remarkable practices of cultural diplomacy. Before recognition was granted in 1933, Soviet-American relations took place largely within the cultural sphere. But considering the tours of progressive educators in particular reveals another under-appreciated area of early Soviet-American relations – those taking place in the intellectual sphere. American and Soviet progressive educators were at the cutting-edge of the pedagogical discipline. Progressive pedagogy involved a high degree of international exchange, and though Soviet educators did not attend NEF conferences or make international study trips of their own, they nonetheless became involved in this exchange with their American counterparts. American progressive pedagogy became known in the Soviet Union largely through translated literature; later, when travel became quite popular, American and Soviet progressive educators were able to enter into direct dialogue. This intellectual exchange is incredibly significant. It not only challenges assumptions of Soviet isolation but demonstrates a striking similarity between left-wing American intellectuals like John Dewey, prominent and quite celebrated in the United States, and Soviet intellectuals like Anatolii Lunacharskii, arguably one of the Bolsheviks most committed to utopian Revolutionary politics in the 1920s.

Progressive education ultimately aimed to enable all to, first, understand the world they lived in, and, second, act in this world in an open, enlightened, critical, collective, and

democratic manner. It was applicable in the both the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1920s and early 1930s, and was again appealing during the 1960s and 1970s, as Bronfenbrenner's study shows. Another fifty years later in 2020, when collective action is demanded to protect individuals against pandemics and police brutality alike, we might well critically evaluate the values we promote through popular education once again, and revisit some of the progressive movement's ideals.

Appendix A: Dalton Laboratory Plan Grade Four History Assignment

*Grade IV. HISTORY 5th Contract Assignment**

After Paul Revere had warned the “Minute Men” that the British were coming, and after the British had been beaten back from Concord there was no fighting for some months. The British were perfectly satisfied to stay in Boston and not meddle with the “Minute Men.” On June 17th, 1775, the British saw that the “Minute Men” had put up a fort on Bunker Hill in Charlestown. If the British did not drive the Americans off the hill, the Americans might drive the British out of Boston. The British attacked Bunker Hill, and after being driven back twice with great loss of life, they finally succeeded in driving the Americans away, because the Americans had used up all their ammunition. In the summer General George Washington came to take command of the American army near Boston, and in the spring of the next year, by mounting some cannon on Dorchester Heights, near Boston, he made the British get into their ships and sail away. Washington then went to New York, and the British came there also soon after. This time the British were successful, and Washington was driven out of New York and across New Jersey, with the British in hot pursuit. When Washington crossed the Delaware River into Pennsylvania, the British gave up the chase, thinking they had frightened him away for good and all.

1st Week

This week we are going to read how Washington surprised the British when they least expected it. There will be two problems to work on.

Problems

PROBLEM 1. Suppose you are one of Washington’s soldiers at the time the British were chasing him across New Jersey and into Pennsylvania. Write the story of how you crossed the Delaware River with Washington on Christmas night, and how you took Trenton.

PROBLEM 2. Again supposing you are one of Washington’s men. This time you are with the American army at Valley Forge during the winter of 1776-77, when the British were snugly housed in Philadelphia, and when Washington, with his poor little army, was shivering at Valley Forge. Write a letter home to your children telling them of your life at camp.

* Reproduced from Helen Parkhurst, *Education on the Dalton Plan* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1922), 85-90.

This is a sample assignment for pupils aged eight to nine years old.

The Dalton school year was measured in periods of twenty school days (roughly one calendar month). In each period of twenty days, pupils received contract assignments in each subject that specified twenty “days” of work – but here “days” is simply a unit of measure rather than an allotted amount of time. Thus, the awarded days of work for each task listed under the “Equivalents” sections here represents how many units the task counts to the total of twenty units needed to complete the contract work in this subject, not the amount of time the task should take. Moreover, pupils could take more than twenty actual school days to complete their whole contracts if needed, as the Dalton Plan emphasized an individual pace of work.

References

The reference for these problems is *American Hero Stories*. Use the index to find the stories you want. One is called “A Christmas Surprise” and the other “Winter at Valley Forge.”

Equivalents

Each of these problems counts as two-and-a-half days’ work. Bring your compositions to me when you have finished them.

Department Cut

This written work, when accepted by me, may be credited as a week’s work in English Composition.

2nd Week

In the summer of 1776 a very important thing happened in Philadelphia. It was before the British captured the city, and it was not a battle. The Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4th. That is what we shall study about this week. I presume you know something about it already. Perhaps you can find out some more about it.

Problems

Here are some questions on the Declaration of Independence. Write the answers to them, using complete sentences in each answer.

1. Who were in the Continental Congress?
2. Where did it meet, and when?
3. What two important deeds did the Continental Congress do?
4. Who introduced the resolution for Independence?
5. What five men were on the committee?
6. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
7. How was the news of the Declaration of Independence told to the people?
8. What was the exact date of the Declaration of Independence?

Memory Work

Learn by heart the last paragraph of the Declaration, beginning: “We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America —”

References

The reference for this work is *Makers of the Nation*.

Bulletin Study and Conference

Will you all examine the copy of the Declaration of Independence that is on the Bulletin Board? At the Conference on Friday, February 17th, we shall talk about the Declaration, and I shall ask you what you have noticed about this copy of the Declaration.

Equivalents

The reading counts as one day's work; the questions as two days' work; and the memory work as two days' work.

3rd Week

This week we shall read and study about one of the martyrs of the Revolution. I wonder if you all know the martyr is. If you do not know, see if you can find out. This martyr's name was Nathan Hale.

Problem

Your problem this week will be to read about Nathan Hale, and then come to me and let me test you on your reading. I am giving you some questions here to guide you as you study about him.

1. Where was Nathan Hale born?
2. Where did he go to College?
3. Tell about his offering to go on the dangerous mission for Washington.
4. What was his disguise?
5. Tell about his adventures and about his capture.
6. What was done to him?
7. What were his last words?

Equivalents

The reading will count as two days' work, and the reporting on the reading as three days' work.

4th Week

There are a great many heroes of the Revolutionary War that we might read about. We have not time to read about all of them, but I am hoping that you may be interested to find out more about some of them. Here are some of the interesting ones: Ethan Allen, Benedict Arnold, Colonel Prescott, General Gates, General Herkimer, Israel Putnam, Mad Anthony Wayne, Daniel Morgan, The Swamp Will o' the Wisp, Nathaniel Greene, Lafayette, Baron Von Steuben, Robert Morris, George Rogers Clark.

This week will shall learn about one more great Revolutionary hero, John Paul Jones, the "Father of the American Navy."

Problem

The problem is to read about John Paul Jones and then to come to me and give me an oral report on your reading. I shall expect you to come and tell me what you have to say without any questioning or help on my part. Plan your report out before you come to me.

I shall ask some of the children who give good reports to repeat them at the conference on February 24th.

References

The references for this work are *American Hero Stories* or *Makers of the Nation*.

Equivalents

The reading counts as two days' work, and the report as three days' work.

Appendix B: Russian Language Translations of American Progressive Educators; Discussions of American Progressive Methods

Translations by author, work, date:

Dewey, Evelyn

Dewey, Evelyn. *Daltonsky laboratornyi plan (The Dalton Laboratory Plan)*. Translated by R. Langsberg. Preface by N. K. Krupskaya. Moskva: Novaya Moskva, 1923.

Dewey, John

Dewey, John. *Psikhologia i pedagogika myshlenia (How We Think)*. Moskva: Mir, 1915.

Dewey, John. *Psikhologia i pedagogika myshlenia (How We Think)*. Translated by N. M. Nikolskaya and N. D. Vinogradov. Berlin: Gosizdat RSFSR, 1922.

Dewey, John. *Skola i obschestvo (The School and Society)*. Moskva: I.D. Sytin, 1907.

Dewey, John. *Shkola i obschestvo (The School and Society)*. Moskva: Rabotnik Prosveschenia, 1922.

Dewey, John. *Shkola i obschestvo (The School and Society)*. Moskva: Gosizdat, 1924.

Dewey, John. *Shkola i obschestvo (The School and Society)*. Translated by G.A. Luchinsky. Moskva, Rabotnik Prosveschenia, 1925.

Dewey, John. *Shkola i rebyonok (The Child and the Curriculum)*. Translated by L. Azarevich. Moskva, Gosizdat, 1922.

Dewey, John. *Shkola i rebyonok (The Child and the Curriculum)*. Translated by L. Azarevic. Moskva/Petrograd: Gosizdat, 1923.

Dewey, John. *Vvedenie v filosofiyyu vospitania (Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education)*. Preface by S. T. Shatsky. Moskva: Rabotnik Prosveschenia, 1921.

Dewey, John and Evelyn Dewey

Dewey, John and Evelyn Dewey. "Shkoly buduschego" (Schools of Tomorrow). Translated by R. Langsberg. *Svobodnoe vospitanie (Free Education)* nos. 1-12 (1916-1917): 21–48, 55–74, 21–42, 17–40, 19–34, 25–40, 67–94, 21–40.

Dewey, John and Evelyn Dewey. *Shkoly buduschego (Schools of Tomorrow)*. Translated by R. Langsberg. Moskva: Rabotnik Prosveschenia, 1922.

Kilpatrick, William H.

Kilpatrick, William H. *Metod proyektov: primeneniye tselevoy ustanovki v pedagogicheskom protsesse (The Project Method: Application of the Purposeful Act in the Pedagogical Process)*. Translated by N. V. Chekhova. Leningrad: Brokgauz-Efron, 1925.

Kilpatrick, William H. *Osnovy metoda (Foundations of Method)*. Moskva: Gosizdat, 1928.

Parkhurst, Helen

Parkhurst, Helen. *Vospitanie i obuchenie po Daltonskomu planu (Education on the Dalton Plan)*. Translated by R. Landsberg. Novaia Moskva, Moskva 1924.

Works by Soviet authors on American progressive education:

Finkel, I. *Daltonplan v shkole fabzavucha: Sbornik statei i materialov (The Dalton Plan in Factory Schools. A Collection of Articles and Materials)*. Moskva: Novaya Moskva, 1925.

Gentsov, I.A., Dzents-Litovsky, A.I. and Kazmin, N.V. *Daltonplan na rabfak (The Dalton Plan at Workers' Faculties)*. Leningrad: Priboi, 1925

Ignatiev, B.V. *Daltonplan i noveishie techenia russkoi pedagogicheskoi mysli (The Dalton Plan and the Newest Educational Trends in Russia)*. Moskva: Mir, 1925.

Komarovsky, B.B. *Pedagogika Dewey (Dewey's Education)* Baku. 1926

Krupskaya, N.K. "Evelyn Dewey. Daltonsky plan laboratornoi raboty v shkole. Helen Parkhurst. Vospitanie pri pomoschi Daltonskogo plana" ("Evelyn Dewey. The Dalton Laboratory Plan. Helen Parkhurst. Education on the Dalton Plan"). *Na putiakh k novoi shkole (Towards the New School)* 2–3 (1922): 163–168.

Krupskaya, N.K. "Metod proektov v politprosvetrabote" ("The Project Method in Political Education"). *Kommunisticheskoe Prosveschenie (Communist Education)* 3, no. 9 (1923): 25–31.

Levin, L. *Novye puti shkolnoi raboty (metod proektov) (New Ways in School Work (The Project Method))*. Moskva, Rabotnik Prosveschenia, 1925.

Merzon. "Opyt primeneniya Dalton-plana v trudovoi shkole" ("Using the Dalton Plan in the Production School"). *Narodnoe Prosveschenie (National Education)* 10/11 (1925): 128–132.

Moiseev, L.V. and Beskin, M.A. *Daltonplan v shkolach uchenichestva. Opyt raboty Moskovskoi shkoly uchenichestva (The Dalton Plan in Apprentice Schools. Work Experience in the Moscow Apprentice School)*. Moskva: Transpechat NKPS, Moskva, 1927.

Shulgin, V.N. “Shkoly buduschego,” (“Schools of Tomorrow”), by J. Dewey & E. Dewey, *Svobodnoe vospitanie* 9*Free Education*) 19 (1918): 15–16.

Simonov, I.S. and Chekhov, N.V. *Daltonplan v russkoi shkole* 9*The Dalton Plan in the Russian School*). Leningrad: Brockhaus-Ethron, 1924.

Appendix C: Complex Themes for the First Grade of the Rural Unified Labour School (1927)

Complex Themes from the Program for the First Grade (8-12 Years) *

Rural Schools

First Year

1. First days in the school (10 days).
2. Autumn activity of the family (21 days).
3. Protection of Health (12 days).
(Celebration of the October Revolution – 3 days).
4. Preparation for the winter and winter work (12 days).
(Lenin Day – 3 days).
5. Life and work during the winter (61 days).
6. Symptoms of spring and preparation for spring work (24 days).
(Celebration of the First of May – 3 days).
7. Children's participation in spring activities (24 days).
8. School Exhibition (3 days).

Second Year

1. Child's life and work during summer and the beginning of autumn work in school (10 days).
2. Autumn work in the village (24 days).
(Our Participation in the Celebration of the October Revolution – 3 days).
3. Protection of Health at home and in the village (18 days).
4. Life and work of a village during winter (60 days).

* Reproduced from Lucy L.W. Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1928), 172-183.

Sections of the 1927 Program by Narkompros (RSFSR) quoted by Wilson.

(Lenin Day – 3 days).

5. Spring and its first activities (24 days).

(First of May – 3 days).

6. Spring labor in the village (27days).

Exhibition: The results of the school year and the plans for the summer.

Third Year

Results of summer work and organization (6 days).

I. The Rural Community

Crops and cultivation of agricultural products (24 days).

Village and vicinity (12 days).

Local trade (9 days)

Peasants' Organizations.

II. Village and town (18 days)

Trade and exchange (9 days).

Plants and factories (24 days).

City life (9 days).

Cultural relations between city and village (9 days).

III. Spring and Peasant' Labor

Work on the soil (24 days).

Water reservoirs (6 days).

Forests, fields and beehives (25 days).

School and First of May.

Exhibition.

Fourth Year

Summer results and plans for the coming school year.

I. Federation of Soviet Republics

Sub-theme "Earth as a globe" (12 days)

Climate, nature, agriculture in Russia and foreign lands (32 days)

The far North (12 days)

The far South (12 days)

Industry of USSR (36 days)

Formation of USSR (20 days)

Government of U.S.S.R. (5 days)

Foreign relations (10 days)

2. Protection of workmen by the Soviet Government
Improvement of the condition of labor (7-18 days)

Exhibition.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bourne, Randolph S. "Schools in Gary." *The New Republic* 2, no. 21 (March 27, 1915): 198–99.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *Two World of Childhood: U.S. and U.S.S.R.* New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1970.

Chase, Stuart, Robert Dunn, and Rexford Guy Tugwell, eds. *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade: A Joint Survey by the Technical Staff of the First American Trade Union Delegation.* New York: The John Day Company, 1928.

Counts, George S. *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia.* Boston: The Stratford Co., 1930.

———. *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* New York: John Day Company, 1932.

———. "Education and the Five-Year Plan of Soviet Russia." *The Journal of Educational Sociology* 4, no. 1 (September 1930): 20–29.

———. "Education in Soviet Russia." In *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade: A Joint Survey by the Technical Staff of the First American Trade Union Delegation*, 268–303. New York: The John Day Company, 1928.

———. "The Educational Program of Soviet Russia." In *Addresses and Proceedings of the National Education Association of the United States, 1928.* Washington, D.C.: National Education Association of the United States, 1928.

———. *The Soviet Challenge to America.* New York: John Day Company, 1931.

Counts, George S. and Nucia P. Lodge. *The Country of the Blind: The Soviet System of Mind Control.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970. Originally published in 1949.

"Delegation of American Professors in U.S.S.R." *Soviet Union Review* 6, no. 9 (September 1928): 134.

Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916.

———. *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World.* New York: New Republic Inc., 1929.

———. *Individualism Old and New.* New York: Minton, Balch, & Company, 1930.

———. *My Pedagogic Creed.* New York: E.L. Kellogg and Co., 1897.

- . *The Public and Its Problems*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927.
- . *The School and Society, Being Three Lectures, Supplemented by a Statement of The University Elementary School*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1907.
- Dewey, John, and Evelyn Dewey. *Schools of To-Morrow*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1915.
- Dreiser, Theodore. *Dreiser Looks at Russia*. New York: Horace Liveright, 1928.
- Ensor, Beatrice. "Outlook Tower: Russia." *The New Era* 9, no. 33 (January 1928): 4–6.
- Flexner, Abraham, and Frank P. Bachman. *The Gary Schools: A General Account*. New York: General Board of Education, 1918.
- Gould, Margaret. *I Visit the Soviets*. Toronto: Francis White Publishers Limited, 1937.
- "Hints for Teachers Visiting Russia." *The New Era* 9, no. 99 (January 1928): 39.
- Ilin, M. *New Russian Primer: The Story of the Five-Year Plan*. Translated by George S. Counts and Nucia P. Lodge. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931.
- Kilpatrick, William Heard. *Foundations of Method: Informal Talks on Teaching*. New York: Macmillan, 1925.
- . *The Montessori System Explained*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914.
- . *The Project Method: The Use of the Purposeful Act in the Educative Process*. New York: Teachers' College Columbia University, 1929.
- Krupskaia, Nadezhda Konstantinova. *Narodnoe Obrazovanie i Demokratiia*. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izd-vo R.S.F.S.R., 1921.
- Krupskaya, N.K. "All-Round Development of Children." In *N.K. Krupskaya on Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, translated by G.P. Ivanov-Mumjiev, 127–31. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957.
- . "Evelyn Dewey. Daltonsky Plan Laboratornoi Raboty v Shkole. Helen Parkhurst. Vospitanie Pri Pomoschi Daltonskogo Plana." *Na Putiakh k Novoi Shkole* 2–3 (1922): 163–68.
- . "Metod Proektov v Politprosvetrabote." *Kommunisticheskoe Prosveschenie* 3, no. 9 (1923): 25–31.
- . "The Young Pioneer Movement as a Pedagogical Problem." In *N.K. Krupskaya on Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, translated by G.P. Ivanov-Mumjiev, 118–22. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957.

- Lunacharsky, A.V. "On the Class School." In *On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, edited by E. Dneprov, translated by Ruth English, 82–109. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981.
- . "Education of the New Man." In *Anatoli Lunacharsky On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, translated by Ruth English and E. Dneprov, 217–41. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981.
- . "On Social Education." In *Anatoli Lunacharsky On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, edited by E. Dneprov, translated by Ruth English, 31–44. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981.
- . "Speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Education." In *Anatoli Lunacharsky On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, edited by E. Dneprov, translated by Ruth English, 10–30. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981.
- . "The Philosophy of the School and the Revolution." In *Anatoli Lunacharsky On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, edited by E. Dneprov, translated by Ruth English, 145–69. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981.
- . "What Kind of School Does the Proletarian State Need?" In *Anatoli Lunacharsky On Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, edited by E. Dneprov, translated by Ruth English, 119–44. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981.
- Meyer, Agnes E. "Significance of the Trotsky Trial: Interview with John Dewey." *International Conciliation* 19 (February 1938): 53–60.
- Nearing, Scott. *Education in Soviet Russia*. New York: International Publishers, 1926.
- . *The Twilight of Empire: An Economic Interpretation of Imperialist Cycles*. New York: Vanguard Press, 1930.
- Nearing, Scott, and Jack Hardy. *The Economic Organization of the Soviet Union*. New York: Vanguard Press, 1927.
- Nearing, Scott, and Helen Nearing. *The Brave New World*. Harborside, ME: Social Science Institute, 1958.
- Pinkevich, A.P. *Osnovnye Problemy Sovremennoi Shkoly: Shest' Leksiy Po Pedagogike (The Main Problems of the Modern School: Six Lectures in Pedagogy)*. Petrograd: Proboj, 1924.
- Podzemsky, A.I. *Public Education in the Russian Socialistic Federation of Soviet Republics*. Moscow: State Publishing House, 1928.
- Parkhurst, Helen. *Education on the Dalton Plan*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1922.

Shatsky, Stanislav. "A Teacher's Path." In *A Teacher's Experience: A Collection*, translated by N.P. Kuzin and D.J. Latishina, 23–40. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981.

———. "First Steps Towards Education Through Work." In *A Teacher's Experience: A Collection*, edited by D.J. Latishina, translated by N.P. Kuzin, 174–96. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981.

———. "Which Comes First: The Children or the School?" In *A Teacher's Experience: A Collection*, edited by D.J. Latishina, translated by N.P. Kuzin, 202–30. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981.

State Commission on Education. "Basic Principles of the United Labor School." In *Bolshevik Visions: First Phases of the Cultural Revolution*, edited by William G. Rosenberg, 300–314. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis Publishers, 1984.

Washburne, Carleton. "The Common Schools of the R.S.F.S.R." In *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade: A Joint Survey by the Technical Staff of the First American Trade Union Delegation*, 304–23. New York: The John Day Company, 1928.

———. "The Good and Bad in Russian Education." *The New Era* 9, no. 33 (January 1928): 8–12.

Wilson, Lucy L.W. "Rural Schools in the Soviet Union," *The New Era* 9, no. 33 (January 1928): 29–34.

———. *The New Schools of New Russia*. New York: Vanguard Press, 1928.

Secondary Sources

Anweiler, Oskar. "Origin and Development of Progressive Education in Eastern Europe." In *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*, edited by Hermann Röhrs and Lenhart Volker, 121–30. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.

Bailes, Kendalle E. "The American Connection: Ideology and the Transfer of American Technology to the Soviet Union, 1917–1941." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, no. 3 (July 1981): 421–48.

Bowen, James. *A History of Western Education, Volume Three: The Modern West: Europe and the New World*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981.

Brook, Anthony. "Gary, Indiana: Steeltown Extraordinary." *Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 1 (April 1975): 35–53.

Brooks, Jeffrey. "The Press and Its Message: Images of America in the 1920s and 1930s." In *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, edited by Sheila Fitzpatrick, Richard Stites, and Alexander Rabinowitch, 231–52. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

- Chatterjee, Choi, and Beth Holmgren, eds. *Americans Experience Russia: Encountering the Enigma, 1917-Present*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Cohen, Sol. "The Influence of Progressive Education on School Reform in the U.S.A." In *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*, 321–31. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Cremin, Lawrence. *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*. New York: Vintage, 1961.
- David-Fox, Michael. *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- De Coninck-Smith, Ning. "Geography and the Environment." In *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family in the Age of Empire*, edited by Colin Heywood, 5:73–90. A Cultural History of Childhood and Family. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010.
- Donson, Andrew. *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914-1918*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Edwards, June. *Women in American Education, 1820-1955: The Female Force and Educational Reform*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002.
- Engerman, David C. "John Dewey and the Soviet Union: Pragmatism Meets Revolution." *Modern Intellectual History* 3, no. 1 (2006): 33–63.
- Ewing, E. Thomas. "The 'Virtues of Planning': American Educators Look at Soviet Schools." In *Education & The Great Depression: Lessons from a Global History*, edited by E. Thomas Ewing and David Hicks, 41–61. New York: Peter Lang, 2006.
- Fallace, Thomas. "Reading Democracy and Education in the Context of World War I." *Democracy & Education* 25, no. 1 (2017): 1–7.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- . *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917-1921*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Flewers, Paul. *The New Civilization? Understanding Stalin's Soviet Union 1929-1940*. London: Francis Boutle Publishers, 2008.
- Foglesong, David S. *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire": The Crusade for a "Free Russia" Since 1881*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Gutek, Gerald Lee. *George S. Counts and American Civilization: The Educator as Social Theorist*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984.

- Hollander, Paul. *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928-1978*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Holmes, Brian. "The Origin and Development of Progressive Education in England." In *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*, 51–70. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Holmes, Larry E. "Magic into Hocus-Pocus: The Decline of Labor Education in Soviet Russia's Schools, 1931-1937." *The Russian Review* 51, no. 4 (1992): 545–65.
- . "Soviet Schools: Policy Pursues Practice, 1921-1928." *Slavic Review* 48, no. 2 (1989): 234–53.
- . *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse: Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indian University Press, 1991.
- . "Western Perception of Soviet Education, 1918-1931." *Educational Forum* 39, no. 1 (1974): 26–32.
- Kelly, Catriona. *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Kenez, Peter. "The Soviet Concept of Propaganda." In *The Birth of Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929*, 1–18. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Kengor, Paul. *Dupes: How America's Adversaries Have Manipulated Progressives for a Century*. Wilmington, Delaware: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2014.
- Kett, Joseph F. "'Theory Run Mad': John Dewey and 'Real' Vocational Education." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 16, no. 4 (October 2017): 500–514.
- Kindleberger, Charles. *The World in Depression, 1929-1939*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Kliebard, Herbert M. *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.
- Kotkin, Stephen. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- . "Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture." *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 111–64.
- Lee, Jenny L. "1919 Winnetka Plan." *History of Education: Selected Moments of the 20th Century*, edited by Daniel Shugarensky, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, 2002. <https://archive.is/i8WhD>.

- Lee, Mordecai. *The Philosopher-Lobbyist: John Dewey and the People's Lobby, 1928-1940*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015.
- Legg, Catherine, and Christopher Hookway. "Pragmatism." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2016.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatism/>.
- Malia, Martin. *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991*. New York: Free Press, 1994.
- Marples, David R. *Motherland: Russia in the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Martin, Jay. *The Education of John Dewey: A Biography*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- McDougall, Walter A. *The Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age*. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Mchitarjan, Irina. "John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930 - Report on a Forgotten Reception." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 19, no. 1 (2000): 109–31.
- Meyer, Ernst. "An International Perspective on Group Education." In *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*, 287–306. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Oelkers, Jürgen. "Origin and Development in Central Europe." In *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*, 31–50. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Parker, David H. "'The Talent at Its Command': The First World War and the Vocational Aspect of Education, 1914-39." *History of Education Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1995): 237–59.
- Partlett, William. "Bourgeois Ideas in Communist Construction: The Development of Stanislav Shatskii's Teacher Training Methods." *History of Education* 35, no. 4/5 (September 2006): 453–74.
- . "Breaching Cultural Worlds with the Village School: Educational Visions, Local Initiative, and Rural Experience at S.T. Shatskii's Kaluga School System, 1919-1932." *Slavonic & East European Review* 82, no. 4 (October 2004): 847–85.
- Peacock, Margaret. *Innocent Weapons: The Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
- Provenzo, Eugene F., ed. *The Social Frontier: A Critical Reader*. New York: Peter Lang, 2011.
- Ravitch, Diane. *Left Back: A Century of Battles over School Reform*. New York: Touchstone, 2000.

- Röhrs, Hermann. "International Response to the Educational Ideas of M. Montessori as Exemplified by Their Influence on Progressive Education in the United States." In *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*, 205–18. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- . "Internationalism in Progressive Education and Initial Steps towards a World Education Movement." In *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*, 11–27. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- . "The New Education Fellowship: An International Forum for Progressive Education." In *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*, 179–92. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Röhrs, Hermann, and Lenhart Volker, eds. *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Ryan, Alan. *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.
- Salomone, Rosemary C. *True American*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Saltmarsh, John A. *Scott Nearing: An Intellectual Biography*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.
- Saul, Norman E. *Friends or Foes? The United States and Soviet Russia, 1921-1941*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2006.
- Schaafsma, David. *Jane Addams in the Classroom*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014.
- Semel, Susan F. "Helen Parkhurst and the Dalton School." In *Founding Mothers and Others: Women Educational Leaders During the Progressive Era*, edited by Alan R. Sadovnik and Susan F. Semel, 77–92. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Simpson, Douglas J., and Michael J.B. Jackson. "John Dewey's View of the Curriculum in The Child and the Curriculum." *Education and Culture* 20, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 23–27.
- Snyder, Thomas D., ed. *120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait*. National Center for Educational Statistics, 1993.
- Steinberg, Mark D. *The Russian Revolution, 1905-1921*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Stern, Ludmilla. *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union, 1920-1940*. London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007.
- Tanner, Daniel. "The John Dewey Society and the Progressive Education Association." In *Crusade for Democracy: Progressive Education at the Crossroads*, 53–68. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

- Tenenbaum, Samuel. *William Heard Kilpatrick: Trail Blazer in Education*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951.
- Timasheff, Nicholas S. *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia*. New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1946.
- Townsend, Elizabeth, and Judith Friedland. "19th and 20th Century Educational Reforms Arising in Europe, the United Kingdom, and the Americas: Inspiration for Occupational Science?" *Journal of Occupational Sciences* 23, no. 4 (2016): 488–95.
- Vinal, William Gould. "Mrs. Lucy Langdon Williams Wilson." *Science Education* 42, no. 5 (1958): 456–59.
- Wallace, James M. "The Origin and Development of Progressive Education in the United States of America: New World Progressives in the Old World." In *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook*, 133–46. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Whitfield, Stephen J. *Scott Nearing: An Apostle of American Radicalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.
- Zikeyev, N.V. "N.K. Krupskaya's Work on the Book, 'Public Education and Democracy,' and First Reviews of This Book." *Soviet Education* 1, no. 7 (1959): 59–62.