

HISTORY IN THE SOVIET SCHOOL, 1917-1937
Changing Policy and Practice

by

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PREFACE

It is generally agreed by the writers on Soviet historiography that the year 1934 marks a radical reversal in the Soviet historical scholarship. Soviet scholars until recently have maintained that the period before 1934 was dominated by the "erroneous" views of the "school of Pokrovsky", and that true Marxist-Leninist historiography had triumphed only after that year. On the other hand, Western scholars, on the whole, while accepting Pokrovsky's "erroneousness", at the same time paradoxically maintain that the post-1934 period of Soviet historiography was characterized by "nationalism" in contrast to its former internationalistic nature, thus permitting the conclusion that neither before nor after 1934 was there an orthodox school of Marxist historiography. Detailed evaluation of this great change, however, varies from author to author, as often do the facts presented by them in support of their views.

The existing inconsistencies in the conclusions and some factual details presented by the Western scholars can largely be attributed to the absence of a definitive work on this important period. While disclaiming any pretense of being such a work, it is hoped that this dissertation will throw some light on the background of

the great change, its reasons and the manner in which it was carried out.

So far as can be ascertained, Stalin refrained from direct intervention in historiography. Neither modesty, tact nor cunning could account for this abstention. The study of history per se had little if any value either for Stalin, or for the founders of Marxism-Leninism. History as a vehicle of ideology and propaganda, on the other hand, was highly valued by all Bolshevik leaders; and undoubtedly the best place for the use of history as a tool and weapon of indoctrination was the school. It is therefore in the teaching of history that Stalin chose to intervene personally on May 16, 1934; and it is this intervention that provided the Soviet historians with cues for the subsequent development of the historical science.

This dissertation, therefore, deals primarily with history, and above all Russian history, within the framework of the Soviet school.

The reason for beginning this study with 1917 is twofold. First, since there are no adequate studies in English or reliable works in Russian on the development of the teaching of history in the Soviet school, it is difficult to make references to facts or developments with which the reader is not acquainted in order to make certain conclusions acceptable. Secondly, it was hoped that from a

description of the main lines of the evolution of the teaching of history in the Soviet school some patterns would emerge pointing in the direction of correct conclusions.

Furthermore, there are no monographs in English, or reliable studies in Russian, about the development of the teaching of history in the Soviet school. Wishing to remain factual and objective the author felt rather uneasy whenever he was forced to draw conclusions or argue a point on the basis of circumstantial evidence and inferences alone. Occasionally it was found impossible not to react to the interminable and slavishly repetitive verbiage and obvious contradictions, distortions and falsifications in the bulk of the Soviet source material.

The author made an attempt to avail himself of all the source material available in North America. Apart from educational and historical material he consulted the published Party decrees on education and Party policy, and most published stenographic transcripts of Party congresses and decrees indirectly related to education. Books and articles from a variety of journals and newspapers were searched for accounts of contemporary events and opinions, and former Soviet teachers and students were interviewed.

It is hoped that this work will contribute to the elucidation of the question of "nationalism" in Soviet

historiography, give a true picture of Pokrovsky's role in Marxist historical scholarship, as well as describe the evolution of the teaching of history in the Soviet school.

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HISTORY IN THE SOVIET SCHOOL, 1917-1937

CHAPTER ONE

THE FIRST DECADE OF CONFLICTS AND CHANGES
IN THE SOVIET SCHOOL

From the beginning Soviet education was characterized by an incessant conflict between theory and practice, the battle shifting from one sector of the educational front to another depending on the circumstances and personalities involved. Ideologists, theorists, and idealists on the one hand, and die-hard practical realists on the other, conducted a tug-o-war with the latter inevitably coming out of the conflict victorious. Not even in a country as totally dedicated to a dogma as the Soviet Union is to Marxism (at least on the surface) can education ignore realities, and develop as though in a vacuum.

Like anywhere else, education in Russia was shaped primarily not by the dreams of a few visionaries but by the naked truth of economic conditions and social or even military pressures. The dreams of the idealists were realized in proportion to the degree in which they coincided with the developments of reality, or insofar as they were shaped by that same reality.

Economic and social conditions in Russia greatly hindered education, and certainly prevented the introduction

of universal education until recent times. Until nearly the end of the 19th Century the economic growth of Russia had been extremely backward, while a large proportion of the population - until 1861 - was bound in serfdom. Owing to an almost total absence of industry, the country had no need for skilled technological or scientific manpower. As a result, there was no provision for the education of the children of serfs while the children of the landed aristocracy were given instruction in social graces, religion, classics and some elements of sciences. The Russian Academy of Sciences fulfilled no vital need of the country's economy, but served largely the purpose of enhancing the prestige of the Empire. As a result more than sixty per cent of the adult male population was illiterate in 1900.

After the turn of the century, Russian industrial growth progressed rapidly, and created an urgent need for programmes of mass education. Schools of a great variety made their appearance trying to satisfy the needs of the country.

Generally speaking education in Russia was similar to the various European systems. After three or four years of primary education, the child was enrolled in one of several different kinds of school, independent, yet parallel to each other: academic, vocational, technical, commercial, and specialized schools.

Preparation for university entrance and training for the professions was carried out on a limited scale by the traditional Gymnazium. The curriculum was "classical", the students being required to master much subject matter as a prerequisite for professional training. Both the curriculum and the organization of the system of education made access to higher learning inaccessible for a very large proportion of the total young population of Russia.¹

According to Nicholas Hans, in 1914 youngsters belonging to the upper classes which constituted about three per cent of the population provided forty per cent of the total enrollment in the schools of the Ministry of Public Instruction, while in institutions of higher learning sixty-one per cent of the students belonged to this group.²

Liberal and progressive thinkers and educators advocated the broadening of the basis of the educational structure by the introduction of universal education, and at the same time attempted to revise the curriculum and methods of teaching in the light of the latest scientific discoveries. They were largely under the influence, or followed the example of western progressive educators.

¹The desirability of a universal attendance at the institutions of higher learning or even of secondary academic education for all is not assumed here.

²Cf. History of Russian Educational Policy (1701-1917) (London, 1931), pp. 235-239.

Their efforts, however, were hampered by the reactionary Ministry of Education.

The two revolutions of 1917 brought new hopes. The progressive educators saw their chance of putting their ideas into practice, while the masses gained access to universal education, at least in theory.

Following the establishment of Soviet rule, the Bolshevik party undertook the transformation of the school from "an instrument of class rule of the bourgeoisie into a tool of full destruction of the division of society into classes, and into a weapon for the communist transformation of society."³ In Lenin's own words,

The school must become an instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat . . . for the total annihilation of the reactionary tendencies of the exploiters and for the establishment of a communist regime.⁴

Lenin made it clear from the beginning that education cannot remain isolated from politics. He argued that the bourgeois claim of non-political education was a lie and hypocrisy,⁵ and he demanded that the work of the

³KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK. (7th ed.; Moscow, 1954), I, 419.

⁴V.I. Lenin, "Proekt programmy RKP (b)", Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (5th ed.; Moscow, 1963), XXXVIII, 116.

⁵"Rech'na I vserossiiskom s'ezde po prosveshcheniyu, 28 avgusta 1918 g", ibid., XXXVII, 77.

"Rech'na II vserossiiskom s'ezde uchitelei-internatsionalistov, 18 yanvarya 1919 g", ibid., XXXVII, 431.

"Rech na vserossiiskom soveshchanii politprosvetov gubernskikh i uездnykh otделov narodnogo obrazovaniya, 3 noyabrya 1920 g", ibid., XLI, 399.

school be closely integrated "with the tasks of the socialist organization of society".⁶ As a result, the Soviet school was closely linked with the policies and practice of the Bolshevik party and the Soviet government.

One of the first steps of the new regime was to organize a State Commission of Education. Founded on November 9, 1917 the Commission was given the assignment of laying the foundations for a new public system of education.⁷ The People's Commissar of Education, A.V. Lunacharsky, on behalf of the Party, set lofty goals for the new system, goals which, according to W.W. Brickman, have not been fully realized even forty years later.⁸ The first practical achievement of the Commissar of Education and his deputy, M.N. Pokrovsky, however, was to destroy the old school and to overcome the resistance of its many supporters.

On December 15, 1917, all religious educational institutions were subordinated to the Narkompros⁹ and transformed into schools of general education.¹⁰ General

⁶"Rech'na vserossiiskom s'ezde uchitelei-internationalistov 5 iyunya, 1918 g", ibid., XXXVI, 420.

⁷Izvestiya, Nov. 9, 1917.

⁸G.Z.F. Bereday, W.W. Brickman and G.H. Read (eds.), The Changing Soviet School (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 52.

⁹The People's Commissariat of Enlightenment, henceforth referred to as NKP.

¹⁰Direktivy VKP(b) i postanovleniya sovetskogo pravitel'stva o narodnom obrazovanii. Sbornik dokumentov za 1917-1947 gg. (Moscow, 1947), I, 16f.

and polytechnical¹¹ education for children of both sexes was made compulsory up to the age of sixteen.¹² On January 21, 1918, the church was officially separated from the state, and the school separated from the church; all religious instruction in the classroom was forbidden. The Soviet school was secularized.¹³ At the same time the former system of school administration was abolished, and the positions of directors and inspectors vacated. By a decree of June 26, 1918, the leadership of general education in the Russian republic was placed in the hands of the State Commission of Education (Goskompros). The gubernia, uezd, and volost' branches of people's education (ONO)¹⁴ were entrusted to the executive committees (Ispolkom) of the Soviets of workers and peasants deputies. The Soviet system of education was thus provided with a highly centralized and administratively unified character.¹⁵

¹¹For a description of "polytechnical" education, see below, page 15, footnote 35.

¹²In 1919 this age was raised to seventeen, to be lowered in 1921 to a more realistic age of fifteen. Lenin considered this measure only temporary, fully intending to return to the former principle of compulsory education up to the age of seventeen.

"Direktivy TsK Kommunistam-Rabotnikam Narkomrposa", Pravda, February 5, 1921.

¹³Direktivy VKP(b) . . . , I, 17f.

¹⁴Otdel Narodnogo Obrazovaniya, henceforth referred to as ONO.

¹⁵Cf. Direktivy VKP(b) . . . , I, 21-26. The

In August 1918 the First All-Russian Congress of Education was convoked in Moscow. A new system of a unified elementary and secondary school was adopted, with four and five years of training respectively. This became the Nine Year School of General Education. On October 16, of the same year, a decree was issued for the establishment in the RSFSR of a "Unified Labour School", officially dispensing with the multiplicity of schools and school systems predominating before 1917.¹⁶

The practical application of the decree was, however, not an easy task. While there were some teachers who, like A.S. Makarenko, became "dizzy with enthusiasm" about the prospects offered by the October Revolution in the field of education, the majority of teachers and educationists were openly hostile towards the Bolshevik government. As early as December 1917, the All-Russian Teachers Union (VUS),¹⁷ called a general strike of teachers

former practice of decentralization of education under various ministries was abolished. This practice, however, reappeared in the 1930's, in a not too dissimilar fashion, when it was reintroduced partly because the Party had achieved full control of the school, partly because the NKP fell out of favour, but mainly because the complexity of the planned economy demanded that each department train qualified personnel for the needs of its own branch of the national economy.

¹⁶Cf. Sbornik dekretov i postanovlenii Rabochego i Krestyanskogo pravitel'stva (Moscow; Narkompros, 1927), p. 107-112.

¹⁷Founded immediately after the February Revolution.

lasting until March 1918. To counteract the Union, the NKP at the end of 1917 organized a Federation of Internationalist-Teachers.¹⁸ In June, 1918 the Federation held its first congress. Lenin was the main speaker. He openly admitted that a large majority of Russian intellectuals opposed the new regime, and called on the Internationalist teachers to undertake a re-education of their hostile colleagues.¹⁹

Immediate measures were taken for carrying out this assignment. In the course of 1918 alone some 164 teachers' congresses and 81 congresses of leaders of ONO²⁰ were organized for the political and ideological indoctrination of Soviet educators and the explanation of the principles, goals and tasks of the Soviet school.²¹

Numerous courses were organized for the training of new teachers. Over one hundred accelerated pedagogical courses were offered in the summer of 1918. But, these emergency courses, were not adequate for providing enough new and reliable teachers especially at Secondary School level. Therefore, the former teachers' colleges were reorganized into three year teacher training institutes where sociology, political economics, history of socialism,

¹⁸By the following spring the Federation numbered about 12,000 members. Cf. Lenin, XXXVI, 620.

¹⁹Ibid., XXXVI, 420 f.

²⁰Otdel Narodnogo Obrazovaniya.

²¹N.A. Konstantinov, et.al., Istoriya Pedagogiki (Moscow; APN RSFSR, 1959), p. 374.

Soviet constitution, and the fundamental principles of the Unified Labour School were taught. The Teachers' Institutes were reorganized into higher pedagogical training schools for the exclusive training of secondary school teachers.²² By the end of 1920 there were fifty-seven such institutions in the RSFSR with an enrollment of over ten thousand students.²³

The training of new loyal teachers alone, however, was not sufficient for even a minimally adequate staffing of the class rooms; the Party and the government therefore attempted to convert to the Bolshevik cause those teachers who were trained before the Revolution. This measure was especially necessary because, as Lenin admitted, it is precisely these people who possessed knowledge and learning - commodities so necessary to the new regime - without the acquisition of which all the victories of the Bolsheviks would remain worthless.²⁴ Intensive propaganda coupled with various means of persuasion brought forth some results. By the end of 1918 the VUS was abolished through a decree of the Soviet government, and organized resistance was henceforth made impossible.

²²Ibid., p. 375.

²³There were also 154 three-year institutes for the training of teachers of elementary schools, and 90 one-year pedagogical courses, with an enrollment of 24,000 students. Ibid.

²⁴Lenin, XLI, 404.

Although the foundations of the new school were laid down and the organized resistance of hostile teachers overcome at an early date, the Soviet school did not make much progress in the period of War Communism. Industry as a whole, with the exception of some war production, was at a virtual standstill. Many of the relatively limited number of schools built before the Revolution were either destroyed or occupied by the military; school supplies were almost totally lacking; and the teachers were either uneducated or hostile to the new regime. At the same time, the Party was absorbed in critical military operations and was preoccupied with the sheer necessity of preserving and consolidating its power. Insisting on academic preparation or training for industry in such circumstances would have been most unrealistic. Consequently, in this period Party policy demanded that the school should concentrate on ideological indoctrination both of the Youth and the adult community. The school should become a "transmitter of the principles of Communism", and also a

. . . transmitter of the ideological, organizational and educational influences of the proletariat on the semi-proletarian and non-proletarian sections of the toiling masses, with the purpose of educating a generation capable definitely to establish Communism.²⁵

Lenin demanded that the teachers become agents of

²⁵KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, I, 419.

agitation and propaganda.²⁶ In his speech to the First All-Russian Congress of Enlightenment, on August 28, 1918, he stated that:

Our task in the field of school education is this same struggle for the overthrowing of the bourgeoisie; we openly declare that to pretend that the school is separated from life and separated from politics, is a lie and hypocrisy.²⁷

In the struggle for the mind of the population at large, of the old teachers, and of the youth in and outside the school, the Komsomol organization was of great help to the Party.

The Eighth Party Congress in March, 1919 underlined the importance of political work among the youth, particularly in view of the increasing role they would be called upon to play in the revolutionary struggle. If Soviet power was to survive, the Congress pointed out, the youth must be trained for the "continuation and deepening of the revolution".²⁸ To help the loyal teachers in their task of indoctrinating school children, and to keep the teachers who were hostile towards the regime under surveillance, the Party made appeal to the newly established

²⁶ Lenin, XXXVII, 430-433, passim; Ibid. XLI, 398-408, passim; see also L. Mamet, "Istoriya: obshchestvenno-politicheskoe vospitanie", I-M, XIV (1929), 157.

²⁷ Lenin, XXXVII, 77.

²⁸ "O rabote sredi molodezhi", KPSS v resolyutsiyakh, I, 454.

Union of Russian Communist Youth, the Komsomol.

In November, 1918 a circular of the Central Committee declared that the Komsomol was a "school for the training of conscious Communists".²⁹ On May 11, 1919, by order of the Organization Bureau of the Central Committee, political work among workers, peasants, and in the schools was entrusted to the Komsomol.³⁰ A special "School Section" was established within this movement with the explicit task of organizing Communist cells among school children, thus carrying the revolution into the school.³¹ The members of the Komsomol were given extensive powers. It is through them that "self-rule" was granted to the students; they, and not the teachers, had the ultimate power and authority in the classroom.

In its overriding concern for ideological indoctrination of the youth, the Party almost totally ignored the need for the training of technical and professional manpower. This policy was expressed in most of the speeches made by Lenin in reference to education in the period of War Communism, and it found its practical manifestation and application in the official curriculum formulated for the new Unified Labour School.

²⁹Y.M. Sverdlov, Izbrannye stat'i i rechi (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1944), p. 124.

³⁰Pravda, May 17, 1919.

³¹Ibid.

During the first half of 1918, the State Commission on Education, counting among its members several progressive, idealistic and liberal educationists like Shulgin, Blonsky, Pinkevich and others, under the leadership of Lunacharsky, Pokrovsky, and Lenin's wife, N.K. Krupskaya, feverishly formulated the foundation and basic principles of the Unified Labour School. With Lenin's encouragement and on his insistence, the Marxist educators turned to Europe and especially to America for examples and models of progressive education which had broken away from the traditional methods and were blazing new trails.³²

By August 1918 a comprehensive programme was drafted by the Commission and submitted to the First Congress on Enlightenment, which unanimously approved it. On October 16, 1918 the new "revolutionary programme", calling for a radical change in the school system, was published and was given official approval by the Central Committee. However, realistically enough, it was not made compulsory.

The programme was centred around the triple principle of education advocated in the Communist Manifesto: mental, physical and polytechnical. Rejecting the rigid subject-matter-centred pattern of the former school, formal lessons, homework and examinations, the Soviet school

³²Cf. N.K. Krupskaya, "K desyatiletiiu zhurnala Na Putyakh k Novoi Shkole", Pedagogicheskie Sochineniya (Moscow: APN, 1959), X, 469.

demanded that the individual differences and interests of the students be given primary consideration, that their self-reliance and creativity be encouraged, and that the whole course of studies be centred around various branches of production, with no particular emphasis on specific training in any field. It was believed that through physical and aesthetic education³³ the school should produce well rounded and fully developed personalities. And such full development of the human personality, Lenin argued, was possible only under the new Socialist order.³⁴

It would be naive to suppose that the new programme was at once introduced in all Soviet schools, that education in the USSR was uniform, and that progressive and polytechnical education³⁵ was widely practised. In fact, the new programme caused great confusion even among its most enthusiastic supporters. Uniformity of education,

³³Such as gymnastics, sport, games, rhythmic, drawing, singing and music.

³⁴Lenin, XXXVII, 431.

³⁵This term had caused confusion among many Western students of the Soviet school. The problem was somewhat confused due to the fact that even among Russian educationists the belief existed that polytechnical education meant the "study of the fundamentals of industrial production". A proper definition of the term should be sought, it seems, in the French definition, from which Marx himself may have borrowed his concept, namely "many-sided-craftsmanship" or mnogoremeslennichestvo. Lenin himself used the term "polytechnical" in contrast to "monotechnical". "O rabote Narkomprosa", Lenin, XLII, 323; see also "O politekhnicheskoi obrazovanii", ibid., 228-230.

in spite of the administrative centralization, was neither feasible in the conditions of Civil War nor was it the policy of the Party at that time.

In the period of 1917-1920, there were no compulsory uniform curricula. The NKP allowed a large degree of autonomy, and even urged whole regions, as well as individual schools and teachers, to develop their own programmes in harmony with the existing local conditions.³⁶ This, of course, can hardly be regarded as a concession to the local authorities, because the schools, at this time, were supported entirely from local funds. Consequently, many local educational authorities (ONO) published their own regional syllabi. And also many of the older teachers, as might be expected, continued teaching in the former tradition.

Textbooks, particularly in social studies, were almost non-existent. The old ones were officially rejected because many of them were saturated with religious concepts, and, on the whole, supported and praised Autocracy and Nationalism. Also some progressive educators regarded text books as altogether unnecessary. Besides, their supply was rather short. The serious lack of other school supplies, such as pencils and scribblers, prevented the teachers, as a last resort, from dictating their lessons

³⁶More will be said about this later.

and thus alleviating the problem of textbooks. In such conditions, formal or traditional education was seriously handicapped, and may have been impossible even if it had been given official support. This situation helped the spreading of the "progressive" principles of the NKP.

It would be most unrealistic, however, to assume that "progressive education" in the USSR was identical to progressive education as it is understood in the west today. In actual practice the lofty progressive principles of "polytechnical" education, "self-activity", "spirit of collectivism", "physical" training and "self-expression" were all lumped together in what was known as samoobs-luzhivanie, or self-service. And "self-service" as Krupskaya was forced to admit, in the majority of schools meant no more than maintenance of school buildings, collecting wood for the heating of the classroom, gardening in the school yard, participation in farming and animal husbandry, and "sewing clothes and underwear for the soldiers of the Red Army".³⁷

The end of the Civil War and the beginning of the restoration of the national economy imposed new demands on the Soviet school. The former, essentially political goal of education was replaced by the urgent need to train qualified personnel for the economy of the country.

The actual changing of the Party policy was

³⁷Krupskaya, IV, 110; see also Konstantinov, p. 382f.

strikingly recorded in Lenin's speech to an assembly of the All-Russian leaders of education on November 3, 1920, in the dying moments of the military hostilities.

There are two distinct aspects to our struggle: on the one hand the task of destroying the inheritance of the bourgeois system and of the attempts to suppress the Soviet power carried on by all of the bourgeoisie. Until now, this task has preoccupied our attention above everything else and prevented us from proceeding to the second task, i.e., the task of construction . . . The victories over Wrangel, about which we have read yesterday and about which you will read today, and, probably, tomorrow, indicate that one phase of the struggle is coming to an end. . . . And each victory on the military front liberates us for the struggle on the domestic one; for the policy of constructing our state . . . Our main policy at this time must be the economic construction of the state . . . , and all agitation and propaganda must be founded on this.³⁸

The new proposed policy presented a very practical dilemma. Without a considerable rate of increase in literacy and improvement in the general and technical education the economic reconstruction of the nation was inconceivable. On the other hand, without an increase in the role of economic growth, it was difficult to envisage a cultural revolution. Lenin correctly solved the problem by deciding that priority should be given to the cultural revolution without which, he maintained, one could not hope to transform the economically backward Russia into a leading and powerful Socialist state.³⁹

³⁸Lenin, XLI, 406, 407.

³⁹Lenin, "O Kooperatsii", XLV, 369-377.

Stark realities demanded that the school assume new tasks and that it be reorganized along more practical lines.⁴⁰ Lenin, fully recognized the need for a change in the purpose and the nature of the school in the light of the new problems facing the Soviet Union, and demanded a change not in the foundations and orientation of teaching but in the nature of school activities, which, he said, should be adjusted to the transition to peaceful construction with a broad plan of industrial and economic transformation of the country.⁴¹ He obviously had no intention of subordinating the school to some rigid and dogmatic principle, but wanted to turn it into a flexible tool for bringing about a Socialist and Communist society.

The problems related to the adaptation of the tasks dictated by the economic restoration of the country and the basic principles of further development of the school were discussed at the First Conference of the Party on the People's Education held December 11, 1920 - January 4, 1921, less than a month after the ending of the hostilities on the military front.⁴²

⁴⁰Cf. Lenin, "Tezisy o proizvodstvennoi propagande", Polnoe Sobranie, XLII, 14-16.

⁴¹"Rech'na vserossiiskom soveshchanii polit-prosvetov", XLI, 398-408, passim.

⁴²Cf. Lenin, XLII, 478.

The radical Bolsheviks, believing in the Marxist principle of "withering away" of the state, raised the question of whether the School also should "wither away" and be abolished altogether, and the education of youngsters entrusted to special childrens' homes.⁴³ It was believed that in a proletarian state the family as a social unit would disappear, and that the state would have to assume complete education of the child.

Krupskaya and Lunacharsky among others opposed this utopian point of view maintaining that the fundamental questions of education should be solved on the basis of the demands imposed by the Party. The latter, they argued, regarded the School as the very foundation for the revolutionary education of the whole young generation in the USSR.

Some delegates opposed general education calling it "a survival of bourgeoisie", and demanded that purely technical and professional education be introduced. Krupskaya and especially Lunacharsky, himself a cultured and highly educated man, rejected this request.

Compulsory education was reduced from the unrealistic age of seventeen, to which it was raised in 1919, to the more modest but also more realistic age of fifteen.⁴⁴

⁴³They also argued that the text book must likewise "wither away". A more detailed discussion of this question will be presented in the chapter "Textbooks of History".

⁴⁴"Direktivy TsK Kommunistam - rabotnikam prosveshcheniya", Pravda, February 5, 1921.

Lenin accepted this measure very reluctantly and considered it only temporary.⁴⁵ After much debate, and probably as a result of the reduction in the age of compulsory school attendance, the Conference decided to introduce the Seven Year School to replace the former Nine Year School, in the preparation of candidates for the Tekhnikum and other institutions of professional training.

On the whole the Party conference on Education played an important role in the laying of the foundations of the new school. The school was made flexible, and was closely coordinated with the needs of the economic development of the country.

The majority of the graduates from the Seven Year School entered either some branch of production or some government establishment. Only two or three per cent proceeded to institutions of higher learning from this school. Those who aspired to higher education had to be admitted to the Workers Faculties (Rabfak). These were special schools organized in 1919 on Pokrovsky's initiative and under his guidance⁴⁶ for the "proletarianisation" of the institutions of higher learning and for the preparation of a "proletarian intelligentsia". A highly selective

⁴⁵Lenin, XLII, 373.

⁴⁶Krupskaya, "Ocherednye zadachi nauchnykh bibliotek", VIII, 458.

institution, the Rabfak admitted only those who belonged to the strictly defined proletarian class. In the first ten years of their existence, the Workers Faculties graduated over forty thousand workers and peasants, of whom almost seventy-five per cent eventually entered institutions of higher learning.⁴⁷

To satisfy the need for qualified workers, the Party Conference on Education established a new four year School of Factory-Mill Studies (FZU) for the children of workers. The number of these schools grew considerably after 1921. According to a resolution of the Twelfth Party Congress, "by training qualified and class-conscious workers, the FZU fulfilled a most important role in the education of the ranks of the vanguard of the industrial proletariat."⁴⁸ To train candidates for the FZU, special Factory-Mill Seven Year Schools (FZS) were opened in 1925.

Practical needs led to the opening of other new types of schools as well. Large mills and industrial centres in the major cities sponsored special professional

⁴⁷It seems interesting to note that many of the present day Party and Government leaders of the Soviet Union, including N.S. Khrushchev are former graduates of the Rabfak; and some of them have studied at the Institute of Red Professors, also organized by Pokrovsky. More will be said about this institute, particularly in the chapter on "Pokrovsky and Stalin".

⁴⁸KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, I, 757.

and technical schools for the training of their own manpower, and for the indoctrination of young workers.

In 1923 with the active participation of the Komsomol a new type of school was founded for the children of the poorer peasants. This was the ShKM (School for Peasant Youth), with a three year course of studies. In the words of a resolution of the Thirteenth Party Congress, these Schools of Peasant Youth were preparing "a new type of revolutionary and cultured corn-grower".⁴⁹

In 1918 the Declaration on the Unified Labour School stated that "productive work, organically associated with instruction, must be the foundation of school life" in the Soviet Union. To plan a programme of studies based on this fundamental principle, a State Scientific Council (GUS) was formed in 1919 within the State Commission on Education,⁵⁰ under the chairmanship of M.N. Pokrovsky. Subordinated to the NKP of the RSFSR, the GUS was made responsible for curriculum planning and methodology, and had several sections, among others a scientific-pedagogical, a scientific-technical and a scientific-artistic department.⁵¹

The new curriculum and the teaching methods had to be designed in harmony with the demands of the Party,

⁴⁹KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, I, 757.

⁵⁰Konstantinov, p. 393. There is however little agreement among authors on the foundation of GUS. See M.F. Shabaeva (ed.), Istoriya Pedagogiki (Moscow: APN 1953), p. 278.

⁵¹Pedagogicheskii Slovar' (Moscow: APN 1960), I, 279.

the tenets of Marxist ideology, the professional views of the educationists and the requirements of the national economy. No one was better qualified for the undertaking of such a complex and delicate task than Pokrovsky. Here is what Krupskaya wrote about the significance attached by Lenin to the founding of the GUS and his views on Pokrovsky.

The founding of the GUS was the beginning of this work to which Vladimir Ilich attributed such an exclusive significance. And the most suitable person for this task, in Vladimir Ilich's opinion, was Mikhail Nikolaevich [Pokrovsky], whom he profoundly respected and highly valued.⁵²

It took more than three years of painstaking research and planning to draft a completely new programme. At the general plenary session of the Scientific-Pedagogical Section of the GUS, held January 18-20, 1922,⁵³ an end was put to all forms of teaching by subject-matter, and a "method of complexes" was introduced. This was the long sought formula for the systematisation of general culture, and it was regarded as valid not only for the education of Soviet citizens, but also for the education of the world proletariat as a whole.⁵⁴

Deriving its name from the Latin term "complexus", this system of unifying learning material around central

⁵²Krupskaya, II, 331.

⁵³L.P. Bushchik, Ocherk razvitiya shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovaniya (Moscow: Uchpedgiz, 1961), p. 206.

⁵⁴Cf. L. Volpicelli, L'Evolution de la Pedagogie Sovietique (Paris, 1954), p. 78.

themes, forming topics or "complexes" was not an original Soviet invention. School programmes based on the method of complexes had existed already towards the end of the Nineteenth Century in a number of German and Austrian schools (Gesammtunterricht), in Belgium and other Western European countries. Generally, these programmes were organized in such a way that the child at first studied subjects and phenomena related to his immediate surroundings. His horizons were then gradually broadened to the whole community, the region, the country and eventually the world. Learning the three R's was incidental, and was carried out only in the measure the child needed them while working on various aspects of a central theme. The themes were often suggested by the children themselves.⁵⁵ While this method made the use of textbooks entirely superfluous, it made the use of large numbers of reference books mandatory.⁵⁶

The "Complex Programme" introduced by GUS was based on the study of man's labour, i.e., his struggle against nature with the help of tools of his own invention, and the study of his social relations resulting from labour. Thus, the study of labour was fused with the study of the laws of nature, and of social superstructures to which the former gave rise. The whole programme was drawn

⁵⁵Pedagogicheskii Slovar', I, 547.

⁵⁶See chapter "The Role of History in the 1920's", p. 44.

up under three central headings: Nature, Labour, Society, and provided a schematic and condensed form for the new culture and Marxist Weltanschauung.⁵⁷

Implicitly accepting the Gestalt theory of child psychology, the partisans of the complex programme maintained that it is not in the nature of the child to dissect the phenomena of life into separate systems as represented by separate school subjects, and that, therefore, it was necessary to take whole "slices" or "chunks" of life as they appear in reality, and study these. Such "chunks" were called "complexes", and were introduced into the curriculum as a series of themes under titles such as "Our City", "Autumn Activities in the Village", etc.

On March 14, 1923 the new GUS programme was officially approved, and became known as the "White Book". It was not made compulsory however.⁵⁸ Owing perhaps to the increasing peasant resistance to the Bolshevik government, the new programme was heavily oriented towards village life and activities.

History as a subject was eliminated altogether in 1921 and was studied only incidentally, in relation to a particular theme under consideration. Social studies or

⁵⁷Cf. Krupskaya, "K voprosu o Programmakh", Pedagogicheskie sochineniya, III, 34-44; "O Kompleksakh", Ibid., pp. 146-148.

⁵⁸One of the major reasons for this was the fact that the programme was "regionalized". See chapter "The Role of History in the 1920's", p. 46f.

obshchestvovedenie took the place of history. It consisted mainly of a political analysis of current events or sovremennost' and problems of interest for workers, and particularly peasants, with only occasional elucidation of their historical antecedents, under titles such as "Liberation of peasants in Russia", "Land laws", "Peasant struggles in the West", and so forth; and was very often taught by reliable Party members or Komsomol leaders with no teaching qualifications. Many of the qualified teachers however, continued teaching history, sometimes even using the old textbooks.⁵⁹

A new programme, the so-called "Red Book", appeared in 1925 with a greater stress on city life and problems of manufacturing.⁶⁰ The demands on the teachers for correlating all learning with the immediate environment of the child was relaxed.

In contrast to the former version of the GUS programme in which "contemporary events" and the study of the past were lumped together, the "Red Book" tended to separate "history" (istoriya) from "contemporary events" (sovremennost').⁶¹ There was little or no organic integration of the overall course of studies, although the

⁵⁹A favourite textbook on Russian history was that of Ilovaisky.

⁶⁰Programmy dlya pervogo kontsentra shkol II stupeni (Moscow-Leningrad: Giz., 1925), pp. 20-36.

⁶¹For a fuller description of the GUS programme on social studies see Appendix I.

historical material was abundant and fairly systematically organized.

In 1926 the GUS programme went even further in this direction. It called for the introduction of two parallel courses: social studies and sovremennost'. This plan came to be known as the "ABC of sovremennost'", and took the place of the former politgramota, a course in political literacy introduced in 1923 by the Glavsotsvos⁶² as a substitute for the social studies.⁶³

The purpose of social studies was to acquaint the pupils with the benefits of the Revolution, and to indoctrinate them in Communist ideology. It was therefore subject to especially careful scrutiny by the Party. The results have not always been most effective. The testimony of a former Soviet student about his personal experience seems worth quoting in this reference.

History was not taught at all, its place being taken by "social science", which was usually taught by a member of the Communist Party. In the school which I attended it was taught by a Party member who had completed a Party school and one year at the Communist Academy. The social science teacher seemed to be the only one in the school who adhered strictly to the brigade method. He would give the class a theme, which was 'worked out' by groups of from six to eight students. The 'working out' - i.e., reading of material in the textbook - was preceded

⁶²Central Administration of Socialist Education and Polytechnical Instruction of the NKP RSFSR, founded in 1921.

⁶³A. Ioannisiani, "Istoriya v shkole II stupeni", I-M, III (1927), 161, 163.

by a brief explanation by the teacher. At best, the material was read over and more or less discussed. Generally, however, the 'working out' consisted in the members of the various groups taking turns telling anecdotes - including anti-Soviet ones. After that, someone with a proclivity for this tedious and incomprehensible subject - social science was so regarded by the students - studied the material and answered examination questions for the whole group. That was the brigade or laboratory method in its pure form, 'according to directive'.⁶⁴

The original intention of the Party to formulate a single Unified Labour School which would provide equal training and equal opportunity to all children of both sexes up to the age of seventeen was altogether abandoned under the impact of practical considerations and necessities of the economic life of the country. Flexibility of the school, and its adaptability to the dictates of the economic conditions of the nation must therefore be regarded as a general principle of the Soviet school. M.F. Shabaeva, a Soviet doctor of pedagogical sciences, supports this view.

When the Fourteenth Congress of the Communist Party in December 1925 initiated the socialist industrialization of the country, . . . a more urgent need was created than in the first years of the NEP for qualified specialists, engineers, craftsmen, and so forth and also for workers who have mastered definite general and technical skills.

It was necessary to accelerate the raising of the general cultural level of the people, and to train manpower for the industrialization of the economy.⁶⁵

⁶⁴V.D. Samarin, "The Soviet School, 1936-1942", Soviet Education, ed. G.L. Kline, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 27. Although this account confirms similar accounts heard by the author, it does not follow that the situation was the same everywhere and that the course of social science was generally a failure.

⁶⁵Konstantinov, p. 389.

The introduction of the Five Year Plans caused further radical changes in the Soviet system of education. The plenary session of the Central Committee of the Party in 1928 and 1929 brought forth new resolutions on the reorganization of the whole system of training the necessary manpower for the national economy.⁶⁶ All the institutions of professional and technical training, which until that time were controlled by the NKP, in 1929 were transferred to the jurisdiction of various branches of administration of the national economy. In due time, when ministries were reintroduced once again in the 1930's, these schools were placed under their administration, not unlike before the Revolution.

The needs of the industry had also other far reaching effects. Effective training of technicians, professional men and scientists imposed the need that the secondary schools train candidates capable of successfully pursuing studies of higher learning. Fully aware of this fact the Central Committee demanded in 1928 the radical improvement in the teaching at secondary school level. "Make sure", the Party resolution stated, "that those who graduate from secondary schools are prepared for entrance to the Institutes of Higher Learning".⁶⁷

⁶⁶KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, II, 518-524; 632-642.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 523.

On February 5, 1929, the government of the RSFSR issued a decree on the establishment of a Ten Year Secondary School preparatory primarily for university entrance. The Central Committee, at its plenary session of the same year, took note of the fact that its earlier resolutions had not been fully carried out, and demanded a radical improvement in the school work and full revision of the curriculum of secondary general education.

The rapid changes of the first decade of Soviet rule were paralleled in Soviet education. The arrival of the second decade had brought no promise of stability. The old Russian school was abolished on ideological grounds, but the subsequent changes and modifications were determined by the concrete dictates imposed by the economic and political realities of the nation. Already at that time there were clear indications that the Soviet school would ultimately be shaped into its present form not by ideology but primarily by practical reality.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROLE OF HISTORY IN THE 1920's

Under dictatorships of any kind, and in periods when premium is given to ideological indoctrination, history is generally regarded as a subject par excellence for the training of loyal citizens. This was particularly true in the Soviet Union where the regime was founded on an ideology which pretends to be based on a scientific study of the historical development of mankind.

In the early period of Bolshevik rule, at a time before cynical opportunists gained full control of the Party, Marxist ideology and humanistic idealism did not exclude each other. This was particularly true in the field of education. Krupskaya's attitude towards the problem of teaching history, or more precisely, social studies, is a good illustration of this point.

Talking about social-political education at a conference of the NKP in December 1922, Krupskaya argued that a definite social-political world outlook should pervade the whole school atmosphere. This outlook ought to be the foundation of new "social instincts, consciousness and habits"; it should also serve as a criterion for the evaluation of all social phenomena; finally, collective

work, both physical and mental, within and outside the school, should also be based on this world outlook.

The teaching of social studies should be based on the experience of the pupils and should strive to help them to recognize the events of contemporary life and find their place in society.¹

The study of contemporary life, and of contemporary social and economic problems on the basis of the Marxist world outlook remained the major concern of the teaching of social studies until Stalin intervened in 1934.²

History before the Revolution was nationalistic, fostering national pride and patriotism. There was, of course, no room in the history curriculum for such alien concepts as "class-struggle", "international proletarian solidarity" and "dialectical inevitability". On the whole, according to Th. Woody, textbooks did not extend beyond 1894.

This was a convenient date; it left plenty of time to enlarge on the virtues of the ruling house in the past and the heroism of the leaders and men in such events as the Crimean War; and did not touch such troublesome subjects as the Revolution of 1905. Earlier revolts of Stenka Razin and Pougatcheff [sic] were portrayed in despicable terms. Students were allowed to learn nothing of the labour movements, except as they gained a knowledge of it surreptitiously.³

¹Cited in E.T. Rudneva, "Konferentsii opytno-pokazatel'nykh uchrezhdenii Narkomprosa", Na Putyakh k Novoi Shkole, I (1923), 140.

²The essentially ideological role of the school as a whole was modified at the end of the Civil War. (See chapter "The First Decade of Conflicts and Changes", p. 17.) We are concerned here with the teaching of history alone.

³Th. Woody, New Minds: New Men? (New York: MacMillan, 1932), p. 217.

The Bolshevik government, on the other hand, was committed to a totally different ideology.

The Communist Manifesto had categorically declared that the workers have no fatherland. In his speech "The Proletariat and War" Lenin stated in 1914 that the concept of otechestvo (fatherland) was given in the Communist Manifesto as an "historical category, which has become superfluous at some determined stage of social development".⁴

While condemning "bourgeois patriotism", Lenin left the door open, however, for a new type of "patriotism". Already in 1908 he wrote:

The fatherland, i.e., the given political, cultural and social environment, is the most powerful factor in the class struggle of the proletariatThe proletariat cannot treat the political, social and cultural conditions of its struggle with indifference or equanimity, consequently, it cannot remain indifferent to the destiny of its country. However, it is interested in the destiny of its own country only in as much as it affects its class struggle, and not by virtue of some bourgeois "patriotism" which sounds altogether indecent on the lips of a social-democrat.⁵

Lenin's relativistic concept of patriotism was not fully understood by his followers. At the Sixth Party Congress, held in 1917, patriotism was declared a concept

⁴V.I. Lenin, "Referat na Temu'Proletariat i Voina' 1 (14) oktyabrya 1914 g.", Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii (5th ed.; Moscow, 1962), XXVI, 32.

⁵"Voinstvuyushchii militarizm i antimilitaristskaya taktika sotsial-demokratii", ibid. XVII, 190.

of "bourgeois ideology" devised by the bourgeois elements for the purpose of distracting the youth from "active participation in the economic and political struggle of the working class".⁶

N.S. Timashev, an American scholar of Russian origin, maintains that the logical counterpart to the Communist programme of World Revolution was an anti-national programme within Russia. In support of his views he quotes Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar for Education, who said in 1923:

The teaching of history which would stimulate the children's national pride, their nationalistic feeling, and the like must be banned, as well as such teaching of the subject which would point at stimulating examples in the past for initiation in the present. For I do not know what kind of thing is a healthy love for one's fatherland. Let us look at things objectively and recognize that we need internationalistic, all-human education.⁷

In accordance with such ideas the teaching of Russian history and of the history of Russian literature was discontinued.

The official thesis was that up to Lenin's birth and the rise of the labour movement, Russian history had been all chaos, darkness, and oppression and not worth being memorized⁸

⁶"O soyuzakh molodezhi", KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK. (7th ed.; Moscow, 1954), I, 386. Allowance must be made, however, for the fact that this statement was made before the Bolsheviks gained power.

⁷The Great Retreat (New York: Dutton and Co., 1946), p. 165.

⁸Ibid.

There was little in the former history textbooks for the proletarians to use, particularly in the textbooks of Russian history. The history of peasant uprisings against their feudal exploiters was short indeed, and had not yet been properly written. Besides, the new regime was not one belonging to the peasants in the first place. The history of proletarian and socialist struggle, on the other hand, was even shorter, and very little had been written about it either. And above all, the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat had only hardly begun. The real "class warfare"⁹ reached its apex under the Bolshevik regime, not before. Therefore, the only history which truly counted for the Russian Marxists was contemporary history, the study of current events.

In the years of civil war and foreign intervention, patriotism was indispensable, as Ioannisiani stated in 1927, "to impress upon the growing generation the pathos of the fight, and to prepare the pupils for an active participation in that struggle".¹⁰ But this was a new kind of patriotism; a patriotism fostered by the study of the current achievements of the revolutionary masses - however slanted a picture may or may not have been drawn by the teachers of social studies - and by the study of carefully

⁹Reference is made to the administrative and physical liquidations of the bourgeoisie and the Kulaks.

¹⁰A. Ioannisiani, "Istoriya v shkole II stupeni", I-M, III (1927), 154.

selected examples from world history and the revolutionary traditions which culminated in the October Revolution.

The task of political indoctrination in the school was greatly aided by all the media of mass communication, art and drama. Between 1917 and 1925, many plays were presented on the Soviet stage about historical revolutions of other ages and countries which served as prototypes of the revolution in Russia as well as about revolutionary heroes from the Russian past.¹¹ Thus the political and ideological indoctrination of the Russian population in general and of Soviet school children in particular was carried out on a massive scale by all media available to the new regime and did not depend on the teaching of history alone.

As it was pointed out in the previous chapter history as a subject matter was abolished in 1921 and replaced by social studies.¹² There were several reasons for this measure.

¹¹Cf. H.W.L. Dana, "Patriotic Plays in Soviet Russia", The Russian Review (November, 1941), 65-73. A play called Cromwell in 1921; a play about the early uprising in England called Wat Tyler in 1922; Spartacus in 1923; Zagmuk, a play about a revolt in ancient Babylon in 1925; and a number of plays dealing with the French Revolution and the Paris Commune, were presented throughout the 1920's.

¹²See chapter "The First Decade of Conflicts and Changes", p. 26f.

Although new history textbooks were hastily prepared, they could hardly be used on a massive scale even if they had been published in sufficient numbers. In the hands of hostile teachers such books could easily be, and often were, held to ridicule and used against the new regime rather than in its favour. In the hands of loyal but inadequately trained teachers the new textbooks did not fare much better.¹³

The trend among Marxist leaders of education was in the direction of progressive education and the method of complexes which proscribed any teaching by subject matter. Also, as pointed out, Russia's past still had to be re-written from a Marxist point of view if it was to be of any use in the ideological training of the masses.

Not least important among the factors contributing toward the elimination of history as a subject matter from the school curriculum was the general state of Russian historical scholarship. In the first years of Soviet power few historians were adherents of Marxist philosophy. At the same time most of those who did subscribe to Marxism were actively engaged in the civil war. As a result, the faculties of history were staffed by "bourgeois" historians like S.F. Platonov, R. Yu. Vipper, Yu.V. Gauthier, M.M.

¹³A more detailed study on this problem will be made in the chapter "History Textbooks".

Bogoslovskii, M.K. Lyubavskii, and others, some of whom were openly hostile towards the new regime.¹⁴

According to a Soviet source, in the period from 1917 to 1924,

The whole historical front was impregnated with surviving idealists and vulgar-materialistic concepts of history. The leadership of historical scholarship was often in the hands of men far removed from Marxism. Scientific research and university chairs of history were often under the leadership of active anti-Marxists. The old bourgeois historians in their works and lectures occasionally attacked Marxism and spoke openly against the proletarian dictatorship.¹⁵

The representatives of the old Russian historical school recognized neither Pokrovsky, nor his historical concepts. Precisely because of this, the development of historical scholarship was completely stymied for some time, maintains a former Soviet scholar.¹⁶ In the universities, the faculties of history were shut down. The Faculty of History and Philology was replaced by a Faculty of Social Sciences with a Social-Pedagogical Section where only little history was taught. This faculty was later also shut down and its place was taken by the Faculty of

¹⁴A. Avtorkhanov, "Polozhenie istoricheskoi nauki v SSSR", Materialy (Munich, 1951), p.8. Another group of historians emigrated, including such important figures as P.N. Milyukov, P.B. Struve, A.A. Kizevetter, M.I. Rostovtsev, and G.B. Vernadskii.

¹⁵A.M. Pankratova, "Sovetskaya Istoricheskaya Nauka za 25 let", 25 let istoricheskoi nauki v SSSR (Moscow-Leningrad, 1942), p. 12.

¹⁶Avtorkhanov, p. 7.

Ethnology with several subsections, history being one of its branches.¹⁷

Juxtaposed to this situation was the fact that the Russian Marxists did not regard history as a legitimate discipline per se. Lenin once stated that the study of history is needed only for the understanding of the contemporary events from a Marxist point of view, and from the point of view of the Party, and that without a knowledge of history one cannot be an active participant in the contemporary events nor understand their revolutionary significance.¹⁸ In a later debate on the course of history a leading historian-methodologist from the NKP, L. Mamet, claimed that history has never been an end in itself in the Soviet School; it was not on the curriculum "out of love for the past", but only in so far as it proved to be "an indispensable link"¹⁹ in the social and political education of children.

If it were proved that one could discharge the tasks of social-political education without a knowledge of the historical past, regardless of all the love of

¹⁷S.S. Krivtsov, "Mesto istorii v programmakh obshchestvenno-ekonomicheskikh vuzov", I-M, II (1926), 225.

¹⁸Cf. "Lektsiya o gosudarstve", Pravda, January 18, 1929. See also Polnoe sobranie, XXXIX, 64-84.

¹⁹The "other links" included the other school subjects, mass meetings, and, above all, the media of mass communication and mass entertainment.

the historians for history, one would have to stand up against history in school.²⁰

While there was a general agreement among Marxist educators and historians about the ultimate goal of social studies, no unanimity was reached about the best methods of attaining that goal. Already at the plenary session of the GUS held in January 1922,²¹ more than a year before the official introduction of the "White Book", the method of complexes was attacked by the Leningrad Regional Council of Education. According to L.P. Bushchik, a Soviet historian, objection was based on the grounds that the new programme was not the result of carefully controlled experiments and application in the class room.²² Many schools continued teaching on the basis of subject-matter programmes and social studies remained on their curriculum as a separate subject.²³

In 1924-25, a group from Leningrad published a five volume collection of articles which was used in many schools as a teacher manual. This work served at the same time as a popularizer of the materialistic concept of

²⁰L. Mamet, "Istoriya i obshchestvenno-politicheskoe vospitanie", I-M, XIV (1929), 169.

²¹See chapter "The First Decade", p. 24.

²²Ocherk razvitiya shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovaniya v SSSR (Moscow, 1961), p. 206.

²³Cf. Programmy dlya shkol I i II stupeni (Ivanovo-Voznesensk, 1923).

history, and played an important role in the ideological and theoretical re-education of many teachers. The book was highly selective and included only those "facts which had been processed by the methods of Marx".²⁴ The authors seem to have been in agreement with the spirit if not with the letter of the GUS programme; they also regarded life as a whole, and deduced the aims of education from the new social realities.

The task of our time, stemming from the whole structure of life of the contemporary society, is to fuse social science with contemporary life in order to understand the environment and consciously to build life on solid foundations.²⁵

The GUS programme divided the course of social studies into two sections: (1) sovremennost' ("contemporary age" or "present age") and (2) istoriya ("history" or "study of the past").²⁶ This innovation, and the relative importance attached to one or the other of these created general dissent and a long conflict on the historical front.

Support for the GUS programme in general and sovremennost' in particular was given especially by the partisans of the so-called "sociological current of historical-methodological thought", represented by men such

²⁴N.G. Tarasov (Ed.), Obshchestvovedenie (5 vols.; Petrograd:Seyatel', 1924-1925), I, XV.

²⁵Ibid., p. IX.

²⁶This question is dealt with more thoroughly in Appendix I.

as B.N. Zhavoronkov, N. Geinike, A. Gartvig and S.P. Singalevich, maintains Bushchik.²⁷ These men argued that the revolutionary significance of social studies as conceived by the GUS lay in the fact that the material for the study of social life was not taken from books but from first hand observation by the pupils of life around them. Instead of textbooks, the school children read newspapers and pamphlets issued by various Party, Government and Industry establishments. For this group, the study of present age was all important, and they suggested that only sovremennost' be taught, at least to younger children, and that istoriya ought to be omitted altogether from the Seven Year School.

The exclusive importance attached to the study of the present age was not limited to social studies. The whole GUS programme was centred around sovremennost'.²⁸

²⁷Bushchik, p. 207.

²⁸Krupskaya, for example, praised the authors of an ABC for having stressed sovremennost'. Cf. N.K. Krupskaya "Retsenziya", Pedagogicheskie Sochineniya (Moscow: APN RSFSR, 1962) X, 199.

In a book review of the works of S. Ch. Parker on the methods of teaching, Krupskaya expressed in 1922 great sympathy for the American progressive methods of teaching. Referring to the teaching of history, she quoted Parker as arguing that this subject must not be taught in a chronological order, "as it is always taught", but in a "psychological order". The child has no conception of great spans of time, therefore it is necessary at first to provide him with material from contemporary life, only gradually, and much later introduce him to chronology. Cf. ibid., X, 109.

Having read the manuscript of S. Dzyubinskii's article "Na novye resly", Krupskaya praised the author for drawing a line of demarcation between "objective historians" advocating systematic history and teachers of social studies who "correctly" emphasized the importance of the present age.

The author is perfectly right, when stating that the teaching of social studies must be oriented towards sovremennost' and that the vital goal is the correct explanation of contemporary reality; and this goal should for no reason be sacrificed in the name of the tradition that a course in history must be strictly systematic.²⁹

As a result of the stress on the present age, and because the study of the past was regarded necessary only to the extent it helped explain the present, the study of chronologically more distant historical eras, such as Ancient Greece, Roman Empire, Middle Ages, Kievan Rus and the Times of Troubles, was largely omitted from the curriculum of elementary and secondary schools.³⁰

The study of the current events, however, was not a simple matter. Apart from well qualified and reliable teachers, large selections of books, pamphlets, newspapers, audio-visual material and, preferably, collections of documents were required; both of which were dismally lacking. The supplying of each individual teacher with

²⁹"Otzyv na rukopisi statei V. Devyatkova i S. Dzyubinskogo", ibid., X, 158f.

³⁰Cf. Sovremennost' i obshchestvovedenie v shkole (Moscow:Novaya Moskva, 1923).

such a variety of materials would create difficulties even in a technologically advanced and economically affluent country. In the devastated USSR of the 1920's this problem was immense indeed. But the challenge was met with ingenuity and imagination. B.N. Zhavoronkov and S.N. Dzyubinskii, historian-methodologists from Moscow, suggested that textbooks be replaced by a "Mobile Laboratory in Social Studies", not unlike the mobile museums of atheism and of the Revolution and the mobile libraries which were very popular in the Soviet Union at that time. With their collaboration more than one hundred such laboratories were organized.³¹

The library personnel could conveniently give an emergency in-service training to many unqualified teachers of social studies recruited from loyal Party members.

The mobile laboratories of social studies were also of particular value for the planners of the GUS programmes because of the "regionalization" of the curriculum.³² The programme of 1925 stated that:

The scope, breadth, and order of presentation of one or another problem of political economy can be to a large extent varied by the teachers themselves, depending on the interest and readiness of pupils and the objective availability of time for these problems.³³

³¹Cf. B.N. Zhavoronkov and S.N. Dzyubinskii, Podvizhnaya laboratoriya po obshchestvovedeniyu (Leningrad: GIZ, 1925), in Bushchik, p. 208.

³²This was one of the main reasons why the programme was not made compulsory. See chapter "The First Decade", p. 26.

³³Programmy dlya pervogo kontsentra shkol vtoroi stupeni (Moscow-Leningrad: GIZ, 1925), p. 45f.

The principle of regionalism was based on sound pedagogical reasoning. It was believed that the material to be studied ought to be taken from the child's own environment, and that it should be concrete and not beyond his mental and physical capabilities. Consequently, the school programme varied from region to region and often from one locality to another. As Krupskaya pointed out,

The material on which the school curriculum is established ought to be different in a village school from what it is at a school in industrial areas.³⁴

She spoke of "individualization" of the school programme. In her opinion, the curriculum was a "mere skeleton which should be also dressed into the flesh of local material."³⁵ Each region and each town had its own problems of production, a different past and different social life. The GUS programme, therefore, had to be intimately integrated with the life and interests of local communities, as well as with those of individual children, she maintained.

Regional curricula were formulated at various teachers congresses in close cooperation with the regional executive committees (Ispolkom), local land departments, health boards, representatives of experimental agronomy stations, factory managers, people's commissariates, and

³⁴Krupskaya, X, 476.

³⁵Ibid., III, 86.

other local authorities.³⁶ The proposed local plan was then sent back through the proper channels to the GUS for evaluation and authorization by the NKP.³⁷

The close cooperation of educationists with the local administrative and other authorities made the study of sovremennost' meaningful and realistic. And in order to assure that the contemporary events receive a correct interpretation from the point of view of the Party, teachers of social studies were often recruited among reliable local Party members or leaders of the Komsomol movement.³⁸

On the educational Olympus in the meanwhile the struggle between the supporters of sovremennost' and istoriya continued relentlessly. The question raised in the mid 1920's was whether istoriya should be taught independently from sovremennost'.

At one of the conferences of the GUS in 1926 it was again proposed to establish history as a separate section of social studies, but the suggestion was rejected. The delegates feared that the old methods and the use of old textbooks might be revived. Pokrovsky seemed particularly concerned lest such a threat become fact.

³⁶Cf., ibid., X, 477.

³⁷Ibid., III, 87. This practice became redundant after 1927 when the new GUS plan became "compulsory to some extent".

³⁸See chapter "The First Decade", p. 27. The success with which these unqualified men taught varied from individual to individual, and a case could be easily made to prove either the failure or the success of this enterprise.

Should history ever be reinstated, it must be given the same careful consideration and investigation as we give to formerly expelled members of the Party who seek re-admission What kind of history? Why history? History for what, for what purpose? . . . Some educators are rejoicing that there will once again be czars, ministers, reformers, etc. . . . That kind of history will never be taught again.³⁹ [*italics mine*]

Pokrovsky was, of course, wrong. His prophecy turned out to be incorrect; only two years after his death in 1932, precisely the type of history he most feared returned once again.⁴⁰

But this volte-face did not come like a bolt out of the blue sky, although it created a great deal of confusion on the historical front because of the unexpected nature of its implications. For more than a decade the Marxist historians were split over simple methodological questions, and the opportunistic leaders played one group against the other and introduced measures advocated by neither.

The great debate centred around the methods of achieving the goal to which both factions subscribed, i.e., to educate a generation of Soviet citizens with a Marxist-Leninist Weltanschauung.

Opposing the GUS programme was a group of historians and historian-methodologists from Leningrad.⁴¹

³⁹I-M, IV (1927), 196.

⁴⁰See chapter "Stalin's Intervention", p. 131f.

⁴¹As far as can be ascertained this group included the following historians: A.E. Kudryavtsev, O.V. Trakhtenberg, A.I. Gukovsky, N.A. Rozhkov, S.S. Krivtsov and P. Kushner.

Their objections were based principally on the argument that the official programme failed to achieve its avowed purpose. One of the leading professors from this group, S.S. Krivtsov, stated that during his teaching experience at the Second Moscow State University between 1922 and 1926 seven different plans had been introduced, and that, as a result, his colleagues became weary and indifferent towards the plans, "knowing that nothing would come of them".⁴² He suggested that a History of Russia and of Marxism as interpreted by Lenin be introduced as separate courses.⁴³

Others in this group were embittered by the fact that systematic history was sacrificed in favour of the topical course of social studies. Historical material was selected arbitrarily, they maintained, and grouped around a few "main" themes, and the whole historical process was "dressed up and schematized". Whole periods were left out, many details and events simply ignored. The individual development of nations and states was not studied at all, they claimed, while arbitrary facts were selected as "classical examples" for the illustration of "typical"

⁴²Krivtsov's statement appeared in the minutes of the meeting of the Society of Marxist Historians in I-M, II (1926), 234. According to him, at the entrance to VUZ, no history of Russia, history of the USSR, or Party History was required from the students but only Constitution, Economic Politics and Political Economics. Although Krivtsov had taught in Moscow at least until 1926, he seems to have belonged to the so-called Leningrad group.

⁴³Ibid., p. 232.

socio-economic formations. "True 'concrete' history is not taught", declared a member of the Leningrad group, "all historical courses are more or less 'sociological'."⁴⁴

A.E. Kudryavtsev objected to the attempts of some educational leaders to have istoriya absorbed by sovremennost'. He proposed the drafting of a syllabus in which the study of the past would help to understand the present, and vice versa; the two parts being complementary to each other.⁴⁵

Similar views were expressed at the first All-Union Congress of Teachers in January 1925 and at the first All-Russian Conference of the Schools of II degree in July 1925.⁴⁶ On both occasions, the participants argued, however, that the study of history as a separate subject was meaningless for children and early teenagers, and they advocated the use of history for explaining the present age, and providing it with a better perspective.

Opposed to the Leningrad group, and supporting the GUS plan and its emphasis on sovremennost' was a group of scholars in Moscow.⁴⁷ They regarded history only as

⁴⁴P. Kushner (Knyshev), "Nuzhno li izuchat' obshchestvennye formy?", I-M, VI (1927), 209.

⁴⁵Cf. A.E. Kudryavtsev, Ocherednye voprosy metodiki obshchestvovedeniya (Leningrad: GIZ, 1925), passim.

⁴⁶Cf. "Voprosy shkoly vtoroi stupeni", Trudy pervoi vserossiiskoi konferentsii shkol II stupeni 5 iyulya 1925 g. (Moscow, 1926), passim.

⁴⁷This group counted among its numbers the following historians: B.N. Zhavoronkov, S.N. Dzyubinskii, M.N. Kovalenskii, N. Geinike, A. Gartvig and S.P. Singalevich.

incidental to and explanatory of the contemporary life and current events which they considered to be the "fundamental material of the course and source material for study."⁴⁸

The Moscow "school", as this group came to be known, accused the supporters of systematic history of having dissociated education⁴⁹ and instruction,⁵⁰ and of preserving the latter for the school while relinquishing the former to society, i.e., to the child's extra-school environment. "This is the reason of the demands for a systematic history course separated from the 'course' of contemporary events", claimed Dzyubinskii during a heated debate.⁵¹ However, the arguments advanced by this historian suggest that there was little if any difference of a fundamental nature between the Moscow "school" and the Leningrad group. The divergence of opinion was based purely on methodology, the latter group generally favouring a subject-matter approach to teaching and the former advocating the unconditional use of the "complex-project" method. Speaking for the Moscow group, Dzyubinskii said:

Marxist-Leninist world outlook can be developed only if the present is perceived through a prism

⁴⁸S.P. Singalevich, Obshchestvovedenie v trudovoi shkole (Moscow, 1926), p. 24.

⁴⁹i.e., Vospitanie, meaning "character upbringing".

⁵⁰i.e., Obrazovanie, meaning "intellectual training".

⁵¹I-M, IX (1928), 136.

of historical analysis, but for this it is necessary that the historical material be not separated needlessly from the present; it is most expedient to construct the material of recent history in a 'complex' fashion; in this way, gradually, the pupils will learn how to think dialectically - to look at social events not statically but dynamically; whereas, a systematic course in history, separated from the present, would be drained of its living practical meaning and would turn sovremennost' into a wretched supplement of politgramota.⁵²

Pokrovsky and L.P. Mamet seem to have been caught in the cross fire. The Moscow "school", supporting the GUS programme, of which, it will be remembered, Pokrovsky was a co-author,⁵³ attacked the latter for having suggested that "occasionally it is necessary to study the past in order to find there the key for understanding the present".⁵⁴

Neither Pokrovsky nor Mamet, however, had in fact any desire to see history reintroduced as a separate subject for its own sake. Mamet regarded history as a mere "indispensable link" in the ideological training of children.⁵⁵ Pokrovsky adamantly refused to permit anything but "episodical" studies, at least for children below the age of fourteen. He actually believed that a systematic

⁵²Ibid., p. 137.

⁵³See chapter "The First Decade", p. 23f, and for more details, chapter "Pokrovsky and Stalin".

⁵⁴Cf. M.N. Pokrovsky, "Obshchestvovedenie vo 2 kontsentre II stupeni", Voprosy shkoly II stupeni Eds. Mlinnik and Esipov, (Moscow, 1926). Cited by Dzyubinskii, I-M, IX (1928), 137.

⁵⁵See above, p. 40.

course in history should not be introduced below the level of the Rabfak, and the age of seventeen.⁵⁶

Pokrovsky maintained that in the secondary school the pupils should first be trained to observe the social life around them, after which the teacher of social studies should show them the origins and development of the institutions which have been observed. In his opinion, this was the only correct Marxist dialectical approach to social studies.

I am afraid, if we formulate a descriptive course of history, although it is new, it will be very similar to the old course Formerly, there were holy czars, ministers and philanthropists. Today we have great rebels, revolutionaries and socialists In a sense this is progress. It is better that children learn to understand the Pugachev rebellion than the terrible Nakaz of Catherine II. That is better, of course. But, it was not necessary to spill so much blood to achieve such petty results.⁵⁷ [italics mine]

While the struggle for and against the GUS went on in its confused way, some leaders of the Party, particularly Stalin, Molotov, and Kaganovich, entertained ideas of their own about history in general and the teaching of history in particular independently from the great debate on the historical front. A. Ryndich, spokesman of the Party in the Society of Marxist Historians, defined the views of the Party leaders.

⁵⁶I-M, IV (1927), 198.

⁵⁷Ioannisiani, p. 167.

It is precisely history which is that academic subject par excellence which provides the richest material for the formation of a Marxist world outlook and for the mastery of a Marxist methodology by the student.⁵⁸

This statement seems to have vindicated the Leningrad group. However, while the Leningrad group advocated equality in stress on the two parts of social studies, i.e., istoriya and sovremennost', Ryndich, it will be noticed, argued in favour of history, as opposed to contemporary studies altogether. Ryndich went further. He explained that the Party wanted to indoctrinate the students with a Marxist explanation of the past and of the development of society in order to "make them understand the need for various contemporary and future measures by the Party".⁵⁹ [italics mine] To achieve this goal, it was necessary that the historians select carefully certain definite, concrete and factual material not only from the economic, but also from political, legal and other history, he argued. At the same time, Ryndich continued,

It is well known that the teaching of history, and particularly that of the history of Russia . . . for whatever reason . . . turns into a teaching of the history of economic development It is clear that the history of economic life, the history of economic development must be given a central place in our courses, otherwise we would not be Marxists [italics mine]. But at the same time it is

⁵⁸A Ryndich, "Laboratornyi plan i prepodavanie istorii", I-M, III (1927), 173.

⁵⁹Ibid.

also clear that if we want to arm the student with a Marxist world outlook we cannot limit ourselves to the branches of economic history.⁶⁰

Ryndich condemned the "widespread" belief that the teaching of history will achieve its ideological goal only if the Marxist principles of historical development are studied topically. He argued that such practice had led to the undesirable situation that students "master naked schemes and generalizations but cannot illustrate them with concrete examples". He suggested that;

. . . Only a systematic study of history, only a systematic formulation of the course, i.e., definite conclusions and generalizations to be worked out by the students on the basis of a study of the ensemble [sovokupnost'] of events and facts of a given historical epoch, only such a study can arm the student with a Marxist world outlook and can help him master the Marxist methodology.⁶¹

A.V. Shestakov, an historian who, we shall see later, eventually came to great prominence, openly pleaded with the assembled scholars and methodologists to heed the words of "Comrade Ryndich, one of the few Party members among us".⁶² His warning, however, seems to have gone unheeded.

Pokrovsky, who was aware that someone, or some group, in high authority wanted to separate history from social studies, surprisingly, dismissed the suggestion

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²I-M, III (1927), 182.

without bothering to elaborate by stating simply that, "some people in high authority maintain that the course of history should be separated from social studies".⁶³ This neglect to pay more attention to the warning signs, at least in Pokrovsky's case, may be explained by the fact that he enjoyed a great reputation at that time as an orthodox Marxist historian whose views had been approved by Lenin personally.⁶⁴ Briefly, then, what were those views?

History, for Marx, served three purposes: first, in a selective form it justified his economic theories; secondly, it "demonstrated" the "dialectical" progress of society through class-struggle; and thirdly, it provided him with a "proof" of the inevitability of a world proletarian revolution and the eventual establishment of Communism.

However, in the Soviet Union of the 1920's not "Marxism" but "Marxism-Leninism", was the official dogma. Pokrovsky's error was not to follow up "Leninism" to its logical conclusion. While Lenin accepted Marx's views on history, he also added to it at least two new elements. For him, history served first, as justification of the

⁶³I-M, IV (1927), 197.

⁶⁴See chapter "Pokrovsky and Stalin", p. 185.

Party and its actions, and secondly, as defender of the interests of the Party and the Soviet State. As the Party became more expedient and pragmatic and less ideologically purist, the Leninist element played an increasingly more important role, culminating eventually in what became known as "Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism". Pokrovsky's main error was not to have grasped the full significance of the subtle evolution.

While the historians and methodologists were engaged in bitter and seemingly endless and petty debates and revisions, the teachers had the tedious daily task of applying what the gods of the theoretical Olympus prescribed for the classroom. Officially the course of social studies was saturated with "current events". In practice, however, sovremennost' was shown in a static, quasi clinical way, like a series of unconnected facts and individual events. The majority of teachers - themselves poorly trained in Marxism - could hardly be expected to look at events "dialectically" and to present them to the pupils "dynamically". The teachers failed to recognize the "inevitability" of certain events, nor were they able to predict the "inevitable" future. Few teachers understood or indeed accepted dialectics. The majority taught social studies "statically" rather than "dialectically", showing various social forms in cross section rather than as a

dynamically progressing class-struggle leading to "higher" social formations.⁶⁵

But, perhaps the most important factor was the insistence of the GUS authors on the study and explanation of sovremennost'. It was difficult, nay, impossible, to explain and, mainly, to justify such "current events" as the forceful introduction of industrialization, not to speak of the extermination and mass deportation of the Kulaks. For example, a careful study of the state budget - a prescribed part of the curriculum - revealed to any intelligent person, teacher and pupil alike, that the Kulaks, contrary to official claims, were not "parasites" but had in fact greatly contributed to the national economy. The role of the Kolkhoz and Sovkhoz in the struggle against the Kulaks was difficult to explain not only to children in the rural districts but also to city-dwelling pupils.⁶⁶ It was hardly possible to show that their introduction into the country's life was "inevitable" when it was clear to most people that they were created through drastic measures deliberately imposed from above. To avoid unnecessary trouble, many teachers selected such relatively non-committal and non-political, or at least non-ideological topics as the

⁶⁵Cf. I-M, IV (1927), 195.

⁶⁶Cf. B. Zhavoronkov, "Izuchenie derevni gorodskoyu shkolyu II stupeni". Trudy II MGU, n.p., n.d., passim.

mechanics of administration and description of various institutions, banks, post offices, etc.⁶⁷

By 1928 the sharp disagreement between the Leningrad and the Moscow educators on the school system in general and the role of history in particular largely subsided. The Leningrad group, after having supported "systematic history" for nine years, gradually changed to "topical history" based on the "contrast method" (istoriya-sovremennost') advocated by Kudryavtsev⁶⁸ and eventually accepted the full GUS programme.⁶⁹

The "Moscow group", on the other hand, embraced the principle of the new school a little too literally, and from its inception, unconditionally became identified with it. In a speech at the methodological section of the All-Union Conference of Marxist Historians, Zhavorankov defined the creed of this group:

We believe that the fundamental task of the school is labour education in the class spirit. We believe that the fundamental task of the school is the preparation of men who are needed in the period of industrialization and in the period of cultural revolution. We must underline this.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Mamet, p. 165.

⁶⁸See above, p. 50.

⁶⁹Cf. I-M, IX (1928), 136.

⁷⁰From the stenographic transcripts quoted by A. Ryndich, "Kommunisticheskoe vospitanie i shkol'noe obshchestvovedenie". I-M, XII (1929), 186.

While this statement of faith was in harmony with the Marxist principles adhered to in 1927, and was consistent with the policies inaugurated by Stalin at this time, when the Party line changed and the GUS programme fell out of favour the Moscow group was doomed. Indeed, in 1929 Ryndich quoted Zhavoronkov's seemingly innocuous statement and unleashed a flood of insinuations and accusations, a typical trademark of the Stalinist era:

"What kind of 'labour' education did the Moscow group have in mind? Bourgeois, petty bourgeois, or Communist? What kind of 'class' spirit? Of which class? Preparation for 'Industry and culture'! What industry, and what culture?" asked Ryndich in a rhetorical fury.

"Obviously Zhavoronkov and his colleagues have not understood the true nature of communist education," claimed the accuser.

If the people are to be educated only for the present, only for the day's immediate practical tasks, then school instruction is narrowed, and vulgarized For the solution of the tasks of today, there is no need for any kind of broad horizons; therefore, one can "educate people" without any historical perspective. The school of Zhavoronkov had educated narrow minded practical empiricists who were unnecessarily obliged to master the factual material of "the present", of today.⁷¹

This philippic was a clear indication that the Party line had changed. The former principle of "labour education in the class spirit" and training of industrial workers required by the Five Year Plan was no longer

⁷¹Ibid., p. 187.

sufficient. Events were rapidly following each other. Trotsky and his group were expelled, industrialization was imposed from above, collectivization of farms was not a natural and "inevitable" process and was too ruthlessly being carried out. In 1929 it was difficult to see and accept the "inevitability" of the "present age", of sovremennost' especially if one clung to the former concepts of Marxist analysis. The dynamic succession of contradictory events and measures and the zigzagging Party line could be "understood" and "explained" only through a dynamic dialectical method, and not through a strict adherence to the Marxist dogma. Thus Ryndich was right when he asked the rhetorical question:

Is it possible to speak of a correct understanding of the present, of an ability to be oriented in the complex and rapidly changing facts of the present age without mastering at least the fundamentals of the Marxist method?⁷²

The Marxists of the early 1920's, including Lenin, Krupskaya and Pokrovsky, had studied social phenomena in their development. Krupskaya wrote in 1923, when Lenin was still alive:

Only by knowing how one or another social phenomenon appeared, developed and changed can one understand the tendencies of its development and visualize its future development.⁷³

Towards the end of the 1920's, when Stalin had

⁷²Ibid., p. 187.

⁷³Krupskaya, X, 159.

consolidated his power, it became increasingly embarrassing for the dictator, and dangerous for his subjects, to inquire into the genesis of "current events", and the former stress on sovremennost' in social studies rapidly became a liability. Only dialectical juggling could henceforth explain and justify the "current events" imposed by the Party leadership.

CHAPTER THREE

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE SCHOOL

While the ideological and methodological debate went on among the Marxist intellectuals, the leadership of the Party was rapidly passing into the hands of a new class of practical bureaucrats carefully selected by Stalin and his personal followers. These men were quick to realize that World Revolution was not quite around the corner yet. The proletariat of the more advanced countries had failed to rally behind Soviet Russia during the intervention by overthrowing their governments; and where such attempts had been made, as in Hungary, all gains were rapidly lost. It was evident that for some time Russia would remain the only country with a "proletarian" government. It became therefore, mandatory to consolidate the gains by strengthening the Soviet Union economically and militarily, that is, by "building Socialism in one country", through a most rapid programme of industrialization.¹

In his article on "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists", Stalin argued in 1924 that the final victory of Socialism in Russia was impossible

¹Both parties in the classical debate of "Socialism in One Country" versus "Permanent Revolution" seem to have been fully aware of this domestic necessity.

without the combined efforts of the proletariat of several other countries. But at the same time, he maintained that World Revolution could be hastened through an effective Soviet assistance to the proletariat of other countries.²

In a special message addressed to the First All-Union Conference of Proletarian Students meeting in Moscow April 13-17, 1925, Stalin wrote:

It is not true that one cannot build Socialism in one country, in a country which has defeated and expelled the capitalists and the landlords. The country which has achieved the dictatorship of the proletariat, which disposes with immense resources and which enjoys the support of the proletarians of all countries - such a country can and must build Socialism³

Commenting on Lenin's distinction between "victory of socialism in a single country" and "victory on a world wide scale", Stalin argued that the success of socialism and of Socialist Construction in Russia was not without world-wide significance because "it would fundamentally improve the chances of revolution in other countries in the proletarian struggle against capitalism. The 'national' and international tasks of the proletariat of the USSR are

²I.V. Stalin, "Oktyabr'skaya revolyutsiya i taktika Russkikh kommunistov", Sochineniya (Moscow, 1954), VI 358-401, passim. "K pervoi vsesoyuznoi konferentsii proletarskogo studenchestva", ibid., VII, 85.

³Pravda, April 16, 1925. About 300 delegates took part, representing some 250 thousand students of VUZ, Tekhnikum and Rabfak. Stalin sent them a message on April 15, 1925.

fused into one general task of liberating the proletariat of all countries from capitalism".⁴ "The revolution in the USSR," he concluded, "is a part of World Revolution, its beginning and the base for its development."⁵

To make the Soviet Union a true and effective bastion of World Revolution, the Fifteenth Party Conference in 1926 decreed that,

It is necessary to strive in the relatively minimum historical period to catch up with, and then by-pass the level of industrial development of the advanced Capitalist countries.⁶

To "catch up with", let alone to "by-pass", the level of industrial development of the advanced countries, however, was by no means an easy task. In the past, the much less ambitious plans of Peter the Great had met with a whole array of insurmountable, objective and subjective obstacles.

For an underdeveloped country to raise itself without massive foreign investment, so to speak by its bootstraps, five factors are necessary: the four objective factors of 1) peace, 2) natural resources, 3) technical know-how, and 4) administrative know-how, and 5) the subjective factor of popular will.⁷

⁴"Eshche raz o sotsial-demokraticheskom uklone v nashei partii", ibid., IX, 27.

⁵Ibid., p. 28.

⁶KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, i resheniyakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK. (7th ed.; Moscow, 1954), II, 295.

⁷A warring country, unless it conducts its war on another continent (which an underdeveloped country hardly

But peaceful conditions, the first factor, and especially prospects of lasting peace, are generally not conducive to the arousal of popular will. Only through some "shock" can popular imagination be fired.

When the joint plenary session of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission drew attention, in summer 1927, to an alleged "danger from a counter-revolutionary war against the USSR" resulting from the "stabilization of Capitalism" and the "militarization" of the bourgeois economy through large capital investments,⁸

could hope to do) cannot develop a balanced economy. The peace necessary for its growth can be either guaranteed by realistic international agreements or by reliable defense, either military or geographic; but preferably both.

The need for natural resources is self-evident. Only countries with a long tradition of technical know-how, like the Swiss precision mechanics can, to some extent, dispense with the factor of natural resources. Without technical know-how, natural resources would remain entirely useless unless of course, they were rented to foreigners for exploitation.

Assuming the presence of the three preceding factors, expert administrative know-how is needed for the organization of various branches of industry and for the co-ordination of the general national economy.

Finally, without a strong popular will to attain ambitious goals the four factors could bring about total industrialization at best only gradually and through a long evolution, assuming technical and administrative know-how was acquired by an elite trained abroad.

⁸Pravda, August 10, 1927.

it was done no doubt with the purpose of creating a sense of urgency and shock needed for stimulating the Russian population to greater efforts. The economic stabilization of the Capitalist world was said to be accompanied by a political stabilization of the bourgeoisie. "All this makes a more aggressive policy towards the Soviet Union possible", concluded Pravda on August 10, 1927.⁹

As a direct consequence of this alleged danger, the adoption of two new policies was advocated: first, the world proletariat had to be alerted, and secondly, the USSR was to be made economically self-sufficient and militarily powerful. The ideological argument went as follows:

First, the establishment of Socialism in Russia meant that the world proletariat had finally acquired its own "Socialist Fatherland". Therefore, the defense of the Soviet Union no longer depended on the Russian people alone, but also on the whole world proletariat. Consequently, the former slogan of universal "brotherhood" should be replaced by a slogan of "active aid to the State of the Proletariat". This slogan was to be associated with slogans on the

⁹The breaking of relations between the proletarian state and "imperialism" was attributed to five causes:

1. The appearance and growth of the USSR.
2. Growth and development of Soviet economy.
3. Consolidation of Soviet governmental power.
4. The culture and organization of the broad Soviet masses of toilers.
5. The international revolutionizing significance of the USSR.

overthrowing of "one's own Imperialist Government, i.e., the revolutionary overthrow of Capitalist governments".¹⁰

Secondly, because of the "new international situation", the Soviet Union should urgently prepare for an eventual economic blockade by the Imperialist States, and even for a possible "direct armed aggression against the USSR".¹¹

There is little evidence, however, that such an aggression was actually in preparation. Probably the Soviet leaders themselves did not believe their own claims. It is not unrealistic to assume that the Party's true intention was to create a sense of urgency among the masses about the need for a "Socialist Construction", and to generate a "maximum of spontaneous activity" among the people.¹²

Indeed, a massive campaign was started in the summer of 1927 with the unmistakeable purpose of creating mass enthusiasm for the Socialist Construction. On August 11, Pravda wrote:

A maximum spontaneous activity of the broad layers of the working class and of the basic mass of peasants in the process of Socialist

¹⁰Pravda, August 10, 1927.

¹¹"O mezhdunarodnom polozhenii", Pravda, August 11, 1927.

¹²The less obvious reason, and probably the least understood at the time by the Party leaders, was Stalin's personal manoeuvre for the creation of most favourable conditions in his strife for absolute supremacy.

Construction is the most important guarantee of the successes of economic and cultural growth of the USSR and of the strengthening of its defense.¹³

Following an intensive propaganda campaign, the first Five Year Plan was inaugurated in October 1927.¹⁴ The joint Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, which introduced the Plan, also expelled Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Central Committee. The Fifteenth Party Congress, convened in December, could proceed with the establishment of unshakeable foundations for the Stalinist Revolution and his personal dictatorship. The so-called "danger from the outside" henceforth conveniently justified all drastic actions inside the USSR. The great "danger" served a dual purpose: first, it provided the masses with a will to achieve ambitious goals, secondly, it made them accept with more resignation the severe measures meted out to those who dared to stand in the way of the great changes.

The conditions for a successful execution of the Five Year Plans seemed favourable to the new leaders of the Party. At least three of the afore-mentioned factors were present.

First, as Stalin had pointed out in 1925, Russia

¹³"O mezhdunarodnom polozhenii", Pravda, August 11, 1927.

¹⁴"O khozyaistvennykh direktivakh na 1927 - 1928 god", Pravda, October 25, 1927.

possessed immense resources. Secondly, the Soviet Union was no longer in the grips of civil war and intervention; and, apart from internally produced tensions, the borders of the USSR were enjoying reasonable security. Finally, the alleged threat of military attack from outside no doubt created a near-war psychosis which with some prodding by the Komsomol, the Agitprop and the GPU could stimulate the traditionally easy-going Russians to greater efforts in production.

But due to the depletion of the intelligentsia, the Soviet Union lacked the remaining two factors necessary for a successful upbuilding of an underdeveloped country, i.e., skilled technological manpower and capable administrators or managerial personnel. Fully aware of this problem, the Congress turned its attention to the need for a cultural revolution. The industrialization of the Soviet Union, according to a resolution of the Party, was impossible "without the raising of the role of science and scientific technology."¹⁵

The Party drew attention to the urgency of the problem of immediate improvement in the quality of professional and technical education for the training of "indispensable cadres of specialists".¹⁶ The slogan,

¹⁵KPSS v rezolyutsiakh, II, 465.

¹⁶"0 vseobshchem obyazatel'nom nachal'nom

"Technics decide everything", was introduced. Orders were issued for accelerating the introduction of universal elementary education; and particular emphasis was laid on the more backward regions of Russia.¹⁷

To keep up the morale of the population, constant propaganda was needed. The Party demanded that the "ideological front" be strengthened and that the political enlightenment of the masses be improved through a more extensive use of all media of mass communication, the press, radio, movies, and mobile libraries. Demobilized soldiers of the Red Army and Navy were recruited and were sent to the rural areas to consolidate the Soviet regime there, to help raise the cultural level in the villages, and for social and political education of the peasants.¹⁸

In its struggle against the technological, economic and cultural backwardness of the country, the Party relied more heavily than before on the Komsomol organization, which was its "most important helper".¹⁹ This movement

obuchenii", Pravda, August 15, 1959.

"O nachal'noi i srednei shkole", Sbornik rukovodnykh materialov o shkole (Moscow, 1952), p. 42.

"Ob uchebnykh programmakh i rezhime v nachal'noi i srednei shkole", ibid., p. 59.

¹⁷The former School of Peasant Youth was renamed School of Kolkhoz Youth, with the initials remaining as before ShKM, their number was greatly enlarged, and in the main children of poor peasants enrolled.

¹⁸KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, II, 487.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 467.

acted as a key factor or main lever in the re-education of the worker and peasant youth "in the spirit of Socialist Construction and its defense from all the enemies outside and within the country", as stated a resolution of the Party.²⁰

But, when several months had passed without the actual materialization of the "danger from outside", it became increasingly necessary to demonstrate to the masses that such a danger was not simply a myth invented by the Party. While the government could not, without impunity provoke a real "danger from outside", it could at least safely create a "danger from within".

Such a "danger" was conveniently provided by the notorious "Shakhty Case" and the so-called "sabotage by foreign experts" of the Donbas region. A show trial usefully "demonstrated" the need to create cadres of "Made in USSR" Soviet specialists for the replacement of the "Imported" ones brought in during the years of the New Economic Policy.

In an article on the implications of the "Shakhty Case" in the economic development of the country, Pravda wrote in April 1928:

The Shakhty Case led to the discovery of a counter-revolutionary wrecking organization in Donbas. This case acquired an all-Union public

²⁰Ibid.

significance due to the fact that it unmasked new forms and new methods of struggle of the bourgeois counter-revolution against the proletarian state and against proletarian industrialization. The political significance of this case is underlined by the fact that the wrecking organization of the Donbas is composed of former mine owners and a group of experts who in the past had enjoyed special privileges; it was organized by former Russian and foreign owners, and also by foreign military intelligence; and, among other goals, they aimed at the destruction of the defense of the Soviet Union and at an open preparation for intervention and war against the USSR.²¹

The "shock" which was provided by the alleged "danger from outside and from within", aided by the ideological and physical "encouragement" by the Party Activists was needed if the people were to be made to "understand" the need for great sacrifices in time of peace. It was particularly needed in Russia where for many centuries the population became used to "marking time", "dragging their feet", and spending seemingly endless winter days in near-total idleness. For a majority of Russians time was eternal. Nothing ever happened to give them hope for a better future. No matter how hard the muzhik worked, he had no hope of becoming rich. Whether he worked hard or not he was not much better off - or worse off - than his neighbour. A sense of futility, apathy and lack of ambition characterized the Russian peasant. And he was in an overwhelming majority. Only a

²¹"Shakhtinskoe delo i prakticheskie zadachi v dele bor'by s nedostatkami khozyaistvennogo stroitel'stva", Pravda, April 12, 1928.

"shock" could stir him, and this was now provided.

Unfortunately however, the fear and near war-psychosis which were created at this time were also accompanied by the introduction of a kind of martial law. In these conditions various Government excesses, euphemistically referred to as "necessary measures", were often meekly accepted and even excused by the population.

If the Soviet Union was to "catch up with and then surpass the level of industrial development of the advanced capitalist countries", as the Fifteenth Party Congress ordered in 1926,²² then it followed that it was necessary to master not only Russian but also foreign science and technology", argued Pravda in July 1928.²³

A group of students were handpicked on the orders of Stalin and sent abroad for intensive training. Foreign scientific literature was translated on a large scale, and the formerly persecuted "bourgeois" Intelligentsia was reinstated into university chairs. The door was now opened for the return to traditional education.

Thanks to the "danger from outside and from within", the Party acquired the liberty of relying more on

²²KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, II, 295.

²³"Ob uluchshenii podgotovki novykh spetsialistov", Pravda, July 13, 1928.

One of the immediate results was the emphasis of the Party on the need for each student of higher technical institutions to learn at least one foreign language which would enable him both to read foreign literature in his field and to be sent abroad to study if he was politically reliable.

expediency and "necessity" than on ideological considerations, thus throwing off its ideological shackles.

On the suggestion of V. Molotov at the plenary session of the Central Committee on July 12, 1928, an improvement and more effective training of new specialists was ordered. The reorganization of industry through closer ties of science and technology with the economy of the nation which was under way also necessitated a radical reorganization of the whole system of education.

As a first step in the return to the traditional system, the schools of general education were reorganized for the preparation of students for entrance into institutes of higher learning.²⁴ Since universities and technical colleges by their very nature had to use a systematic subject-matter curriculum, it followed that to provide effective training for higher education, secondary schools also had to introduce a similar curriculum. Thus, the Unified Labour School gradually assumed the role of the former Gymnazium.

The need for a return to more traditional methods was accepted all the more readily, that towards the end of the 1920's many people felt that educational work was generally at a low level. The Labour School did not provide the pupils with a sound general education, while at

²⁴KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, II, 523. See also: "Ob uluchshenii podgotovki novykh spetsialistov", Pravda, July 13, 1928.

the same time it also failed to train them properly in practical knowledge necessary for the industry.²⁵

The existing programmes and methods in the schools of general education were wholly unsatisfactory for a backward nation undertaking rapid industrialization. Complex-project programmes changed with the seasons of the year and with the developments and demands of the economic campaigns; and like anything new and progressive were not understood and supported by the masses. The problems caused by the lack of a permanent or stable programme were increased by the regionalistic nature of the system of education.²⁶

The "Laboratory-Brigade Method" was almost universally introduced; even Party schools had adopted it. This method was based on permanent brigades formed of about eight pupils who were collectively responsible for certain assignments; in practice, the brigade leader (usually the most intelligent child in the group) would do the work, while the other members simply took a rest. Individual study and responsibility suffered while collectivistic habits were not imparted.²⁷

The teacher was pushed into the background; his

²⁵Effective training for industry had been carried on mainly in the FZU. See chapter "The First Decade", p. 22.

²⁶See chapter "The Role of History", pp. 45-47.

²⁷See chapter "The First Decade" p. 28. This testimony was confirmed by several former students and teachers interviewed by the author.

role was reduced to that of an advisor and record keeper. Formal lessons were almost entirely eliminated. While an abundance of textbooks and reading material may have been of some help in this programme, stable textbooks were conspicuous only by their absence.²⁸

Ideological indoctrination and participation in political activities took up much of the time which the students should have devoted to their studies. Theoretically, at least, communist indoctrination should have remained, as before, the primary task of the school; but Stalin clearly foresaw the danger of such policy. His enlightening remarks are worth citing at some length.

. . . It is said that Communist students have poor results in the sciences. It is said that in this respect they are far behind the non-Party [students]. It is said that the Communist students pretend to busy themselves with "high politics", killing two thirds of their time with endless debates "on world problems". Is all this true? I think it is. But if this is true, then at least two conclusions follow. In the first place, the Communist students run the risk of becoming poor leaders of Socialist Construction without having mastered the sciences. Secondly, the training of the new commanding staff runs the risk of becoming a monopoly in the hands of the old professors . . .; all this cannot help but become a direct threat to the whole cause of Socialist Construction Therefore, the Communist students in particular and the Soviet students in general must have a clear and decisive task: to master the sciences and to create a replacement for the old professorial staff out of new Soviet men. By this I do not intend to say that the students must not be interested in politics. Not at all. I am only saying that the Communist students must be able to combine political work with the mastering of sciences.²⁹

²⁸The question of textbooks will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

²⁹Stalin, VII, 87-88.

Dissatisfaction with the quality of training in schools was also expressed by M.I. Kalinin on the anniversary of the introduction of compulsory universal education in August 1931.

Our school is still not properly fulfilling its fundamental task, i.e., assuring high literacy among school children. It is an undeniable fact that even those children who complete the Seven Year School have a very low level of literacy; they are particularly poor in their own mother tongue and in simple grammar.³⁰

Kalinin regarded the school as a "laboratory for the formation of totally developed and entirely conscious builders of Socialism", and argued that the Soviet school should therefore make great efforts to raise the quality of the training and education of children.³¹

The problem of the improvement of the School was also discussed at the First Congress on General Education of the RSFSR in March 1931 where it was decided that qualitative improvement of the School should be regarded as inseparable from its quantitative growth.³²

This highly publicized public debate was followed in September by a decree on the elementary and secondary schools which is generally regarded as a milestone in Soviet education.

The decree of September 5, 1931 by the Central

³⁰ "Na bor'bu za kachestvo raboty sovetskoi shkoly", Izvestiya, August 14, 1931.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Za Kommunisticheskoe Prosveshchenie (March 5, 1931), 2.

Committee in its preamble praised some of the achievements of the Soviet school, such as the significant quantitative growth and the fact that school education was coordinated with production. But at the same time, the Central Committee took the school to task for not having satisfied the demands imposed upon it by the "contemporary period in Socialist Construction".³³

There could no longer be any doubts about the Party's views on the purpose of the school. The school's primary function no longer was political and ideological indoctrination as had been the case before 1928. Under economic and political pressures, Soviet education concentrated on producing systematically trained technicians and specialists in all fields; and economic rather than ideological factors henceforth determined its final form.

It is the opinion of the Central Committee that the basic shortcoming of the school at this time consists in that school training does not provide a sufficient breadth of general knowledge and unsatisfactorily solves the task of preparing for entrance to the Tekhnikum and schools of higher learning fully literate men who have properly mastered the fundamentals of sciences (physics, chemistry, mathematics, mother tongue, geography, etc.)³⁴

To improve its quality, the Second All-Union Party Conference on Education drafted a plan for the unification

³³"O nachal'noi i srednei shkole", Sbornik, p. 43.

³⁴Ibid., p. 43, f.

of the whole system of education in the USSR. Consequently, in 1932 the following system was adopted:

Pre-School education: creche - up to the age of three; kindergarten - age 3-7; zero group (nulevaya grupa) - one year;

Seven Year School: elementary school - 4 years in the RSFSR, 5 years in the national republics; 1st cycle of 2nd degree school - 3 years;

Ten Year School: 2nd cycle of 2nd degree school - 3 years.

Upon completion of the Seven Year School, the child could proceed to the Ten Year School or to the Tekhnikum³⁵ which had a three year programme leading to various institutes of higher learning.³⁶

The general reorganization of the structure of education was, however, only one result of the decree of September 5, 1931. Another, and for our purpose a more important aspect of this change, was the abandonment of the complex-method and the return to a subject-matter curriculum.

Already in 1929 an indication was given of the eventual return to subject-matter teaching in general and the teaching of history as a separate subject in particular. On January 18 of that year, Pravda published the full text of a lecture on the State delivered by Lenin in 1919 at the Sverdlov University in which he had advocated the need

³⁵Secondary technical school.

³⁶Cf. N.A. Konstantinov and E.N. Medynskii, Ocherki po istorii sovetskoi shkoly (Moscow, 1959), pp. 220-221.

for a "historical perspective on events", and the need to master systematically all branches of learning.³⁷ In 1930, at a meeting of the section on methodology of the Institute of History the historian-methodologist S.S. Krivtsov lectured on "Lenin and the Teaching of History". Liberally stretching the meaning of Lenin's speech at the Sverdlov University Krivtsov argued that Lenin had both implicitly and explicitly favoured the teaching of history per se in schools. This was obviously a distortion of the meaning of Lenin's speech.³⁸ Lenin is known to have favoured the GUS programme and its complex-project method. The attempt to imply or "prove" that Lenin supported a subject-matter programme in contrast to the complexes, merely indicates the fact that the Party line was being changed, and ideological justification was sought for the volte face.

The Central Committee condemned the method of complexes as a "light-headed method of hare-brained schemes . . . stemming from the anti-Leninist theory of the withering away of the school", and demanded that this

³⁷Cf. I.V. Lenin, "O gosudarstve", Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenia", (5th ed.; Moscow, 1963), XXXIX, 64-84.

³⁸Lenin had told the students to "look upon every problem from the point of view of how a given situation had arisen, what were the main stages in its development, and from the point of view of that development, observe what the given thing has now become".

method be replaced by a subject-matter curriculum.³⁹ For an early elimination of the "basic shortcoming of the school", the Central Committee ordered a radical revision of all extant programmes and the immediate introduction of new ones based on a "precisely determined circle of systematic knowledge".⁴⁰ Attempts of certain educationists to separate polytechnical education from general and systematic education were condemned, and the liquidation of these "falsifications" was demanded.

In compliance with the Party wishes, the NKP reintroduced history as a separate subject and undertook measures for the drafting of a new general curriculum. A new subject-matter syllabus was devised to take the place of the former "complex-project" programme.⁴¹

It is significant, however, that, while a subject-matter syllabus with history as a separate subject was introduced in the schools of general education, at the same time the Schools of Kolkhoz Youth (ShKM) and the Factory Mill Schools (FZS) continued teaching social studies (obshchestvovedenie) as before.⁴²

³⁹"O nachal'noi i srednei shkole", Sbornik, p. 45. The question of the "withering away of the school" will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹For an example of the new curriculum in history see Appendix II.

⁴²Cf. ShKM Programmy (Moscow-Leningrad: Uchpedgiz, 1932).

Bushchik attributes this to the fact that "individual leaders of the NKP continued to believe that social studies must play a leading role in the educational work of the school".⁴³ Moreover, he states that in spite of the liquidation of the general complex themes in the school curriculum attempts were made in these schools to preserve the complex-method.

It seems paradoxical, however, to maintain that in defiance of explicit orders by the Central Committee, especially at a time when dissent of opinion was rapidly becoming an unusual event, there should have been a whole set of schools which openly persisted in the old ways,⁴⁴ especially in view of the fact that the FZS and ShKM were regarded with particular favour by the Party.⁴⁵ The fact that precisely these favorite schools continued teaching social studies instead of history suggests that social studies as taught in the 1920's rather than history as

⁴³Ocherk razvitiya shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovaniya v SSSR (Moscow: APN, 1961), p. 250.

⁴⁴The fact that the programmes of ShKM and FZS were published by the Uchpedgiz in Moscow and Leningrad simultaneously clearly indicates official support from the highest circles. A more detailed description of the publishing of books and their authorization will be given in the next chapter.

⁴⁵See chapter "The First Decade", p. 22f. According to former students and teachers from the Soviet Union, the sons and daughters of the middle classes, let alone upper classes, were not admitted to these schools. Furthermore, these schools were given special attention and were carefully supplied, while the schools of general education were often neglected and even looked upon with disdain.

taught in the 1930's was regarded by the Party members at large as the more desirable form of ideological indoctrination. It must be kept in mind that in the FZS and ShKM only children of the then favoured lowest proletarian and poor peasant classes were enrolled, and it is from these schools that the Workers Faculties recruited their candidates.

The reorganization of the school was pursued relentlessly and with increasing vigour. On August 25, 1932, the Central Committee issued a further landmarking decree dealing with the curriculum and the question of discipline in the elementary and secondary schools.⁴⁶

While recognizing that some progress had been achieved by the school since the decree of September 5 of the previous year, the Central Committee pointed out that further improvement of the school was hampered by what it called "a fundamental weakness". This "fundamental weakness" consisted in shortcomings of the curriculum itself, unsatisfactory teaching methods, and poor leadership on the part of the NKP.

The curriculum was said to be overloaded with poorly coordinated and poorly integrated material which, in any case, was full of "fundamental errors". Social

⁴⁶"Ob uchebnykh programmakh i rezhime v nachal'noi i srednei shkole", Sbornik, pp. 66-68.

studies was lacking in the historical approach to the analysis of events. The "Laboratory Brigade Method", although it had been widely used also in the Party Schools, was "demonstrated" to be erroneous. The use of projects and cooperative studies instead of formal lessons as a basic approach to teaching was strongly criticized.⁴⁷ Discipline was said to be poor, and the role of the teacher abused.

To justify the new line, and by the same token to condemn the former practice as anti-Leninist, it was now conveniently recalled that in 1922 Lenin had stated:

The people's teacher in our country must be placed at a height at which he has never been, at which he is not or ever can be in a bourgeois society.⁴⁸

The Central Committee recognized "the constantly growing role of the teacher in the cause of instruction of children in the fundamentals of sciences, and teaching conscious discipline and communist attitudes [sic] towards

⁴⁷The formal lesson as a method of teaching was abolished early in the Soviet period. See chapter "The First Decade", p. 14.

⁴⁸"O nachal'noi i srednei shkole", Sbornik, p. 48. As a general rule whenever the Party finds it necessary to revise its stand or to change its line, statements are found post hoc in the writings of the Marxist "classics" justifying the new line. The former line then is identified with some scapegoat and "his" attitude declared "anti-Leninist" or "anti-Marxist" depending on whose works had supplied the above mentioned type of statements. It was now quickly forgotten that the teacher's authority had formerly been undermined by the Komsomol, no doubt on direct orders from above.

learning and work,"⁴⁹ and restored his formerly almost absolute authority to the teacher.⁵⁰

School administration was also streamlined. All Communists who formerly held leading positions in various fields of public education and occupied leading administrative positions were obliged to take either correspondence or evening courses in order to master the methodological aspects of school work.⁵¹ Ideological orthodoxy and loyalty to the regime, formerly the only criteria for heading a school, no longer sufficed; all the non-pedagogical principals had to undergo an intensive professional training or be dismissed. Politics was largely being taken out of the school, and a return was made to academic work.

The direct supervision of the ideological contents and methods of teaching, particularly of social and political sciences, formerly carried out by the Komsomol, was transferred to various Party organizations.⁵²

A general campaign was undertaken for a qualitative improvement of the Soviet school. On the occasion of the fifteenth Anniversary of the October Revolution in 1932 the Central Committee issued slogans such as:

Let us decisively improve the quality of learning!
Bolshevik discipline for the Soviet school!

⁴⁹"Ob uchebnykh programmakh", ibid., p. 66.

⁵⁰The decree also dealt with the problem of teacher training, content of school work, strengthening of discipline and so on.

⁵¹"O nachal'noi i srednei shkole", Sbornik, p. 48.

Let us raise the role of the teacher!
 Let us make sure that the school trains active builders
 of Socialism! ⁵³

The decrees of the Central Committee were given serious consideration by all groups and individuals connected with state education. Mass gatherings and meetings were organized for the consideration of problems related to the reorganization of the school. In the Urals alone there were more than seven thousand such gatherings, more than 316,000 people in all taking part in them.⁵⁴ At the conclusion of these meetings resolutions were adopted assuring the Party and the Government of the loyal support of educators, and promising a speedy and effective implementation of the decrees.⁵⁵

The efforts of the Party in effecting a radical change in the Soviet system of education have not been without success. Reviewing the achievements of the Soviet School in the previous school year Krupskaya declared in autumn 1932 that "great work had been accomplished by the new school".

Study has become more meaningful, the quality of work considerably improved, futile and empty talk is being abandoned, the teacher feels much greater responsibility for the quality of teaching, and the children are behaving more seriously towards learning.⁵⁶

⁵³Pravda, October 27, 1932.

⁵⁴A.V. Kol'tsov, Kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo v RSFSR v gody pervoi pyatiletki (Moscow-Leningrad, 1960), p. 81.

⁵⁵Cf. Za Kommunisticheskoe Prosveshchenie (September 17, 1931), 1.

⁵⁶"Ocherednye zadachi v oblasti shkol'nogo stroitel'stva", Na Putyakh k Novoi Shkole, VII (1932), 6.

Krupskaya's testimonial and the subsequent events demonstrated that the demands of the Central Committee for an effective system of education, capable of training qualified specialists needed for the industrialization of the country, had at least partially been met. The next radical change would occur not because of the dictates of the economy but because of political considerations. But before turning to this question it will be necessary to see how the teaching of history was affected by the changes so far.

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

As pointed out in the previous chapter, the return to the traditional subject-matter system of education signalled also the reintroduction of history as a separate subject. In the process of the reassessment of the views on various aspects of education, official attitude towards the textbook had also changed. The long controversy about the uses of textbooks in the classroom which had started almost immediately after the Revolution was arbitrarily ended by a Party decree in February 1933.

The only textbooks available after the Revolution were of course those of the old school. They were neither sufficient in number to supply the growing demands of the state schools nor politically acceptable to the Party. In the conditions of civil war and foreign intervention it was hardly possible to publish new texts on a large scale. Besides, the Bolsheviks, uncertain of their ultimate victory, probably regarded such undertaking as premature. At any rate there were more important things to do. Consequently in August, 1918 textbooks were "banished from

schools" by a decree of the NKP of the RSFSR.¹

But, concerned with the indoctrination of the population, and regarding history as its most powerful ideological tool, the Party demanded at the Eighth Congress in March 1919, that cultural history "from a scientific-socialist point of view" with special emphasis on the "Great Russian Revolution" together with the Soviet Constitution be taught in schools. For both these courses the Party demanded that textbooks be prepared at once.²

At the Tenth Congress in 1921 the Party again expressed concern for the preparation of communist textbooks, and specifically demanded that these be written, not necessarily by the best qualified scholars but by "responsible Party writers", whose primary task was to be propagandists.³

The Party decrees and recommendations, however, brought few results. In 1922 Lenin was forced to admit that,

Almost five years after the proletariat had taken over the political power, in state schools and universities old bourgeois scholars teach (more

¹"Ob uchebnikhakh dlya nachal'noi i srednei shkoly", Sbornik rukovodyashchik materialov o shkole (Moscow, 1952), p. 68.

²Vos'moi s'ezd RKP(b) (Moscow, 1959), p. 433.

³"O glavpolitprosvete i agitatsionno-propagandistshikh zadachakh partii", KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, (Moscow, 1954), I.552f.

exactly corrupt and debauch) our youth with old bourgeois rubbish [textbooks].⁴

And in his closing speech on the political report of the Central Committee at the Eleventh Party Congress he said:

I do not in any way deny the value of textbooks, and I recently wrote that it would be better if our writers paid less attention to newspapers and to political gabblings, and wrote textbooks instead. In fact from where does the young generation study social sciences? And that at a time when we have hundreds of Marxist writers who can produce textbooks on all social problems, but do not tend in this direction⁵

The reasons for the slow progress in the preparation of textbooks are multiple.

In the first place, as already pointed out, the disrupted economic conditions in the period of War Communism were not conducive to a large scale publication and distribution of textbooks. This was, however, by no means an insurmountable difficulty.

A much more serious problem was presented by the perennial shortage of "top brains" in Russia⁶ which became particularly acute in the Soviet period when many of the most capable intellectuals either left the country or

⁴V.I. Lenin, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii (5th ed.; Moscow, 1963), XXVII, 195.

⁵Ibid., p. 261.

⁶One thinks of Pisarev's theory in the 1860's of the "economy of intellectual energies" which can be attributed to his keen awareness of the utter shortage of brain-power in Russia; hence his condemnation of waste of effort on formalism when so much needed to be done in the field of propaganda and education of the illiterate masses.

refused to co-operate with the new regime. The Party was obliged to order at its Twelfth Congress in 1923 the selection "in the shortest possible time of a special group of competent comrades relieved of all other duties", to prepare teacher manuals and school textbooks.⁷

It was, however, difficult to "relieve the competent comrades from all other duties" when there were so few of them and when they were so badly needed elsewhere. Thus, by 1924 the situation was still the same, as indicated by the demand of the Thirteenth Party Congress that the "fundamental task" of writing textbooks be given priority, and that a "definite beginning of publication of new, politically and methodologically sound textbooks and manuals be undertaken at once".⁸

When some members of the Society of Marxist Historians complained three years later about the state of the teaching of social studies, Pokrovsky candidly admitted that "there were no talented writers of history textbooks, and no talented teachers of social studies".⁹ And this was in 1927, fully a decade after the establishment of Bolshevik rule.

⁷"Po voprosam propagandy, pechaty i agitatsii", KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, I, 734.

⁸"O pechaty", ibid., II, 63.

⁹I-M, III (1927), 168.

In the absence of acceptable textbooks in history and social studies, Pokrovsky's own Brief History of Russia was widely used as a textbook in all schools, and went through many editions,¹⁰ the last appearing in 1934, two years after its author's death, even though, from the methodological point of view, this book was wholly unsuitable for use in the classroom.¹¹

But then Pokrovsky had never intended his book to serve as a school textbook in the first place. He wrote the Brief History for the "conscious worker" seeking self-instruction in Marxist ideology and politics; and it is in this function that this book established the foundations of a Marxist scheme of Russian history.

At a conference of Marxist historians in 1927 Mamet argued that,

The Brief History of Comrade Pokrovsky was not written as a textbook but . . . for the use of readers of the "ABC of Communism", and for the common reader who wants to raise the level of his knowledge.¹²

¹⁰M. Nechkina, "Uchebnaya literatura po istorii Klassovoi bor'by" I-M, V (1927) 163. While the complex method was in force, Pokrovsky's book was divided into pamphlets (feuilletons) and, with its structural unity broken up, was forcefully and artificially adjusted to the new programme, Nechkina maintains.

¹¹It was written for adults who were acquainted with the "bourgeois" interpretation of history; it was a supplement to and a Marxist interpretation of regular history works. Ibid., p. 162. See also: I-M, III (1927), 182.

¹²L.P. Mamet, "Programno-metodicheskie voprosy prepodavaniya istorii na rabochikh fakultetakh", I-M, IV (1927), 195.

Pokrovsky, who was also present, confirmed this claim personally when he stated:

Of course, my book is not a textbook which can be studied by the laboratory method. It can be a useful book for people who know Russian history, because it gives a mass of Marxist generalizations to people who in their time had read Kostomarov, Solovyev, and even Klyuchevsky. It gives Marxist generalizations and the Marxist method; and it is only in this sense that it is useful; but except for this it has nothing else to offer.¹³

The reason for the great popularity of Pokrovsky's book can be explained by Lenin's own great enthusiasm for it. Upon reading the manuscript in 1920, Lenin highly praised it and expressed his desire to see it used as a textbook of the Marxist explanation of History.¹⁴

But Pokrovsky's book was not sufficient for the fullest indoctrination of the masses and the students. Particular circumstances required specific types of books. In 1923 the Party was especially concerned with the problem of peasants¹⁵ because of the vital need for agricultural products and the strong general opposition from the rural inhabitants. The Thirteenth Party Congress in May 1924 therefore urged the writing of a "Soviet textbook" for the rural areas which would have "the greatest cultural

¹³Ibid., p. 197f.

¹⁴V.I. Lenin, Sochineniya, (2nd ed.) XXIX, 442. This letter does not appear in the 5th edition of Lenin's works. More will be said about Lenin's appraisal of Pokrovsky's work in Appendix III.

¹⁵It will be recalled that the 1923 GUS programme was wholly oriented towards the village and the countryside. Cf. chapter "The First Decade", p. 26.

and political significance", and specifically demanded the preparation and immediate publication of a series of textbooks in the rudiments of political knowledge (politgramota) and social studies for both rural and urban schools.¹⁶

The Society of Marxist Historians was entrusted with the preparation of the required books. There were sound pedagogical as well as political reasons for this choice. Pokrovsky, the founder and chairman of the Society, enjoyed the status of dean of Marxist historiography. His ideological orthodoxy notwithstanding, Pokrovsky was also a good methodologist and pedagogue.

He believed that a good textbook should be written with the collaboration of three people: a scholar, a political editor, and a pedagogue.¹⁷ The political editor was needed for "obvious reasons", as he stated. The pedagogue, on the other hand, was required for the organization and presentation of the material in such a way that it be entirely accessible to the child's mind. As for the scholar, Pokrovsky maintained somewhat ambiguously, "he need not enter the archives. What he must be able to do, is to find in the primary sources whatever is necessary."¹⁸ The Marxist historian must be able to select his material in such a way as to illustrate the Marxist principles of

¹⁶KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, II, 63.

¹⁷I-M, IV (1927), 197.

¹⁸Ibid.

social and historical development. In other words, the Marxist historian was above all a propagandist.

Pokrovsky insisted that textbooks for children be prepared with great care and imagination. The books had to be written in a simple and imaginative language, be full of anecdotes, and richly illustrated with fascinating pictures, diagrams and maps. He explicitly opposed the use of figures and statistical tables in the dry form in which they appeared in the unimaginative official publications.¹⁹

Pokrovsky was not the only one among the Marxist historians to be concerned about the pedagogical aspects of writing textbooks. The young historian Nechkina, today a prominent Soviet scholar, explained in some detail the reasons why in her opinion it was not sufficient to be a mere scholar to write textbooks.

It is not enough to know the problem and to be able to write in a "simple language"; one must be a pedagogue; and then, not a pedagogue in general, but a special pedagogue; one who knows the peculiarities of the social background of the pupils, their age differences, and the degree of their readiness. One must be a master not only of a "language easy to understand", but of a special one, one which is appropriate to a given environment, and easily accessible to it. One must know one's school audience perfectly.²⁰

There were however only few authors possessing such talents, and the writing of textbooks was again delayed. In the meanwhile, the educational authorities recommended a

¹⁹I-M, III (1927), 169.

²⁰Nechkina, I-M, V (1927), 161.

variety of historical works for use in the courses of social studies and politgramota.²¹

Another very important reason for the difficulties related to the publication of textbooks was caused by the regionalistic nature of the extant school programmes.²² In the 1920's the school, like the state administration, was not centralized, and showed no uniformity of pattern. In various regions and often within the same district a variety of experimental methods existed side by side. In such conditions it was not possible to impose a unified textbook. Thus V. Shulgin was right when in 1928 he declared in behalf of the NKP:

We are against one textbook for the whole republic. It is too large and too variegated We are in favour of a regional textbook. In it there is something sui generis, something new, something that does not exist in other books: the flavour of a region and its physiognomy.²³

²¹To serve as textbooks for the VUZ in 1926-27, the GUS recommended Em. Yaroslavsky's Kratkie ocherki po istorii VKP(b) (Moscow-Leningrad: Giz., 1926) and V. Volosevich's Samaya Kratkaya Istoriya VKP(b) (Moscow-Leningrad: Giz., 1926), both of which appeared in the series "Uchebniki i uchebnye posobiya dlya vuzov". The Scientific-Political Section of the GUS authorized the following books to be used as readers: M. Dyakonov, Ocherki Obshchestvennogo i Gosudarstvennogo Stroya Drevnei Rusi (preface by Pokrovsky) (Moscow-Leningrad: Giz., 1926), and, for use in the Rabfaks: A.N. Khmelev's Krestyanskaya Reforma 1861g. (Leningrad: Brokgauz and Efrom, 1927) from the series "Biblioteka dlya raboty po Dal'ton-Planu". Based on experience of teachers at the Moscow Workers Faculty "Bukharin", the latter book was designed for use by the Laboratory Method in the study of the "history of class-struggle".

²²This question was discussed more fully in chapter "The Role of History", pp. 45-47.

²³Cited in L. Efremenko, "Borot'sya za stabil'nyi uchebnik", NU, III (1933), 36.

Shulgin and his colleagues in the NKP did not oppose the introduction of textbooks on pedagogical and philosophical grounds alone. As we have seen, in the 1920's many Russians still believed in the theory of the "withering away of the state". Many educational leaders argued that the school, like the state, would also wither away one day. Shulgin, a leading figure in the NKP, known as the greatest proponent of this theory held that the school would exist only during the Socialist period of transition to Communism.

Like the state, the school is an historical category; the school appears at a certain period when the class-dominating state was formed and has all the characteristics of it.²⁴

Krupenina, another prominent figure of the NKP, maintained that the textbook also must "wither away". In her speech to the Society of Marxist Pedagogues of the Communist Academy in 1930 she said:

Let us take for example such an immutable attribute of the school and learning as the textbook which had been used instead of syllabi, contained all school wisdom [premudrost'] and was a gauge of success; he [sic] went through the textbook, consequently he passed the course of such and such a class. Now it [the text book] is going into the past.²⁵

²⁴V. Shulgin, "O shkole", Na Putyakh k Novoi Shkole (March, 1931), p. 37. In the late 1930's Shulgin and his colleague Krupenina were made scapegoats even for ideas which Krupskaya, Blonsky and Shatsky originated.

²⁵Efremenko, p. 36.

The position of the NKP was consistent with the ideologically accepted theories on which the method of complexes was based. It was also in harmony with the spirit of the times and with the wishes of the Party as expressed in its resolutions at the Congresses.

While regionalism made the introduction of unified textbooks impossible, the method of complexes had no room for any textbooks at all.²⁶ At the same time the Party demanded intensive indoctrination of children through a study of daily or current events. These three elements were harmoniously blended in the use of pamphlets dealing with one "complex" at a time, printed separately for each region and about various areas of study. These pamphlets were closely integrated with the current problems of life in the Soviet Union, and played a role similar to the newspapers. They informed the student of the daily events and the Party policy. And this leads us to the last, and perhaps most important obstacle in the writing of textbooks.

Because of their similarity to newspapers, in that they reflected the daily events in the country and abroad, the pamphlets were admirably adapted to the rapidly shifting Party line. Also like the newspapers, they quickly

²⁶This, however, does not exclude their use as reference books. The term "textbook" is used in the sensu stricto.

"dated"; and because of their cheap format²⁷ they were easily discarded. When the Party insisted on the publication of textbooks, Shulgin suggested that the pamphlets be bound into larger volumes. These became known as the Rabochaya Kniga, or "Workers' Book".²⁸ But the Rabochaya Kniga also "dated"; and because it was like a chronicle, in that it recorded daily events and Party policy, it often became embarrassing after a sudden change in the Party line.²⁹

The everchanging Party line necessitated a constant changing of textbooks.³⁰ This, of course,

²⁷They were not bound.

²⁸Efremenko, p. 36. The following are some of the Rabochaya Kniga in use in 1928: Stanchinski, A.D. (ed.) Rabochaya Kniga po obshchestvovedeniyu dlya pyatogo goda obucheniya (Moscow-Leningrad: Giz., 1927). (237 pages, 60,000 copies); Mints and Monosov (eds.) Rabochaya Kniga po obshchestvovedeniyu. Shestoi god obucheniya (Moscow-Leningrad: Giz., 1927). (350 pages; 50,000 copies); Strazhev, A.I. (ed.) Rabochaya kniga po obshchestvovedeniyu. Sed'moi god obucheniya (Moscow-Leningrad: Giz., 1927). (350 pages, 40,000 copies).

²⁹In 1930 during a lesson period in Social Studies an American visitor noticed that the work was much hindered by lack of books. "Why don't you have books?", asked the visitor. "We did till just recently", answered the teacher. "When a political error was discovered, they were withdrawn from use. New ones will be ready soon". Th. Woody, New Minds: New Men? (New York, 1932), p. 272.

³⁰For a good study of the impact of Party policy on the Soviet school see R.L. Widmayer, "The Communist Party and the Soviet School, 1917-1937" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1952).

represented immense waste of labour and material. Many citizens objected to such waste, especially because the local communities had to pay the cost. Such dissatisfaction was reflected in a letter to the Teachers Gazette in January 1930.

The Glavsotsvos and Giz³¹ acknowledge the dissatisfaction of workers and poor and middle peasant masses with the frequent change of textbooks which causes additional material losses and overloads their budget. Nevertheless they consider it impossible at the present time to adhere to the principle of stabilization of texts A stable textbook can at the present time become a serious obstacle in the development of our school and of its integration into the struggle for Communism.³²

To "stabilize" textbooks, particularly those in social studies, would imply the necessity of dissociating them from Party policy and writing them purely on scholastic grounds; and this, one may assume, the Party was unwilling to consider. Therefore, the demands for "stabilization" were most inconsistent with reality. Policy and practice had come to a head. Thus, one can understand Shulgin's position when he wrote about those who demanded the conservation of textbooks:

And they do not understand or see that the good old textbook was good yesterday but today it is bad, moreover it is worthless Is it possible and is it necessary to stabilize for periods of five years one or two textbooks? No. They will hamper our work and will retard the school.³³

³¹Two publishing houses.

³²Uchitel'skaya Gaset, January 30, 1930.

³³V. Shulgin, O Novom uchebnike, as cited by Efremenko, NU, III (1933), 37.

Similarly, the position of the NKP was fully consistent with the situation when on March 28, 1930 it declared that "it is impossible for the present moment to adhere to the principle of stabilization of textbooks".³⁴ On May 16, the All-Russian Conference on Textbooks resolved to reject "decisively" the principle of stabilization.³⁵ On June 30, the NKP gave its official and unconditional support for this resolution, which, indeed, the Commissar of Education and the Director of the School Sector signed and sent to all regional and district administrators. This policy was also endorsed by the Central Committee's Department of Education. The policy was rejected only later, when on Stalin's orders, the personnel of the Department of Education was replaced by Stalin's own men.³⁶ It can, therefore, safely be stated that, until Stalin's personal intervention, the principle of opposition to the "stabilization" of textbooks was also supported by the Party; and by inference it can also be concluded that the separation of education from purely Marxist indoctrination in the late 1920's was demanded by Stalin and his lieutenants in the face of general Party opposition.

The decree of September 5, 1931 calling for the abolition of the method of complexes and the restoration of

³⁴Sbornik, p. 68.

³⁵Ibid., p. 69.

³⁶Ibid., p. 37f.

teaching on the basis of subject-matter curriculum and systematic teaching of individual subjects, proved to be a turning point in the history of Soviet education. It marked the beginning of the return to the pre-Revolution traditional methods. It also made the prospect of achieving the "stabilization" of textbooks at least theoretically feasible. The illogicality of the demand for a "stable textbook" within the framework of a school system based on the method of complexes was removed. The only obstacle remaining now in the way of prospective authors was the shifting Party line, albeit a big one.

In the meanwhile, on August 25, 1932, the Central Committee issued a decree noting with satisfaction that the new NKP programmes for elementary and secondary schools had "considerably improved" from the point of view of the scope of knowledge and systematic organization, and compared favourably with the former curriculum.³⁷

It seems that at least in some schools the history course was established on orthodox Marxist and sound pedagogical principles, as suggested by a contemporary report.

History is understood, in the light of the Manifesto, as history of various stages of class struggle and of the international

³⁷"Ob uchebnykh programmakh i rezhime v nachal'noi i srednei shkole", Sbornik, p. 60.

revolutionary movement Although the programme is difficult . . . the young teacher makes it lively through constant use of examples and questions. With the aid of the principles of Marxism-Leninism the children unravel complex entanglements of events in our epoch, and understand the meaning of crises, unemployment, the role of parliaments and the pseudo-socialists. This is one of the most remarkable experiences of my visit³⁸

Fridman's description of the effectiveness of the teaching methods cannot be generalized since he obviously spoke of the exceptionally good schools he had visited. The importance of his testimony lies in the fact that the history curriculum, such as prescribed officially, was based on the Communist Manifesto and the principles of Marxism-Leninism, and, above all, on the fact that current events and problems were analyzed with the aid of Marxist-Leninist principles. Stalin did not seem to have been satisfied with this state of affairs.

The decree of August 25 pointed out several "weaknesses" of the school. The Central Committee, objected to the fact that the curriculum was "overloaded with learning material", and that individual subjects were insufficiently, if at all, "integrated with each other".³⁹ Unnamed members of the curriculum committee were accused of ignorance of fundamentals" and of "individual political

³⁸"Revolyutsiya v shkole", NU, II (1933), 64f.

³⁹The thinking of the Central Committee was obviously still influenced by the complex method which was based precisely on the concept of integration of all knowledge.

errors in social studies".⁴⁰ This course was said to have an "insufficiently historical approach . . . as revealed by the fact that the historical past of peoples and countries, the evolution of human society, and so forth, are utterly poorly presented."⁴¹

The NKP was ordered to draft a new programme by January 1, 1933 and to pay particular attention to knowledge of facts, integration of the courses in general, and of history and social studies in particular. The history section of the programme of social studies had to be considerably increased and "the most important information [sic] about the national cultures of the USSR, their literature, art, historical development, and elements of regional studies of the USSR (natural characteristics, industry, agriculture, socio-economic development, etc.)" to be introduced.⁴²

This decree was designed to bring the Soviet school into line with the Stalinist Cultural Revolution. Stalin's new Commissar of Education, A.S. Bubnov,⁴³

⁴⁰Sbornik, p. 61

⁴¹Ibid. The stress on the study of the historical past, as we shall see, led to the direct prohibition of the study of "current events" such as the decisions of the Party at its congresses, specifically its Seventeenth Congress in 1934.

⁴²Ibid., p. 62f.

⁴³Lunacharsky was relieved of his duties in 1929 and replaced by Bubnov who formerly had organized the political branch of the Red Army.

maintained that the new measures in education should be regarded in the light of the general plan and development of the Cultural Revolution and Party policy, rather than purely from the point of view of its internal logic of development, a development sui generis.⁴⁴

A special Party Commission was appointed to deal with the drafting of the new unified curriculum. This was ready by December 1932,⁴⁵ but was not published until the summer of the following year.

The section on history was drafted under the editorship and leadership of N.N. Vanag and M.M. Killerog, with the collaboration of the following scholars: V.K. Nikol'skii and N. Tonin (History of Class Society), A.G. Bokshchanin, and A.V. Mishulin (Ancient East), A.V. Mishulin and A.M. Vasyutinskii (Greece and Rome), V.D. Preobrazhenskii and A.D. Udal'tsov (Feudalism in Western Europe), M.M. Killerog (Western History in the period of Industrial Capitalism) and V.I. Lebedev (History of Russia).⁴⁶

⁴⁴A.S. Bubnov, "O prakticheskikh meropriyatiyakh po vypolneniyu postanovleniya TsK VKP(b)", Prosveshchenie Sibiri, XII-XV (1932), 38. This had also been the point of view of the Central Committee. On March 15, 1931, according to Bubnov, the Central Committee demanded that entirely new books be written for the secondary schools and higher institutions; textbooks which would "best reflect the actual problem of Socialist Construction" and which would be so organized as to guarantee "even closer ties of scientific work with the actual tasks of Socialist Construction and class struggle of the proletariat and the earliest liquidation of alienation of scientific thought from the practical work of the Party".

⁴⁵Cf. A.S. Bubnov, Stat'iirechi o narodnom obrazovanii (Moscow, 1959), p. 263.

⁴⁶Programmy srednei shkoly (gorodskoi i sel'skoi) 5-8 goda obucheniya (Moscow: Uchpedgiz), 1933, p. 4.

Having completed the curriculum, the Commission⁴⁷ turned its attention to the problem of textbooks and discovered a whole series of "scandalous practices" and "leftist" methodological "hare-brained schemes".⁴⁸ These were said to be responsible for the fact that no stable and unified textbooks had been written for general use in the whole Soviet Union to take place of the former regional "Workers' Book" (Rabochaya Kniga).

The Commission drafted an outline for a decree on textbooks⁴⁹ which the Central Committee published in its own name on February 12, 1933, under the title: "Ob uchebnikakh dlya nachal'noi i srednei shkoly".⁵⁰ The decree drew attention to the "perfectly inadmissible" fact that not only were stable and universally used textbooks absent from the Soviet school, but also it appeared that this situation was "regarded among some circles of the NKP of the RSFSR as a sign of 'revolutionary achievement'".⁵¹ The Party condemned all opposition to the stabilization of textbooks, demanded the introduction of "new stable programmes and methods of teaching . . . and stable textbooks called upon to liquidate the existing

⁴⁷Of which, it should be remembered, N.N. Vanag was a member.

⁴⁸Bubnov, p. 262.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Sbornik, p. 68.

⁵¹Ibid.

'method of endless projecting' of textbooks".⁵²

The decree revoked the existing practice of publishing textbooks independently by each oblast', krai and autonomous republic, and required the establishment of a single compulsory text approved by the NKP for each subject. The State Publishing House (Gosizdat) was ordered to standardize the technical forms of binding, type, paper, illustrations, format and cover.

The NKP and the publishing house Ogiz were ordered to prepare by July 15, 1933, individual textbooks for each subject so that they might be introduced into the schools by the school entrance in September of the same year.⁵³

Using the new approved programme as a guide for their work, several well known authors urgently prepared new textbooks. N.M. Nikol'skii wrote a text on Ancient History.⁵⁴ A.I. Gukovskii and O.V. Trakhtenberg, with the co-authorship of V.N. Bernadskii, wrote a textbook for grades six and seven on Medieval History.⁵⁵ A. Efimov and N. Freiberg, prepared a textbook on Modern History or the

⁵²Ibid., p. 68f.

⁵³Ibid., p. 69.

⁵⁴Istoriya. Doklassovoe obshchestvo. Drevnii Vostok. Antichnyi mir. (Moscow, 1933).

⁵⁵Istoriya. Epokha promyshlennogo kapitalizma. (Moscow, 1933).

"Epoch of Industrial Capitalism".⁵⁶

At this point it may be of interest to describe in some detail a concrete example of the onerous task of writing textbooks in the Soviet Union.

N.M. Nikol'skii⁵⁷ was asked in 1932 to write a "stable textbook" for ancient history. He was chosen because of his ideological reliability and because of his former training in the History of Ancient Greece and the Ancient Orient; he had also done research in Roman history. Nikol'skii was a good pedagogue with a nineteen-year successful teaching career before the Revolution; and he also had practical experience in writing textbooks. His Marxist interests dated to the 1890's when he applied the Marxist historical method in his articles on history of religion and the church in Russia, published in Pokrovsky's voluminous History of Russia.⁵⁸

In spite of his background, the aging academician

⁵⁶In 1961, referring to the programmes and textbooks of 1933, the Soviet historian, L.P. Bushchik stated that "the Marxist-Leninist teaching about socio-economic formations was introduced into the foundations of the new programmes and textbooks". (Ocherk razvitiya shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovaniya v SSSR, Moscow, 1961, p. 251). They successfully combined elements of Marx's largely deterministic and Lenin's essentially voluntaristic outlook on historical development. Furthermore, the "unruly and superfluous material" to which the decree of August 25 objected, was also eliminated; the whole programme was better harmonized and homogenized, the "basic errors of principle" were eliminated, and more "historism" was introduced. An outline of the history curriculum as published in 1933 will be found in Appendix II.

⁵⁷Not to be confused with V.K. Nikol'skii, see above, p. 106.

⁵⁸See chapter "Pokrovsky and Stalin", p. 181.

accepted his assignment with great reluctance. As he admitted in 1933, only his "patriotic feelings" overruled his fears.

I assumed that my duty to the Socialist Fatherland obliged me to devote all my knowledge and all my experience to this task. As far as ancient history was concerned, I had no worries, since I am very versed in this subject.⁵⁹

The true reasons for Nikol'skii's apprehension can only be guessed and inferred. According to his own testimony, his main concern was due to the fact that his enterprise was a pioneering effort in a field not yet well charted by Marxist ideologists which made him say that:

If writing Marxist history textbooks in general is an extremely difficult task, then writing such a textbook on ancient history is twice as difficult!⁶⁰

Marx and Engels had been fairly explicit on feudalism and capitalism, and by 1932 Soviet historiography had reasonably well solved the theoretical problems connected with mediaeval and modern history. The situation, however, was quite different with regard to ancient history.

First, the originators of Marxism formulated some theories about slave-holding societies, but left almost untouched the whole problem of "pre-class" or "archaic" social structures and formations. Marx was interested in the "archaic formation" only in its last stage, i.e., the

⁵⁹Akad. N.M. Nikol'skii, "Kak ya rabotal nad stabil'nyim uchebnykom drevnei istorii", NU, IV (1933), 114.

⁶⁰Ibid.

clan or village community, while Engels only fleetingly broached the subject of "pre-class communes". Secondly, Bolshevik theoreticians before 1932 had discussed mainly how not to understand rather than how to interpret Marx and Engels on the nature of socio-economic formations in the ancient Orient. As a result, Nikol'skii had no solid theoretical foundations for his work.⁶¹

In the absence of theoretical and ideological guide posts the Academician described the two basic periods in pre-class society, i.e., "band organization" and "class commune", on the basis of the latest information of ethnographic research. This, however, proved to be a mistake, for his critics later wrote:

Indicating the significance of ethnographic research only in one part is obviously not enough; hence it should be necessary to underline the attitude of capitalist countries towards the primitive tribes, to point out that the capitalists had been destroying these primitive tribes, that they took their land away and tormented them; it is necessary to point out that the capitalists had enslaved many tribes,

⁶¹His critics maintained the opposite. (Cf. N. Tonin, (book review) I-M, V (1933), 145.). The problems related to the history of pre-capitalist period were studied in 1932 by specialists in various fields within a whole series of special projects in progress. Tonin himself reported in summer 1933 some disagreements among professors of history as to whether the countries of ancient Orient were based on a slave-holding system or on feudalism, one of the most fundamental aspects of Marxism. In a debate at the Moscow Regional Pedagogical Institute, V.K. Nikol'skii maintained that slave holding existed in ancient Orient, while others insisted that it was characterized by feudalism.

introduced forced labour and so on; and also to point out the resistance that the primitive tribes offered, manifesting features of heroism in the struggle with Capitalism.⁶²

The task of the Soviet historian was not objectively to "discover truth", but to "illustrate it", that is to illustrate what the Party regarded as "objective truth". The historian was provided with basic principles and concepts and even ready-made conclusions which he had to prove and illustrate with concrete examples selected and interpreted with the utmost care. From a multitude of facts he had to choose those which best illustrated the fundamental tenets of Marxism as interpreted by the leaders in power. The Soviet historian's primary duty, as Nikol'skii had also understood, was to be a propagandist and agitator.

The author of a Soviet textbook of history under no circumstances can remain a calm "objective" narrator like an epic Nestorian chronicler . . . The Soviet history textbook . . . through its style and exposition, must be an agitator.⁶³

To fulfill his political role, the author of a textbook must strictly follow the Party line and base his work on accepted and tested models. This task, however, becomes tricky and even treacherous when the Party line shifts too frequently, and when no reliable patterns are available.

⁶²Ibid., p. 146.

⁶³N.M. Nikol'skii, Istoriya doklassovogo obshchestva. Drevnii vostok. Antichnyi mir (Moscow, 1933), p. 10.

Nikol'skii's task was herculean. His only guide was the newly authorized syllabus.

Nikol'skii's predicament was all the more thorny because his book was destined to become the first History textbook to be placed into the hands of school children. Their whole future attitude towards history as a subject-matter, and towards history as a source of ideological indoctrination, it was believed, largely depended on the impact this book would make on them. The book was also bound for general sale as a popular Marxist-Leninist handbook. Therefore, apart from being politically sound, it also had to be written in a popular style.

The textbook of Ancient History must captivate the interest of the pupils and befriend them. On the basis of material which is distant from us and not always comprehensible even for adults, it is supposed to show that history is politics projected into the past; on the basis of material from the antiquity, it should strengthen and inculcate the revolutionary enthusiasm and hatred for the oppressing and exploiting classes, call to battle against exploitation of man by man, and encourage the building of a classless society through free and joyful labour.⁶⁴

When describing problems of production, socio-economic formations and social structures, Nikol'skii, for sound pedagogical reasons, avoided the use of abstractions and emphasized concrete facts; but when he submitted the manuscript, the editors found that his book was "overloaded with factual material".⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the NKP

⁶⁴Nikol'skii, I-M, V (1933), 114.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 115.

authorized the book for use in 1933-34 under the condition that it be made stable after necessary revisions.⁶⁶

The manuscript went through the hands of various committees and political editors before it was published. But hardly had it come off the press when it was attacked on grounds entirely unexpected by its author, and almost bordering on the ludicrous. Nikol'skii was criticized for having failed to describe the nature of the labour which transformed the anthropoid ape into man. It was not satisfactory for his critics that the author had stated that,

Conscious labour transformed the nature of the ancient man Labour brought men closer and closer together since they worked together, helping each other. From this began developing human speech and the human capacity of imagination and thought.⁶⁷

The author was criticized for having stressed the development of the individual man, rather than of mankind and the human race as a whole. Referring to Engels' thesis that, while the animal at best only collects his means of subsistence, man produces it. N. Tonin severely reproached Nikol'skii for having failed to describe in "concrete details" (N.B.: to children of age twelve and thirteen) how the "Heidelberg man" developed his tools, and what were the resulting relations of production.

Nikol'skii was also criticized for his treatment

⁶⁶I-M, V (1933), 145.

⁶⁷Nikol'skii, Istoriya doklassovogo obshchestva, p. 12.

of the difference in the occupation of primitive men and women. He was blamed for having stated no more than: "Men were hunting and women gathered fruits". He should have said instead that fruit gathering was a "complex process, full of difficulties, demanding great skill and courage", stated Tonin, probably to show to the growing Soviet youth that women have always been equal to men in everything, and that distribution of labour was an artificial arrangement.

Noteworthy is Tonin's prudish attitude towards Nikol'skii's description of primitive marriage.

The author coarsely explains the primitive marriage: the man, if he so wished, could have several wives and the woman, if she wanted, several husbands. It is better not to speak about this at all than to "explain" in this way!⁶⁸ [*italics mine*]

Finally, Nikol'skii was said to have failed in his political assignment because he did not point out that "the peoples with primitive characteristics of life [*sic*] in the USSR, under the leadership of the Proletariat and of its Party, were building Socialism and struggling against all survivals of class relations".⁶⁹

The textbook written by Gukovskii and Trakhtenberg fared equally badly. Their manuscript was submitted for examination by a special commission appointed by the Central

⁶⁸Tonin, I-M, V (1933), 147.

⁶⁹Ibid.

Committee. Commenting on the book in the quality of her leading position on the Committee, Krupskaya wrote:

A history textbook for secondary schools must be particularly concrete. It must present the pictures of the past in a very concrete form, present the pictures of social structures as a whole, in their development The textbook must be completely saturated with a materialistic understanding of history; however, this is not achieved by abundant citations from Engels, but through a reasoning out of the material from a materialistic point of view.⁷⁰

She explained that from the "materialistic point of view", production with its own "specificity and scope" lies at the foundation of history. Therefore, in history it is important to study production not by itself, but with the purpose of pointing out "precisely how it affects the whole structure, culture, etc."

Gukovski's textbook does not give living pictures of the labour, life, and culture of those times The pupil gets the impression that the Roman Empire was something like a contemporary state, except that they had slaves while we have workers Regardless of the quotations from Engels and Stalin, one does not get a materialistic explanation of the development of society, but a series of more or less correct reflections on some historical themes. In my opinion, the book is unsatisfactory.⁷¹

The textbook was returned to the authors for a thorough revision. When it was finally published, the editors wrote:

Due to the difficulties connected with the writing of such a textbook, and the necessity to verify it

⁷⁰N.K. Krupskaya, "Otzyv na rukopig" A.I. Gukovskogo", Pedagogicheskie Sochineniya (Moscow, 1962), X, 532.

⁷¹Ibid.

through practical application in the school, this textbook is authorized by the collegiate of the NKP for the forthcoming school year 1933-1934, with the condition that after the insertion of necessary completions and changes it be made stable.⁷²

The difficulties that the editors had in mind were of neither an academic nor a technical nature, but ideological and political. The claim that unlike Nikol'skii's textbook, that of Gukovskii and Trakhtenberg lacked factual material, abounded in generalizations, that sociology in it predominated over facts, and that the presentation was too difficult to follow, was no more than mere rationalization. Both textbooks were ordered replaced by entirely new ones for 1935-36 almost as soon as they left the printing shop.

The responsibility for the "errors" contained in these books was placed squarely on the authors in spite of the fact that they had strictly followed the orders given to them from above, and that their manuscripts had been carefully scrutinized by commissions appointed by the Central Committee itself, and rechecked even after printing.

Since the Party, or more precisely the Central Committee regarded itself infallible, the culpability for the former Party line had to be placed on some common mortal; and the authors of the textbooks were convenient scapegoats.

⁷²Ibid., p. 761.

It was the tragedy of these authors to be caught in the midst of Stalin's intervention in the teaching of history.

CHAPTER FIVE

STALIN'S INTERVENTION IN THE TEACHING

OF HISTORY

In his appraisal of the world situation at the Seventeenth Party Congress in January 1934, Stalin struck an optimistic note. For five years, he argued, the capitalist world had been at mortal grips with an incurable economic crisis, disrupting industrial and agricultural production and destroying all national and international trade and financing.¹ Salvation was sought by the capitalists in the preparation of a new imperialistic war. Conflicts between capitalist countries were sharpening. The Sino-Japanese war and the occupation of Manchuria caused tensions in the Far East. In Europe, potential conflicts came into sight as a result of the victory of Nazism in Germany and the rising spirit of revanchisme. The Japanese and German walk-out from the League of Nations gave an incentive for rearmament.²

Stalin was convinced that a "storm of world

¹I.V. Stalin, "Dvizhenie ekonomicheskogo krizisa v kapitalisticheskikh stranakh", Sochineniya (Moscow, 1955), XIII, 284-291.

²Stalin, "Obostrenie politicheskogo polozheniya v kapitalisticheskikh stranakh", ibid., 291-299.

revolution" was rapidly gathering. From all sides he saw "signs of the times" surging forward. The world proletariat was growing impatient with the ever-increasing mass unemployment. Revolutionary activities of workers in various countries, such as the revolt in Austria, the general strike in France and the intensification of activities by the German Communist Party soon provided what seemed like a confirmation of his views and expectations.³

At this point Fascism and Nazism seemed to Stalin not threats, but blessings in disguise. They were for him the surest signs of the final spasm of moribund Capitalism.⁴ At the same time the Soviet Union appeared to him invulnerable to foreign aggression because, he thought, the world proletariat would rise in unison against their own governments if the latter attacked the "Fatherland of the Proletariat".⁵

³It is possible that Stalin may have had some pre-information of the general strike and demonstrations in France, February 6-12, 1934 in which over four million people took part, and of the revolt in Austria against Dolfus, February 12-16, 1934, and laid great hopes on them.

⁴Cf. Stalin, XIII, 293f.

⁵Ibid., p. 297. The Fourth Congress of MOPR (International Organization for Aid to Fighters of the Revolution), held in March 1934 declared that "the name of Dimitrov has become a symbol of the growing might of international proletarian solidarity". Internatsional'nyi Mayak, VII (April, 1937), 7, quoted in Mezhduna-rodnaya solidarnost' trudyashchikhsya v bor'be s fashizmom, protiv razvyazyvaniya vtoroi mirovoi voyny, (1933-1937) (Moscow, 1961), p. 9.

The situation on the domestic front seemed equally rosy to Stalin. The successful fulfillment of the Five Year Plan had proved beyond doubt that Socialism in one country, serving as a basis for world revolution, was fully achievable.⁶ At the same time, the "leftist" and "rightist" oppositions within the Party had been routed. Stalin was right when he said to the Congress:

If, at the Fifteenth Party Congress, it was still necessary to attempt to prove the correctness of the Party line and fight certain anti-Leninist groups, while at the Sixteenth Congress we had to deal final blows to the last adherents of these groups, at this Congress there is nothing to prove and really nobody to deal blows to.⁷ [*italics mine*]

Nevertheless, he warned his audience against undue optimism which might lull the Party into complacency and relaxation of efforts. Despite the favourable "foreign situation", the open racist threats by some Nazi leaders against the USSR, required, he said, that the latter undertake precautionary measures.⁸ Consequently, a rapprochement was necessary with a number of capitalist countries, while the defence and the economy of the Soviet Union should further be strengthened. He concluded that these measures had to be coupled with "ideological vigilance, state of battle-readiness and mobilization for the realization of the Second Five Year Plan", and above all,

⁶Stalin, XIII, 348.

⁷Ibid., p. 347.

⁸History of the C.P.S.U. (Moscow, 1960), p. 481.

by a merciless struggle against the "remnants of capitalism" in the minds of the people.⁹

A major speech by the supreme leader of the Party usually is followed in the USSR by a revision of the Party line, and the necessary readjustments of all spheres of life and endeavour to the new line. Stalin's speech to the Seventeenth Party Congress was followed by a zealous soul-searching among the leaders of all sectors of the administration, economy and culture. All segments of society, and above all the professions, began investigating their own fields and made the necessary adjustments.¹⁰ On the ideological front, it was believed that the final achievement of Socialism in one country was not possible without the establishment of a classless society,¹¹ and that it was therefore necessary to carry to the end the class-struggle undertaken in the period of intensified industrialization and collectivization.¹² Thus, the most important immediate task, the ideologists concluded, was the overcoming of the remnants of capitalism in the minds of the people.¹³

⁹Stalin, XIII, 376.

¹⁰Cf. A. Vershinskii, "Kakim dolzhen byt'proseminar po istoricheskim distsiplinam", I-M, V (1934), 56.

¹¹I-M, II (1934), 3.

¹²Yu. Bocharov, "Zadachi prepodavaniya istorii", I-M, III, (1934), 86.

¹³I-M, II (1934), 3.

The views of the ideologists, however, were nothing more than a mere systematization of Stalin's own ideas. Already in 1926 Stalin had stated that,

To build Socialism in the USSR means to defeat our own Soviet bourgeoisie by fighting with our own power.¹⁴

The historians were particularly concerned with the overcoming of the remnants of capitalism in the minds of the people. The realization of the new Five Year Plan required further strengthening of the schools and improvement of the knowledge about society and of communist education of the students, in which history teaching had to play a particularly important role.¹⁵ Thus, Istorik-Marksist, the official journal of the Society of Marxist Historians, published an editorial explaining in detail the implications of Stalin's speech for the historians.¹⁶

The historic decisions of the Seventeenth Party Congress placed before the Party and the country a task of the greatest significance, i.e., reorganizing the work in all areas in agreement with the grandiose tasks and perspectives imposed by the Party Congress

The historical science must become one of the most important, and politically most up-to-date and most active sections of the theoretical work of the Party, fulfilling the great decisions of its Congress.¹⁷

¹⁴Stalin, "Eshche raz o sotsial-demokraticheskom uklone v nashei partii", IX, 21.

¹⁵L.P. Bushchik, Ocherk razvitiya, shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovaniya v SSSR. (Moscow, 1961), p. 259.

¹⁶"Istoricheskuyu nauku na uroven' velikikh zadach", I-M, II (1934), 3-10.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 3.

The historians were called upon to play a tremendous role in the "revolutionary revision of the historical inheritance of the past". The importance placed on the past was an innovation in Marxist historiographical emphasis.¹⁸ As a result of this total turnabout in policy, the study of the past had to be broadly popularized for the education of "conscious builders of a classless socialist society". This could be achieved, the editorial claimed, through popularization of history and particularly through a study of the "history of the Ancient World, Middle Ages, Modern History, the history of the class struggle in Russia and in the countries enslaved by world imperialism".¹⁹ The former policy of deliberately ignoring most of the pre-1917 history and regarding as important only current events - a policy which had been shaped by the Party, although this was now conveniently ignored - was rejected as a "deeply rooted prejudice".

The sudden interest in the more distant past was merely a "tactical" change; the "strategy" remained the same. As before, history was a political weapon in the hands of the Party. The "tactical" changes were determined by the change in Party policy. Whereas formerly, history

¹⁸Ibid. The study of the more distant past had been formerly regarded as unimportant because of the tremendous importance attached to pure Marxist indoctrination and explanation of the current events. See chapter "The Role of History", p. 44.

¹⁹I-M, II (1934), 3.

had been used as a means of indoctrination and education in Communist and Marxist principles and Weltanschauung, now that Stalin became the incontestable personal dictator, its primary task was to serve the interests of the Party, that is of its leaders, or more precisely of Stalin himself, by explaining and justifying the everchanging turns and twists of the Party line. The true reason for the great change, therefore, seems to have been the need of pragmatic leaders to formulate a pragmatic rather than ideologically orthodox method of indoctrination. Soon a new dimension was to be added to the obligations of historiography and the teaching of history, and this will be examined in the next chapter. Let us here consider the tasks imposed on the historians as a result of the Seventeenth Party Congress in general and Stalin's speech in particular, and the measures undertaken for carrying them out.

Istoriik-Marksist called upon Bolshevik historians to prepare a series of new history books, with the aim of alerting the world proletariat against an impending danger from Imperialism and Fascism, and of calling it to "revolutionary vigilance" and readiness to defend the USSR, "the Fatherland of the toilers of the whole world".²⁰

The History of Civil War, Factories and Mills which had been ordered some time earlier was urgently to be completed and introduced as "a school textbook and as one of the

²⁰Ibid., p. 6.

most popular books for the broad masses of readers in the USSR and abroad".²¹ Histories of the Communist Party, the Comintern and of the "Imperialist War of 1914-1918" had to be written in "concrete" forms. The workers of the USSR and the proletarians of the world were to be supplied with histories of Socialist Construction, of the First Socialist State, of the Victorious Socialism in One Country, and of the Party. "Every builder of Socialism in the USSR and every fighter against Capitalism in the bourgeois countries should become familiar with this history", demanded the editorial.²²

The History of the USSR ordered at this time was destined to become a "road map of Socialism", illustrating the progress of the national republics in the Socialist Construction; it was to serve as a blueprint for revolution and for building Socialism. The historians had to show in concrete terms, and using factual information, how the entire face of the USSR had changed and was changing under the guidance of the Party; how the economically, politically and culturally backward "colonies of Czarist Russia" were being transformed into rapidly growing autonomous National Republics, "liquidating their centuries-old backwardness only thanks to the Dictatorship of the

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

Proletariat",²³ and to show also that the new system worked equally well for all nationalities regardless of the former level of their development.

It was also believed that a concrete study of the history of individual nationalities under the former regime and under the new Socialist system would make it easier to "overcome the remnants of capitalism" among the national groups. According to Stalin, it is precisely in this area that the "remnants of capitalism" were the most prominent in the mind of the people.

The tendency for nationalism, whether of the great power type or of a local nature, indicates a political departure from Leninist internationalism, and the attempts of the national bourgeoisie to undermine the Soviet system and re-establish capitalism.²⁴

While these proposals show the Party's interest in the indoctrination of adults, in the USSR and outside, its main concern was directed towards the schools where new millions of future citizens were educated; and history, being the most political of all school subjects, received the greatest attention.

Historians must, above all, join the work on the changing of the teaching of history and the preparation and writing of new textbooks, in agreement with the new demands imposed on them and formulated in the indications of comrade Stalin. The historians - researchers must enter into direct cooperation with the practising-pedagogues and together with them compose model Bolshevik textbooks, school

²³Ibid., p. 7.

²⁴Ibid., p. 8.

readers, teacher manuals and a school history library - in one word, that whole scientific-pedagogical arsenal of historical weapons with the aid of which the historical science must penetrate into the masses and educate new millions of conscious fighters and builders of Socialism in our country.²⁵ [*italics mine*]

In this case the decision to change the history programme in the schools was provided with an objective justification. During the school year 1933-34, the NKP conducted a survey of one hundred and twenty schools in fourteen regions and districts, in which about one hundred thousand pupils participated. The report noted some progress over the earlier periods, but it also pointed out several weaknesses in the teaching of history. It was discovered that the students had a poor knowledge of "historical facts", often confused actual events with pure schemes and poorly grasped various generalizations. Their knowledge of chronology was found weak, and their familiarity with historical maps most inadequate. They had poorly understood the relations of historical events and lacked historical perspective, and often mistook past events for contemporary ones. This claim was, however, at variance with the findings of some inspectors²⁶ and foreign visitors.²⁷

²⁵Ibid., p. 9.

²⁶See chapter "History Textbooks", p. 103f. It will be recalled that Zhorzh Fridman who had inspected the schools one year earlier, as well as foreign visitors (Th. Woody and others) had thought that from the point of view of indoctrination the teaching of history and social studies was most effective.

²⁷Cf. Th. Woody, New Minds: New Men? (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1932), passim.

The Commissar of Education, A.S. Bubnov, met on March 8, 1934 with a group of historians and educators from the NKP for the planning of the preparation of "truly stable textbooks". At that meeting he gave a truer indication of the reasons for the change in the teaching of history. While maintaining that the history textbook did not provide the student with a systematic exposition of historical developments, he stated that the history of socio-economic structures, political events, and class struggle should be explained by a "pragmatic history".²⁸

Bubnov's emphasis on pragmatic history supplanting the former ideologically orthodox method of indoctrination indicates the extent of the conceptual change. Marxism, as formerly understood, was on the retreat.

This rapid and radical alteration of approach may well have startled the assembled pedagogues. Certainly the debate that followed Bubnov's remarks seems to reflect a state of confusion in some of the participants. Krupskaya, for example, spoke in vague terms about a "most significant problem . . . i.e., how to write textbooks . . . imposed by life itself . . . ". She was more interested in developing the individual capacities of children and training them in the spirit of Marxist ideology and internationalistic

²⁸ Arkhir Ministerstva prosveshcheniya RSFSR, f. Upravleniya nachal'noi i srednei shkoly za 1932 g. op. No. 1, sv. 15, d. 112, l.i. quoted by Bushchik, p. 256f.

brotherhood. Her comment about the need for a change in the history textbook remained vague and evasive of political issues. She was going through the motions of providing pedagogical arguments for a measure obviously imposed from above.

We know that our children think in very concrete terms. And if we supply them with abstract material, they will not acquire any historical perspectives. Lack of historical perspective is a characteristic in children.²⁹

To provide a broader basis and further support for the impending changes, a conference of teachers of social studies was called together in April 1934, at which the pragmatic goals of the leaders of the Party and the idealistic aims of many educators were to some extent subtly reconciled. Numerous examples of confusion among students through the teaching of abstract socio-economic material entirely unintelligible to them were brought forth. Some delegates were particularly concerned about the fact that the age characteristics of children had been completely ignored, and that even the youngest children were taught complex sociological and political problems. Social studies, others maintained, was not one course, but several simultaneous ones:

It is a veritable course in political economics in abbreviated form; a course of study of Communist Society, State, the Party, and so on.³⁰

²⁹Ibid., p. 257.

³⁰Ibid., p. 258.

But what they were criticising is precisely what had been demanded before, and to a large extent still required by the highest officials as indicated also by Bubnov's remarks above.

An intensive campaign was undertaken by the daily and periodical press with the purpose of providing a popular basis for the change. Letters to the editor appeared almost daily, criticising the existing practices in the teaching of social studies.³¹ Articles and editorials criticised the extant history textbooks for giving abstract descriptions of the class struggle without concrete facts. On April 5, 1934, Pravda published an article under the highly suggestive title: "Skeletons in the School", maintaining that the history textbooks give "only abstract formulae without faces. These are decidedly textbooks without czars and kings. Only 'class struggle' and nothing else!"³² (italics mine)

Pokrovsky's emotional outburst in 1926 and his prediction that a history of "czars, ministers, reformers

³¹According to testimonials of former Soviet citizens, there was a wide-spread popular dissatisfaction both with the former "progressive" methods of teaching and with social studies as a means of indoctrination. Thirsty for knowledge, the Russian people wanted their children to be taught concrete facts and "real" knowledge. This may account for the fact that few of the letters were of the usual stereotyped form which are obviously written by carefully instructed agents of agitation and propaganda, and by trustworthy party members.

³²"Skelety v shkole", Pravda, April 5, 1934.

etc. . . . will never be taught again"³³ sounds most pathetic in the light of the new developments. If it had not been worthwhile "spilling so much blood to achieve such petty results" like replacing the czars, ministers and philanthropists by great rebels, revolutionaries and socialists, as Pokrovsky argued in 1927,³⁴ then how much less worthwhile was spilling all that blood only to return to the history of "czars and kings" once again!

The former Marxist interpretation that modes of production, economics and class-struggle were the moving force in history was rejected and "events, individuals and facts" were declared to be that moving force. On April 10, a leading educational journal commented:

The task of teaching history is to pass in review before the eyes of the children living and beautiful pictures of the past, pictures of basic political events, wars, revolutions, popular movements, familiarizing them with political figures and with those who, through their class and social position, held in their hands the fate of peoples and states and to show in their full diversity the events, individuals and facts, which are the "moving force in history". [*italics mine*] ³⁵

On the 24th of April an article in the same journal again attacked the textbooks of history for omitting living historical figures, ignoring concrete

³³Cf. Chapter "The Role of History", p. 48.

³⁴Ibid., p. 16.

³⁵"Za podlinnuyu istoriyu protiv skholastiki i abstrakts'yi", Za Kommunisticheskoe Prosveshchenie, April 10, 1934.

and clear facts, and venturing into the regions of some themes and problems which are beyond the realm of child comprehension. The author was "shocked by the naked truth of the state of teaching history" in the Soviet school. The authors of textbooks, he said while keeping silent on the high authorities which not only gave their "Imprimatur" but also strict instructions that the authors had to follow, "speculated with wisdom, drew conclusions, made generalizations . . . on the basis of abundant quotations from class warfare".³⁶ The pupils, he said not without irony and biting sarcasm, had in the past been introduced to "higher" science, by being taught how to "solve problems of overgrowth", how to determine "the specific importance of every class" and how to discover "the role of moving forces in history".³⁷

The Party line having openly shifted toward more practical lines, the leaders suddenly realized that the whole system of ideological indoctrination of the younger generation had been "incomprehensible", "abstract", and even "repulsive" to children because of "excessive use of clichés and other forms of impermissible training". Was this an admission of failure?

Until Stalin achieved incontestable personal power, the Party had maintained that it was the "most

³⁶Za Kommunisticheskoe Prosveshchenie, April 24, 1934.

³⁷Ibid.

important task" of the school, the Pioneer organization and the Komsomol to discuss ideological matters and to comment on all Party Congresses and their decisions. Political meetings were often called at the expense of regular class hours. Ideological and social training was also carried out through "socially useful work". Children "volunteered" for various projects, involving physical effort, such as construction, auxiliary work in factories and help in harvesting, and they were often sent among the adult population as agitators during economic or political campaigns. It was firmly believed that this "socially useful work" trained communist attitudes toward life and society. All this was now changed.

In the summer of 1933 the Central Committee "categorically" prohibited the organization during class hours of political and ideological meetings. Serious study became the "most important social obligation". Professional, Komsomol, and Party organizations were forbidden to call student political gatherings, as had been a frequent practice in the past, and to overload the students on their days of rest with "socially useful obligations". Soliciting the aid of individuals or groups of students for economic and political campaigns outside their own school was permitted only if "explicit consent" was secured from the principal, and then, only outside the regular

class hours.³⁸

On April 23, 1934, the Party issued a decree "On the Overwork of School Children and Pioneers Through Social-Political Tasks". This surprisingly little known decree was perhaps the most revolutionary decision in the history of the Soviet school. In it the Central Committee demanded:

- (1) That the study of the decisions of the Seventeenth Party Congress and of the problems of Marxist-Leninist theory be immediately brought to an end in the elementary schools.
- (2) That no orders be given by the Central Bureau of the Young Pioneers for activities of Pioneers in the school without the knowledge of the Commissariat of People's Education . . . and, in the schools themselves, without the knowledge of the principal, and
- (3) That in the secondary schools overloading of children with social political tasks not be permitted.³⁹

This decree marked the end of an era of intensive indoctrination of youngsters which it was now found had repelled them from all interest even in phenomena of social life and Socialist Construction accessible to their level of understanding",⁴⁰ and at the same time it inaugurated the final phase of the return to the traditional system of education, with its division into elementary and secondary schools.⁴¹

³⁸"O uporyadochenii obshchestvennykh nagruzok studentov", KPSS o Komsomole i molodezhi (Moscow, 1962), p. 216.

³⁹"O peregruzke shkol'nikov i pionerov obshchestvenno-politicheskimi zadaniyami", ibid., p. 220.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹On May 15, 1934, on orders from the Central

There is no evidence in this decree that the Party truly believed that its former plan of communist indoctrination had failed. On the contrary; but, having attained absolute power by eliminating from higher positions the old Bolsheviki, many of whom to the end had clung to ideological purity, Stalin had no wish to see a new ideologically well-informed generation raised -- a whole generation which one day might call him and his lieutenants to account for their deviations and betrayal of the Marxist faith. Furthermore, Stalin needed men who were properly trained in the professions, not in ideology.

On May 16, 1934, Stalin, on behalf of the Party, and Molotov, in the name of the government, issued the historic decree "On the Teaching of Civic History in Secondary Schools". This decree is regarded by most Western scholars as the turning point in Soviet historiography. It is also regarded as the beginning of "The Great Retreat"⁴² and of the great "Betrayal of Marx".⁴³

Committee, the school system was reorganized. The former Seven Year and Ten Year Schools established only two years earlier were now transformed into the School of General Education consisting of:

1. Elementary School (grades 1-IV)
2. Incomplete Secondary School (grades 1-VII)
3. Secondary School (grades 1-X)

"O strukture nachal'noi i srednei shkoly v SSSR", Pravda, May 16, 1934.

⁴²Cf. N.S. Timashev, The Great Retreat (New York: Dutton and Co., 1946).

⁴³Cf. K. Mehnert, Stalin versus Marx (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952).

At least one author quoted the decree in extenso in his work on Russian historiography.⁴⁴

In view of the importance attached to this decree by the writers on Soviet historiography, it may be useful to quote at least the pertinent passage stating the new line to be followed in the teaching of history.

Instead of the teaching of civic history in an animated and entertaining form with the exposition of the most important events and facts in their chronological sequence and with sketches of historical personages, the pupils are given abstract definitions of social and economic formations, which thus replace the consecutive exposition of civic history by abstract sociological schemes.

The decisive condition of the permanent mastery of history is the observance of historical and chronological sequence in the exposition of historical events, with a due emphasis in the memory of the pupils of important historical facts, the names of historical persons and chronological dates. Only such a course of historical teaching can assure the necessary understanding, fidelity of presentation and real use of historical material; correct analysis and correct presentation of historical events, leading pupils to the Marxist conception of history, are possible only on this basis.⁴⁵

⁴⁴A.G. Mazour, Modern Russian Historiography (2nd ed., revised; New York: Van Nostrand, 1958), p. 197f. Mazour omitted the list of the authors charged with the writing of the new textbooks. This is most unfortunate since this list is invariably omitted from all current Soviet sources and even collections of documents. (Cf. Sbornik rukovodyashchikh materialov o shkole (Moscow:APN RSFSR, 1952) . It may be assumed that the reason for this systematic omission by Soviet sources is the fact that many of the scholars mentioned in the decree were basely disgraced a few months later.

⁴⁵"O prepodavanii grazhdanskoi istorii v shkolakh SSSR", Direktivy VKP(b) i postanovleniya sovetskogo pravitel'stva o narodnom obrazovanii za 1917-1947 gg. (Moscow, 1947), I, 170f. trans. in Slavonic and East European Review, XIII (July, 1934), 204-205.

Although Stalin demanded a full chronological treatment of history describing vividly the reigns of various czars, at least for some time, the main stress remained as before on the "proletarian epoch". The Party still considered it most important that the students be taught contemporary history, namely world history of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, with a particular emphasis on that of the USSR.⁴⁶

In order to assure "high scientific quality, ideological consistency, and pedagogical soundness",⁴⁷ Stalin drew a list of highly qualified scholars and practising pedagogues, to collaborate in the drafting of the new textbooks.⁴⁸

⁴⁶I-M, III (1934), 88.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 89.

⁴⁸Direktivy VKP(b), I, 186. A prominent role among these authors was given to scholars, like N.M. Vanag, who were later disgraced as members of the "anti-Marxist school of Pokrovsky". It seems, therefore, worthwhile citing the list of the authors and the areas in which each team co-operated.

Ancient History: Prof. S.I. Kovalev (leader), Academician N.M. Nikol'skii, A.S. Svanidze, Prof. A.V. Minulin; Medieval History: Prof. E.A. Kos'minskii (leader), Prof. A.I. Gukovskii, O.V. Trakhtenberg, A.V. Malyshev; Modern History: Acad. N.M. Lukin (leader), Prof. G.S. Fridlyand, Prof. V.M. Dalin, Prof. G.S. Zaidel', dotsent A.V. Efimov; History of USSR: Prof. N.M. Vanag (leader), Prof. B.D. Grekov, Prof. A.M. Pankratova, Prof. S.A. Piontkovskii; Modern History of Dependent and Colonial Countries: R.B. Radek (leader), K.Z. Gabidulin, Prof. S.A. Konrad, A.S. Mukhardzhi, M.S. Godes, M.D. Kokin, L.I. Mad'yar, P.A. Mifi, F.A. Rotshtein.

This list was omitted from Sbornik rukovodyashchikh materialov o shkole published in 1952.

As can be readily seen, there was nothing fundamentally new in this decree over and above what at one time or another had been said by various historians who had been in disagreement with the then official line. Its significance lay first, in the fact that it was issued by Stalin personally, and therefore showed beyond doubt what the new Party line was, and, secondly, in the implications of the change. Commenting on the immediate implications of the decree for the teachers of history, the official journal of the Marxist historians declared:

Facts, dates, personalities, this is what we want! We cannot put up with "reformers" who are trying to reduce history in our schools to the teaching of "illustrative episodes" set in a sea of arid abstractions. Our text-books have only too frequently represented the revolutionary struggle of the masses as a struggle against Capitalism in general, against Autocracy in general; there hardly ever appears on the scene any living figure representing capitalists or Russian autocrats. Hence the indignant remark of a history teacher: "The text book says this happened under Paul. Do I have to know who Paul was?". Many young teachers sincerely hold this view; and they are not to blame; they have themselves been taught history with the names of czars carefully excluded.⁴⁹ [*italics mine*]

The Party, it appears from the obviously derogatory use of the word "reformists", could no longer put up with the orthodox Marxists, who, in their "reformist" zeal, formerly had totally rejected the Russian national tradition.

On May 22 the Commissar of Education, issued

⁴⁹I-M, III (1934), 88.

detailed instructions for the fulfillment of Stalin's wishes. He drew the attention of all leaders of education, school principals and their teaching staff to the "exclusive significance" of the decree, which was the last in a series⁵⁰ constituting "a militant and concrete construction" of the Soviet school.

There cannot and must not be a single teacher or worker of enlightenment in the country who does not study these most important documents which give new evidence of the exclusive concern for and attention to the school, shown by our Party and its leader, Comrade Stalin.⁵¹

Kamenev and Tsimkhes⁵² of the School Direction (Shkolnoe Upravlenie) were ordered immediately to organize the groups of authors named by Stalin for preparing the textbooks by June 1935. Detailed summaries and outlines of textbooks had to be submitted to the Commissar of Education within three weeks, not later than June 15, 1934.⁵³

At the same time new programmes of history were ordered for the school year 1935/36 to be drafted by the best qualified scholars of the Academy of Sciences, the Communist Academy, and of the corresponding scientific

⁵⁰The others were those of September 5, 1931, July 25, 1932, and February 12, 1933.

⁵¹"Prikaz po narkomprosu RSFSR", Kommunisticheskoe Prosveshchenie, III (1934), 15.

⁵²Regretfully, the initials could not be secured by the author.

⁵³Ibid., p. 18.

research institutes. Kamenev was made responsible for the most urgent preparation of methodological directives on the use of stable programmes and history textbooks for the forthcoming 1934/35 school year so that the teachers may comply with the new orders even before the new textbook reached their classes.

To provide the class-rooms with competent teachers, the Faculties of History of the Universities of Moscow and Leningrad were re-opened on September 1, 1934.⁵⁴ The Marxist Historians were ordered to "mobilize the whole historical front and attract the attention of the better professional cadres".⁵⁵ This was an open invitation for the return of men like Tarlé and other "bourgeois" historians who had been released from their duties when the faculties of history were shut down in the early 1920's.

The Uchpedgiz was ordered to begin the publication of a new methodological journal, Istoriya v Shkole, with an editorial board approved by the Commissar of Education.

The director of teacher training, Orakhelashvili, was instructed to submit to Epshtein, the deputy Commissar of Education, a detailed plan of a curriculum designed for the immediate raising of the qualifications of all teachers of history with courses to be given in 1934/35 preferably

⁵⁴Ibid. It will be recalled that the faculties of history had been closed shortly after the Bolshevik revolution. See chapter "The Role of History", p. 39.

⁵⁵I-M, II (1934), 9.

by the history departments of the pedagogical institutes and the faculties of history at the universities.⁵⁶

To fill the gap until new textbooks were published in full agreement with Stalin's wishes, temporary teacher manuals and textbooks were published by Sotsekgiz and Partizdat.⁵⁷

On the pages of Istoriik-Marksist a new section devoted to the problems of teaching history appeared under the heading "Prepodavanie Istории".⁵⁸ One of the very first articles published in this section stated that,

Without a special study of history, and without an historical approach to all phenomena of life there can be no Marxist education and instruction; briefly, there can be no Soviet school.⁵⁹

History is important only inasmuch as it is a tool in the hands of the Party, the author argued, and it must be used as an "explanation of the present through the study of the

⁵⁶Direktivy VKP(b), I, 167.

⁵⁷Struve, konspekt lektsii po istorii drevnego vostoka; Piontkovskii, Istoriya Rossii XIX-XX v.v.; Preobrazhenskii, Feodalizm v Zapadnoi Evrope; Bocharov, Istoriya Rossii i SSSR v materialakh i dokumentakh; Lukin, Epokha imperializma v materialakh i dokumentakh; Lukin, Epokha promyshlennogo kapitalizma v materialakh i dokumentakh; Udal'tsov, Klassy i klassovaya bor'ba v antichnom i feodal'-nom obshchestve, Ryklin (ed.), Ocherki po istorii revolyutsionnogo dvizheniya; Vantke, Ocherke mezhdunarodnogo revolyutsionnogo dvizheniya (epokha dovoennogo imperializma); Knorin, Istoriya VKP(b); Yaroslavskii, Istoriya VKP(b).

⁵⁸Beginning with the issue No. V (1934).

⁵⁹A. Vershinskii, "Kakim dolzhen byt' proseminar po istoricheskim distsiplinam", I-M, V (1934) 60.

⁶⁰Ibid.

historical process as a whole".⁶⁰ And it is for this reason, "and for this reason alone", that history is a compulsory subject on the curriculum of the Soviet school, stated Vershinskii, echoing the words of Mamet from the 1920's.⁶¹

The far-reaching significance of a controlled political indoctrination of school children can be easily grasped from a mere glance at the rate of numerical growth of youngsters educated in the state schools up to that time. Whereas before 1917 only five and a half million children were taught in secondary schools, in 1934 this number grew to twenty six and a half million, and by 1937 at least thirty six million were expected to be enrolled. "The world outlook of these pupils must remain under the leadership of the Party", stated A.M. Pankratova, Stalin's favourite historian, in an article dealing with the "Bolshevik Teaching of History".⁶² In the struggle for the control of the minds of these millions of youngsters, the history textbook was called upon to play the role of "the most crucial book", she maintained in her article published in Bolshevik, the Central Committee's official organ.

There is no other single book, with the exception of the classics of Marxism-Leninism, which has such a large number of readers as the school text.

⁶¹Cf. chapter "The Role of History", p. 40f.

⁶²"Za Bol'shevistskoe Prepodavanie Istorii", Bolshevik (Dec. 15, 1934), 50.

Millions of readers use school textbooks
The material in the textbook is interpreted by
children as an unquestionable source. This is
why it is necessary to make for the textbook
the highest scientific, pedagogical and political
demands.⁶³ [*italics mine*]

The new textbooks in history, particularly those on the history of Russia, which were to become blue prints of revolution and Socialist Construction, were Stalin's carefully chosen ideological weapon and tool for the education of a new generation of young followers and for the re-education of the masses of adult population of the USSR.

Stalin's personal intervention in the teaching of history was a signal for the Soviet historians that radical changes had to be introduced also in the historical front as a whole. But precisely in what direction these changes were to guide Soviet historiography it was not quite clear; and it took at least two more personal interventions by Stalin before the historians reoriented themselves.

⁶³Ibid., p. 35. Pankratova's statement is strikingly reminiscent of Pokrovsky's argument in 1927 that textbooks ought to be written by three people: a scholar, a political editor and a pedagogue. Cf. chapter "History Textbooks", p. 95f.

CHAPTER SIX

VICTORY ON THE HISTORICAL FRONT

Confusion spread over the historical and historico-methodological fronts after the decree of May 16, 1934. The historians were not quite sure of the true intentions of Stalin's intervention, and the methodologists debated the pros and cons of a systematic course in history particularly with regard to the elementary school level. Many educators, especially those who adhered to the pedological school of thought,¹ argued that children in grades three and four were not ready for a systematic study of history.

The official advocates of systematic history dismissed the arguments of the Pedologists and their sympathisers on three grounds. First, they argued that systematic history had been successfully taught in the Russian elementary schools before the Revolution, and that, therefore, there was no reason to assume that children in the Soviet school would be less ready for such a course, as, apparently, the Pedologists did. Secondly, they

¹Pedology or child study was another feature of Western educational principles, which, because of its somewhat Tolstoyan characteristics became popular in the USSR towards the end of the 1920's and took strong roots in Soviet education in the first half of the 1930's.

pointed out that very young children were being taught systematic history in several West European countries, notably in France, Germany, and England, with no apparent ill effects. Finally, they claimed that Soviet experience itself clearly indicated the possibility of teaching history to children of this age level.²

The debate was a very short one. On June 9, 1934, the Party "solved" the problem from above by decreeing the introduction of an Elementary Course of General History of the USSR in the Elementary and Incomplete Secondary schools. At the same time, the Party determined the content and methods, and proposed the following curriculum:

1. Elementary History of USSR with brief summary of General History (grade III, 80 hours of teaching).
2. Ancient World History (grade V, 80 hours and grade VI, 40 hours).
3. Medieval History: 5th to 9th Century (grade VI, 40 hours) and 12th to 18th Century (grade VII, 80 hours).³

Practical measures for the execution of the Central Committee's orders were immediately undertaken. On July 9, the Commissar of Education issued detailed

²Cf. A. Rozin, "Fundament istoricheskogo obrazovaniya", N-U, IV (1935), 66. Significantly reference was made to educational practices in czarist Russia in a favourable way, and, in the reference to the Western countries, the formerly inevitable expression "capitalist countries" was replaced by the moderate form "the West".

³"O vvedenii v nachal'noi i nepolnoi srednei shkole elementarnogo kursa vseobshchei istorii i istorii SSSR", Sbornik rukovodyashchikh materialov o shkole (Moscow, 1952), p. 76.

orders for the most urgent preparation of an elementary school textbook in Russian history with some elements of general history. The historians Mints and Lozinsky were commissioned to prepare the manuscript. Bubnov's decree was later acclaimed as a "milestone in the history of Soviet education".⁴

Summaries and outlines of textbooks which had been ordered by the decree of May 16⁵ were ready in the summer 1934 and examined by various commissions appointed by the Central Committee and the NKP. The outlines of the textbooks on Ancient and Medieval history were found satisfactory, given the "Imprimatur" and published with the approval of the NKP for use in the Incomplete Secondary schools. According to Bushchik, these textbooks "incorporated the Marxist assumption that in a concrete and historically formed society there are no "'pure' socio-economic formations"; and also Lenin's theory that in every process of social development there are "remnants of the past, foundations of the present and beginnings of the future".⁶

The need to bring out this ideological point seems clear. Stalin's demand for an all out fight against the "remnants of capitalism", fully fourteen years after

⁴Rozin, p. 66.

⁵Cf. chapter "Stalin's Intervention", p. 140.

⁶L.P. Bushchik, Ocherk razvitiya shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovaniya (Moscow, 1961), p. 262.

the Revolution, and in a period when the foundations of socialism were said to have been established, obviously needed an explanation and justification, lest the people think that socialism had failed. If the present contains remnants of the past, then it is logical that in a socialist society there can be survivals of capitalism which however should be overcome. It should be pointed out, however, that the concept that there are no pure socio-economic formations formerly was advocated by Pokrovsky in opposition to his Stalinist attackers who had argued "that every given country at every given period of time must be exclusively dominated by a single economic system".⁷

The outlines of the textbooks on Modern History and the History of the USSR had a much less favourable reception. A special commission, headed by Stalin and his close associates Kirov and Zhdanov, examined several dozen manuscripts submitted that summer. On August 8, 1934, the Commission issued its Remarks on the textbook of the History of the USSR. The Remarks, Stalin's second, and perhaps more important intervention in the teaching of history than that of May 16, were not made public, as far as can be ascertained, until 1936, when on January 27 they were published in Pravda, by explicit orders of the Central

⁷M.N. Pokrovsky, Brief History of Russia (10th edition; New York: International Publishers), p. 284.

Committee, together with a resolution of January 26, 1936 dealing with some developments on the historical front.⁸

Judging by the Remarks, the authors of the textbooks were utterly confused by the former decrees and instructions. They were accused of having reverted to some general trends characteristic of the pre-Revolution historiography. Former Russian historians, in their textbooks and courses on Russian history, had written essentially a history of great Russia. The peoples with which the Russians had come into contact were shown as objects of historical action and imperial policy, rather than "makers of history".

The authors of the outline blindly imitate the hackneyed and entirely unscientific concepts of all sorts of bourgeois historians, forgetting that they must communicate to our youth Marxist and scientifically founded definitions.⁹

Whether these accusations were fair and well founded or not cannot be ascertained because none of the outlines were published. On the other hand, these remarks and criticism reveal a great deal about the views of the Party leaders on historiography and its purpose.

When the decree of May 16, 1934 emphasized the need for stressing the role of historical figures and for abandoning Marxist sociological schemes, Stalin had

⁸"Na fronte istoricheskoi nauki", Sbornik, p. 84.

⁹"Zamechanie po povodu konspekta uchebnika po istorii SSSR", Sbornik, p. 85.

obviously no intention of leading Soviet historiography back to an unadulterated form of its pre-Revolution predecessor. Most of the pre-Revolution historians often referred to the minorities of the Russian Empire only marginally. The Soviet leaders, on the other hand, largely depended on interracial solidarity within the Soviet union and with the proletariat of the world. The former "bourgeois" historians had presented the history of Russia in relative isolation from the general history of Europe and the world, except in as much as Russia came in direct contact with certain foreign countries. Such an approach to writing history would have been most undesirable to the Soviet leaders who were preparing a new line of international solidarity, the so-called "Popular Front" in the face of the rising German threat.¹⁰ Finally, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia had to be shown not as a mere coincidence of circumstances, but as the first link in a long chain of Communist revolutions which are the result of "inevitable laws" of social and historical development.

We need such a textbook in which, in the first place, the history of Great Russia is not isolated from the history of the other peoples of the USSR,

¹⁰ Soon after the Seventeenth Party Congress in January 1934 the Soviet leaders seem to have realized the serious nature of the Nazi threat, as testify the numerous articles which appeared in the press on German racist claims, and the fact that the USSR, in a reversal of policy, entered the League of Nations.

and, in the second place, in which the history of the peoples of the USSR is not isolated from the general European and world history.¹¹

Surely it did not take exceptionally brilliant minds to understand these elementary principles.

Nevertheless, the Remarks want us to believe that the authors of the submitted textbook had not been able to follow their instructions. According to the Remarks, the authors failed to describe the conditions and origin of the movements for national liberation among the peoples subjected by the Russian czarism. Consequently, "the October Revolution, as a liberator of these peoples from national oppression, remains unjustified, just as the founding of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics remains unexplained".¹²

It seems unreasonable to maintain that Soviet historians who had been carefully groomed by the Party leaders¹³ should be unable to follow their instructions. On the other hand, it seems more likely that they should have been unwilling to recognize the fact that the Party had changed its line, at least as this was indicated in the new attitude towards the capitalist countries, as suggested by the following criticism.

The outline does not reflect the role and influence of West European revolutionary bourgeois and

¹¹Sbornik, p. 86.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Cf. chapter "Pokrovsky and Stalin", p. 189.

socialist movements on the formation of the bourgeois revolutionary movement and the proletarian socialist movement in Russia. The authors of the outline have obviously forgotten that the Russian revolutionaries regarded themselves as pupils and disciples of the famous giants of bourgeois revolutionary and Marxist thought in the west.¹⁴ [italics mine]

Also it seems incredible that the czarist role in World War I as the "reserve" of the West-European states as well as the "dependency" of Russian czarism and capitalism on West European capital should have been altogether neglected by Vanag, as Stalin claimed, as a result of which neglect "the significance of the October Revolution as a liberator of Russia from her semi-colonial state was left entirely unexplained".

The outline fails to take into account the nature of the general European political crisis before the World War as revealed, among others, by the failure of bourgeois democracy and parliamentarianism, as a result of which the significance of the Soviets, from the point of view of world history, as the standard bearers of proletarian democracy and as organs of liberation of workers and peasants from capitalism, remains unexplained.¹⁵

More credible, of course, is the claim that the outline neglected to describe the struggle of various factions within the ruling Communist Party of the USSR and the "struggle with Trotskyism, as the manifestation of petty-bourgeois counterrevolution". This was still a very delicate problem, and it was better to leave it

¹⁴Sbornik, p. 85.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 86.

alone until specific instructions were given on its detailed interpretation.

Stalin and his commission found particularly unsatisfactory the outline submitted by N.N. Vanag. Unless this manuscript is published one day, the full truth may never be found out. It seems most incomprehensible that of all people Vanag, Pokrovsky's most brilliant student and a rising leader of Marxist historians¹⁶ should have written a textbook reminiscent of former bourgeois works. One must draw the conclusion that the Remarks do not reflect the full truth about the manuscripts.

Unless he had been explicitly forced to do so by the highest authorities, it seems improbable that Vanag would have neglected, as suggested by the Remarks, to "underline the annexist-colonialist role played by Russian czarism in the service of the Russian bourgeoisie and landlords, or that he would have forgotten to "underline the counterrevolutionary role of Russian czarism in its foreign policies".¹⁷ The Remarks sound especially false when Vanag is accused of neglecting to emphasize such features as were among the most characteristic tenets of the Pokrovsky "school", i.e., "czarism as the prison of

¹⁶ A.A. Avtorkhanov, "Polozhenie istoricheskoi nauki v SSSR", Materialy Konferentsii Nauchnykh Rabotnikov (emigrantov) (Munich: Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1951), p. 11.

¹⁷ Sbornik, p. 85.

nations" and "czarism as the international gendarme".¹⁸

All these gross "errors" and "shortcomings" notwithstanding, Vanag and his colleagues were asked to continue their work on the preparation of the new textbook on the History of the USSR. It seems that at this time theirs had been sins of omission rather than sins of commission.

On August 14, 1934, the Central Committee and the Government approved the Remarks and requested that the authors of the outlines urgently prepare revised textbooks in the light of instructions from the Party.¹⁹

The growing realization of the seriousness of the German threat, the resulting "Popular Front" policy abroad, and, finally, the assassination of Kirov in December 1934 and the consequent introduction of the notorious Yezhovshchina, marked a new phase in Soviet life in general and on the historical front in particular. The Party propaganda machinery was mobilized in the struggle for the urgent overcoming of the "remnants of capitalism" in the minds of the people, the urgency of which was cleverly illustrated by the murder of one of the most popular leaders of the Party.

In October 1935, a Council of Teachers of the

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Bushchik, p. 263. The author has found no evidence that these instructions have been published.

Institute of Red Professors was convened at the request of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the Central Committee and the Scientific Committee of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR. The need for sweeping action in the field of propaganda and education among the masses and the problem of "overcoming the remnants of capitalism in the minds of the people" were the themes of the deliberations.²⁰ Shtetskii, the head of Agitprop opened the first meeting by bringing to the attention of the participants the importance of the series of decrees issued by Stalin on the teaching and study of history, and of a decree by the Leningrad City Commissariat of the Party on the lack of historical works about the Soviet period.²¹ Shtetskii's remarks on the teaching of history in the Soviet school and on the nature of the tasks of Soviet historians are most revealing, and, in view of the importance of his unique position, should be regarded as a true reflection of the Party line.

Shtetskii described the state of Soviet historiography as follows: Marxist historians are not scholars but propagandists playing a specific practical role. Stalin's intervention in the teaching of history was to be taken as a direct intervention in Soviet historiography.

²⁰M. Shestakov, "Soveshchanie prepodavatelei institutov krasnoi professury", I-M, II (1935), 119.

²¹Ibid. This decree was said to have been issued on March 29, 1935 but no details are provided about its contents.

Ideology, or theory should be subordinated to practice. The Soviet historians are provided with specific outlines from above, the details of which they must then work out, leading to conclusions which also are provided from above. Specifically, the head of the Agitprop pointed out to the assembled Red Professors that new programmes and study plans had been determined and stabilized, making it possible for their Institute to carry out successfully its primary task of political indoctrination.

The Red Professors are not 'academicians', but fighting Communists, and they must remember the instructions of Comrade Stalin about the unity of theory and practice. For all of us, in this respect, the model is Comrade Stalin who, like nobody else, is capable of uniting theory and practice.²²

The need for "uniting theory and practice" had been pointed out by Stalin already sometime in 1931 when he stated that the intellectuals frequently lagged behind practice with their theories. Stalin did not hesitate to depart from and to revise the doctrines of the Marxist classics when such action was necessary or expedient, and he demanded that his followers be ready to imitate his example. When ideology and the sheer need for survival clashed, it was invariably the former that had to give way. The task of the ideologists was to make post-hoc adjustments of ideology to pragmatic action.

²²Shestakov, p. 123.

The merely superficial changes and instructions appear to disguise the Party's actual intentions. The inconsistency in the treatment of Vanag points to a decision not merely to change pedagogical methods in history but to deny the entire Marxist-Leninist historiography by condemning its proponents. Thus Vanag's work was constantly rejected in spite of his obvious efforts to co-operate and conform to the new policy. Vanag suddenly becoming stupid is unlikely in view of his past record; therefore his failure may well have resulted from a foregone determination on his downfall as the leading proponent of the school of the late Pokrovsky. At one of the meetings of the Council of Teachers, Vanag expressed his concern about the progress of the work of his group on the textbook for the History of the USSR. He complained particularly about the outlines at his disposal, maintaining that the ideologists had failed to provide him with a satisfactory pattern which would permit him to integrate the history of Russia with that of the world. Also, divers elements of the history of individual nations had not been clarified, he stated, and there was a general lack of systematic generalizations of the history of the Soviet national groups.

As an example, he pointed out that the Ukraine was given prominence only so far as the peasant uprisings and the struggle with Poland and Muscovy were concerned,

while the whole Nineteenth Century was presented only in vague outlines.²³ Vanag pleaded that historians from various national republics be brought to Moscow to help his group; he claimed that this was especially important because the textbook which he was preparing was regarded by the Party as "a generalization of the history of the peoples of the USSR".²⁴

One of the members of Vanag's group A.M. Pankratova, publicly contradicted her chairman by claiming that "the propositions and remarks which Comrade Stalin had made with reference to the outlines of the textbooks" in the summer of 1934 were entirely adequate to serve as un mistakeable guides for the writing of the textbook.²⁵ Shortly thereafter, Vanag was removed from his position as associate editor of Istorik-Marksist, while Pankratova rose in the ranks of the board of editors.²⁶ An old hand at ingratiating herself with the highest authorities,²⁷ Pankratova saw her star rising rapidly to the greatest heights in the Soviet Union,²⁸ while Vanag's faded away, and fell into disgrace.

²³Ibid., p. 121.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Cf. I-M, IV (1935), title page.

²⁷Cf. A.A. Avtorkhanov, Stalin and the Soviet Communist Party (Munich: Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1959), pp. 10, 35.

²⁸The book on which Vanag had worked was eventually published under her name in 1939-1940, and, with some

On January 26, 1936, the Central Committee and the government issued a joint resolution under the title "On the Front of the Historical Science",²⁹ and ordered the publication of the Remarks of August 8, 1934, by Stalin, Kirov and Zhdanov.³⁰ This resolution sealed the fate of Vanag and inaugurated an intensive campaign against the so called "school of Pokrovsky".

Once again it was found that in spite of all the former decrees on history and the specific remarks of the Party leaders on this subject,

Particularly unsatisfactory is the textbook on the history of the USSR presented by the group of Professor Vanag, and also the textbook of elementary course on the history of the USSR for elementary schools, presented by the group of Mints and Lozinsky.³¹

But whereas in August 1934 the "errors" of the authors had been attributed to blind imitation of the "hackneyed and entirely unsatisfactory concepts of all sorts of bourgeois historians",³² these authors were now accused of "anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist, liquidatory and anti-scientific"

alterations, it is still used in the Soviet schools today. However, with the current rehabilitation of Pokrovsky, Pankratova's star may lose some of its lustre.

²⁹"Na fronte istoricheskoi nauki" Pravda, January 27, 1936. Also Sbornik, p. 82-84.

³⁰Above, p. 148.

³¹Sbornik, p. 83.

³²Above, p. 149.

views; and their "dangerous tendency and attempt to liquidate history as a science" were attributed to the spreading "among certain historians of erroneous historical concepts particular to the so-called 'historical school' of Pokrovsky".³³

Paradoxically, then, Vanag was in turn accused of "bourgeois" tendencies and of excessive "leftist" Trotskyism and "smuggling" of Pokrovsky's ideas.³⁴ The nature of Stalin's dissatisfaction with the works of these authors appears to have taken a new turn, but in fact, it reverted to the original form of May 16, 1934.

The decree of May 16, 1934 doubtless was aimed against Pokrovsky's type of predominantly deterministic Marxist historiography, in which there was little room for Stalin's personality cult, and which laid particular stress on ideological indoctrination of youngsters for a better understanding of Communism and its alleged role in world history. On the other hand, the Remarks of August 8, 1934 were aimed in precisely the opposite direction, essentially demanding a treatment of history along lines similar to Pokrovsky's general principles. Then the decree of January 26, 1936 fully reverted to the stand taken in that of May 16, 1934, to the extent of quoting long passages

³³Sbornik, p. 83f.

³⁴Cf. A.G. Mazour, Modern Russian Historiography (2nd ed., revised; New York: Van Nostrand, 1958), p. 201.

from it, and stating that Vanag's textbook continued suffering from the same mistakes and errors as pointed out in that decree.

The inconsistency in these attacked on Vanag is confusing. It is improbable, though remotely possible, that the Remarks were designed simply as a general guide for the new historical science, and had no further significance. To say this is to say that there is no explanation of the phenomena under discussion. Therefore the shift in the attack on Vanag should be attributed primarily to shifts in the Party line.

It is possible that the Remarks represent a temporary withdrawal from the position adopted on May 16, 1934. Certainly the Remarks of August 8, 1934 suggest that Stalin was displeased with the results of his former decree. Vanag and his group had allegedly turned towards "bourgeois" ideas for the execution of their task. But the question arises whether in his Remarks Stalin did in fact truthfully describe the content and nature of the submitted textbook outlines. Is it possible, one may ask, that of all historians, Vanag, Pokrovsky's heir to the leadership among Marxist historians³⁵ would almost overnight turn into a "bourgeois" historian? Only Pankratova from the whole group could have acted in this manner.

³⁵Cf. Avtorkhanov, Materialy, p. 11.

Assuming, however, that Vanag was in fact capable of such a sudden change under pressure from Stalin, why was it necessary, then, in 1936 to regard the "school of Pokrovsky" as a threat to the state and demand the dismissal and disgrace of Vanag and his friends?

Rather than believing that Stalin truthfully described the submitted outlines, it seems more realistic to consider the possibility that Stalin's decree of May 16 had some unforeseen repercussions and results. Some questions may have been raised among leaders of foreign Communist parties as to the intent of the decree and, not wishing to alienate them, Stalin in his Remarks tried to show that he had in mind no elements of "bourgeois" historiography when he demanded the replacement of Pokrovsky's Marxist type. Another motive behind the August Remarks may well be the wish to warn men like Tarlé, Wipper, and other former bourgeois historians who were potentially getting into the limelight after May 16, that this decree was by no means meant to be an unconditional repudiation of Marxist historiography in favour of former "bourgeois" historiography. However, conditions were somewhat different by 1936, and Stalin reverted to his stand taken in May 1934.

Whatever the reasons for the inconsistency of the attacks on Vanag, there is a clear line: an attack is made, and it is directed at discrediting Vanag and ultimately the

school of Pokrovsky, the leading Marxist-Leninist historian. This condemnation is closely related to the major changes in Party policy under Stalin, that is, by the Stalinist deviation from Marxist ideology in three areas: (1) subordination of theory or ideology to pragmatic concerns; (2) development of the cult of personality instead of Marxist determinism; and (3) shift from Marxist-Leninist internationalism to Russian patriotism.

At the Seventeenth Party Congress, while confident about the international position of the USSR,³⁶ Stalin expressed concern for the state of the Soviet economy. He argued that the capitalist world was in its death struggle, its economy at a complete stand-still. A solution to the problem was sought by the capitalists, he alleged, in preparing a new imperialist war. While there was no direct threat against the Soviet Union, because the capitalists knew that the proletarians would rise against them if they declared war on the USSR, Stalin maintained that the Soviet Union, nevertheless, had to take precautions, and prepare for any contingency.³⁷

Against this desperate background of the capitalist world, Stalin first painted a rosy picture of the domestic situation. Thanks to the Five Year Plan, he argued, Soviet

³⁶See chapter, "Stalin's Intervention", p. 1f.

³⁷Stalin, "Otchetnyi doklad XVII s'ezdu partii o rabote TsK VKP(b)", Sochineniya (Moscow, 1955), XIII, 305.

economy was prospering and served as a lighthouse of hope for the proletarians of other countries. But then, he pointed out, there was a great danger that the whole Soviet economy might collapse through a breakdown in the system of consumer distribution. To prevent this tragedy Stalin proposed that an effective trading system be introduced.³⁸

He demanded that the existing system of distribution (tovaro-oborot), carried out largely without monetary transactions, be replaced by torgovlya (trade or commerce).³⁹ Stalin knew that he was treading on the quick-sand of ideology when he introduced the term "commerce" in his speech obviously because he took great pains to explain his point of view, and even pointed out with great emphasis that without the solution of this problem further economic

³⁸Ibid., p. 341.

³⁹Ibid. It seems that Mikoyan, then Commissar for Inner Trade, had something to do with Stalin's revision of the former position. Reporting to the Seventeenth Congress he naively told the following story. Once, he said, he had a talk with Stalin on the subject of combating "speculation", i.e., the tendency of enterprising individuals to gain high profits by breaking through the official prohibition of commerce. Supplying commodities unavailable in sufficient quantities through official channels, they frequently made several hundred per cent profit. Suddenly, Stalin got an inspiration: if such profits were possible, why should they be gained by private individuals and not by the State treasury? Mikoyan applauded and very soon a system was put into force which with minor modifications still forms the backbone of Soviet trade and finance. To this system, N.S. Timashev gave the name of "commercialization of the Revolution". See The Great Retreat, (New York: Dutton, 1946), p. 146.

progress would be blocked. The problem therefore was of significance for the state.

And yet, in spite of the fact that this truth is perfectly obvious, the Party had to contend . . . with a number of obstacles which arose in the way of expanding Soviet commerce as a result of what could briefly be described as a dislocation of the brain among a section of the Communists on the question of the necessity and significance of Soviet trade.

To begin with, there is still among a section of Communists a supercilious, contemptuous attitude towards commerce in general . . . These Communists, for lack of a better word . . . regard those engaged in trade as doomed. Evidently, these people do not realize that their supercilious attitude towards Soviet trade does not express the Bolshevik point of view, but rather the point of view of shabby noblemen who are full of ambition but lack ammunition. These people do not realize that Soviet trade is our own Bolshevik work, and that the workers employed in trade, including those behind the counter - if only they work conscientiously - are doing our revolutionary, Bolshevik work.⁴⁰

Those who opposed trade on ideological grounds Stalin was forced to call Communists "for lack of a better word".

In his own words, he had just finished eliminating the "left" and the "right" in the Party, no doubt with the help of these people; and having just admitted that there was nobody left to deal blows to, he had no label for the latest opposition to his pragmatic and arbitrary rule.⁴¹

A second danger or "prejudice" bothered Stalin probably even more.

I have in mind the Leftist chatter that has gained currency among another section of our

⁴⁰Stalin, XIII, 341f.

⁴¹See chapter "Stalin's Intervention", p. 121.

functionaries to the effect that Soviet trade is a superseded stage; that it is now necessary to organize a direct exchange of products; that money will soon be abolished, because it has become mere tokens; that it is unnecessary to develop trade, since the direct exchange of products is knocking at the door. It must be observed that this Leftist petty-bourgeois chatter which plays into the hands of the capitalist elements who are striving to prevent the expansion of Soviet trade, has gained currency not only among a section of our Red professors, but also among certain persons in charge of trade.⁴² [italics mine]

With his usual sarcasm and biting irony, Stalin called these ideological opponents and Marxist purists "Don Quixotes", because "they refused to subordinate theory to practice".

But Don Quixotes are called Don Quixotes precisely because they lack the most elementary sense of reality.⁴³

Instead of quoting some long forgotten passage from the "classics" of Marxism either in support of his claim or in order to condemn the new deviationists - probably because he could find no adequate quotation - Stalin simply made appeal to common sense and to a pragmatic approach to an everyday problem.

These people, who are as far removed from Marxism as the sky is from earth, evidently do not realize that we shall use money for a long time to come, right up to the time when the first stage of Communism, i.e., the Socialist stage of development, has been completed. They do not realize that money is the instrument of bourgeois economy which the Soviet government has taken over and adapted to the interests of Socialism, for the purpose of expanding Soviet trade and of thus creating the conditions necessary for the direct exchange of products.⁴⁴

⁴²Stalin, XIII, 342.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 343.

The "left" and the "right" factions of the Party having been defeated, serious ideological opposition to Stalin's pragmatic policies could be expected to come forth only from the so-called "Theory Headquarters of the Central Committee", as Avtorkhanov called the Institute of Red Professors,⁴⁵ where Pokrovsky had left behind him a group of convinced ideological heirs. Pokrovsky's authority among the ideologists having been based mainly on the master's correct adherence to Marxism - his influence was bound to have some effect on the Party theoreticians even after his death.

Stalin's reference to the ideological opposition to his trade and monetary policies emanating from the Institute of Red Professors seems most significant, all the more that this opposition was based on grounds formerly held by the official Party line. And this opposition probably did not subside for some time. This, then, may well explain the need for the subsequent overemphasis of, and vicious attack on Pokrovsky's theories about "commercial capitalism".⁴⁶

⁴⁵Cf. Avtorkhanov, Stalin, p. 19.

⁴⁶Two large volumes of attacks on Pokrovsky's ideological and historical conceptions were published: Protiv kontseptsii Pokrovskogo - Protiv istoricheskoi kontseptsii M.N. Pokrovskogo; sbornik statei. Vol. I (1939); Protiv antimarksistkoi kontseptsii M.N. Pokrovskogo; sbornik statei. Vol. II (1940), ed. B. Grekov.

But the actual or possible opposition to the shifting Party line on ideological grounds was, of course, not the only motive for the decree of May 16, 1934. An investigation of the state of the school in general and that of the teaching of history in particular conducted in 1933-34 did reveal a lack of systematic knowledge of history.

(This, of course, could have been expected in view of the fact that neither the pupils nor their teachers had in fact been taught systematic history.) Sensing a shift, and encouraged by it, many parents demanded the return of a form of teaching which they could understand, and which was more reminiscent of a system of education from which they had themselves been excluded before the Revolution but for which they continued to have a great respect. One must not, however, draw the conclusion that the Russian Communist Party brought about drastic measures simply to satisfy popular aspirations.

The former system of ideological training through social studies and the teaching of socio-economic formations and other historical principles of Marxism have been a dismal failure as far as Stalin was concerned. On the one hand, those who had accepted Marxism presented a threat because they knew too much. At the same time, the bulk of the population was oversaturated with ideology and had a generally hostile attitude towards the ruling minority. The former, Stalin thought, could easily be

controlled by the well organized Apparatchiki, but the latter, in the case of war, could easily turn against the Party and the Soviet State. To gain some popular support among the masses on which the Party would have to rely for the defense of the country, a history of generals, kings and czars had to be reintroduced. It was more meaningful to the people than the abstract history of forces of production which give rise to social formations and ultimately lead to some glorious but remote and abstract Communism.

Above all, in an impersonal type of Marxist history, Stalin saw no place for his own glorification as the great leader of the Industrial Revolution leading his country on the road to Socialism. Stalin, therefore, demanded that the voluntaristic aspect of Marxism be stressed at the expense of its deterministic aspect, and that a history peopled with real individuals endowed with a will of their own be taught.

Finally, by 1936 very practical reasons had developed for giving up the former Communist insistence on internationalism and gradually reviving the formerly defunct bourgeois tradition of patriotism and indeed nationalism. The "Popular Front" policy had failed to yield immediate spectacular results, while the Nazi menace was relentlessly growing every day; and it became clear that for the defense of the country the Party would

have to rely solely on the Soviet people, and more particularly on those very Great Russians for whom Pokrovsky had so much scorn. It became therefore, mandatory to inspire a national pride in these people.

Having been an ideological obstacle for the introduction of realistic policies dictated by expediency, and being now an obstacle for a mighty campaign of Russian patriotism, Pokrovsky and his "school" had become a real danger for the Soviet State as the decree of January 26, 1936 stated.⁴⁷

The council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee declare that the task of overcoming these dangerous views is an indispensable condition both for the writing of textbooks in history, and for the development of the Marxist-Leninist historical science, and the raising of the teaching of history in the USSR. This problem has the most significant meaning for the cause of our state, our Party and for the education of the growing generation.⁴⁸
[italics mine]

"Facts, dates, personalities, this is what we want!" harangued Istorik-Marksist in 1934, with the names of czars included.⁴⁹ At the same time, in Pokrovsky's scheme of history there was at best room for "heroes" and "great men" of the revolutionary type, but most of them had little or no appeal for the Russian people, and could hardly be expected to fire their patriotic sentiments.

⁴⁷Sbornik, p. 84.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 83f.

⁴⁹See chapter "Stalin's Intervention", p. 139.

Minin and Pozharsky, Alexander Nevsky, and above all Suvorov and Kutuzov had no place in a Marxist scheme of history based on dialectical changes in the modes of production, economic developments, and the resulting changes in social formation. "Real civic history" was needed, a history animated with "real historical figures" and one may add, historical figures who were real for the people, who were familiar to them, who could make the people proud of a glorious past, and whose example could inspire them to acts of heroism in case of a new foreign invasion. Generals, kings, and czars were needed; and Pokrovsky was in the way for their return.

Between 1936 and 1937 the anti-Pokrovsky campaign was intensified as part of the general drive against the "counterrevolutionary wreckers . . . and agents of Fascism" who had to be mercilessly uprooted and smashed.⁵⁰ Much of the work of Soviet historians and the editorial policies of the previous editorial board of the Istorik-Marksist were violently attacked,⁵¹ largely under the instigation of articles published in Pravda in March 1937. T. Fridlyand and Vanag, both professors in Moscow, and both closely associated with the Istorik-Marksist, were especially singled out for attack, and were finally disgraced. The editorial board was dismissed, and

⁵⁰"Boevaya programma dal'neishego pod'ema istoricheskoi nauki" (Editorial) I-M, III (1937), 143.

⁵¹Ibid.

N.M. Lukin appointed as "responsible editor".⁵²

The resolution of January 26, 1936 declared that to overcome the "harmful concepts of Pokrovsky was an indispensable prerequisite for the writing of textbooks of history, as well as for the development of the Marxist-Leninist historical science".⁵³ Because this problem was of greatest concern both to the Party and the government, the joint resolution of the Government and the Central Committee ordered a verification and improvement, and, in case of necessity, the revision of already written textbooks in history. A special Commission was appointed to carry out this programme. The members of the Commission were instructed to organize groups for the revision of textbooks and also to declare a competition for the writing of new books for the replacement of those which, in its opinion, needed a thorough revising. Zhdanov was chairman of the commission, the other members being Svanidze, Lukin, Yakovlev, Bystryanskii, Zatonskii, Faizully, Khodzhaev, Bauman, Bubnov, and significantly, Radek and Bukharin.⁵⁴

⁵²Lukin was an authority on French Revolution and Nineteenth Century socialism and was the leader of the Soviet delegation at the International Historical Congress and its committee: and he also was the leading member of the previous editorial board of Istorik-Marksist. He too was castigated by the same number of this journal as Fridlyand and Vanag.

⁵³Sbornik, p. 84.

⁵⁴"Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) i SNK Soyuza SSSR" [Signed by V. Molotov and I.V. Stalin, January 26, 1936] Istoricheskii sbornik, V (Moscow-Leningrad: Academy of Sciences, 1936) The names of the members of the

On March 3, 1936, a competition for the writing of a textbook of history for grades three and four to replace those submitted by Mints and Lozinsky was declared in the name of the government and the Central Committee.⁵⁵ The conditions of the competition were that the authors should take guidance from the earlier decisions of the

Commission were omitted from the text of the decree published in the Sbornik rukovodyashchikh materialov o shkole (Moscow, 1952), p. 84. Bukharin's position at that time had already been quite ambiguous. He was publicly humiliated. N.S. Timashev, (The Great Retreat, p. 172) relates the following incident. On January 27, 1936 the same day as Stalin's resolution was published, Bukharin, then editor of Izvestiya said that laziness was the most universal trait of the Russian nation and that Oblomov, a famous "hero" from Goncharov's novel, was its chief symbol. On February 1, Pravda, without mentioning Bukharin assailed those who asserted that Russia had been organized by foreigners, especially Germans, and enumerated the reasons why the Russians ought to be proud of their past. Bukharin does not seem to have understood the seriousness of his blunder for the next day he published an article in which he obstinately defended his position. On February 10, a bitter invective against Bukharin appeared in Pravda in which, by numerous citations, it was "proved" that the slanderous distortion of the Russian past had nothing to do with Marxism. Now Bukharin had to apologize:

The theory making Russian history a lasting darkness is historically wrong, and politically harmful. Russian history knew periods of great progress and tremendous displays of energy. Russian science has given a number of brilliant names, Russian literature is entitled to occupy one of the first places in universal literature. I never shared that erroneous theory, but having made the unfortunate reference to Oblomov, I unwillingly deceived many. I am sorry that I have done so.

⁵⁵Dvadtsat' pyat'let istoricheskoi nauki USSR (Moscow-Leningrad, 1942), p. 14.

Party and the government and the Remarks of Stalin, Zhdanov, and Kirov. The textbook had to be "concrete", "historically truthful" [sic], its presentation "clear, interesting and artistic, and entirely accessible to the pupils of the indicated age group".⁵⁶ At least forty six groups and individuals feverishly began to work on the new textbook in close cooperation with, and closer supervision of the Party and its various organs of control.

At the same time the last stronghold of what may be regarded as progressive education and modern Western influence was destroyed. On July 4, 1936 a decree "On the Pedological Falsifications in the System of the NKP"⁵⁷ outlawed the child-centred system of education and inaugurated the unreserved return to a subject-centred systematic programme of education.⁵⁸ The strongest opponents of history in elementary grades, the Pedologists, were thus eliminated from above.

In early 1936 a group of historians under the leadership of Professor A.V. Shestakov, basing themselves on the Remarks of Stalin, Kirov and Zhdanov, and on the

⁵⁶I-M, III (1937), 143.

⁵⁷"O pedologicheskikh izvrashcheniyakh v sisteme Narkompros", Pravda, July 5, 1936.

⁵⁸Parallel drastic changes occurred in all other fields of cultural life in 1936. Experimental and progressive tendencies in literature, art and music were also stifled, and "Socialist Realism" introduced as the only form of expression.

decree of March 31, 1936 regarding the competition for textbooks, began work in earnest on a Short History of the USSR, and largely completed their work by the summer of the same year.⁵⁹ Shestakov and his group were aided by the whole staff of historians of the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute and by a large number of scholars and ideologists.⁶⁰ The Central Committee itself took part in the revision, and probably in the drafting of certain passages:

A particularly great role was played by the Government Commission itself, the members of the Jury, and directly by the Central Committee of our party, who took an active part in the work on the textbook, correcting the mistakes of the authors of the Short Course.⁶¹

The significance of the textbook in preparation was two-fold. First, it was destined to become a blueprint for revolution and Socialist Construction; secondly, "the problems solved in the process of its preparation were the same as the tasks of the Soviet Marxist historical science",⁶² and as such, it was to become also a blueprint for Soviet historiography.

⁵⁹A.V. Shestakov, "Osnovnye problemy uchebnika 'Kratkii kurs istorii SSSR'", I-M, III (1937), 86.

⁶⁰The Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences qua institution was deliberately ignored - a fact which was not missed by the Academicians, (I-M, III (1937), 145), the Government Commission having solicited the aid only of certain of its carefully selected individual members.

⁶¹Shestakov, p. 85.

⁶²Ibid.

On August 22, 1937, the report of the Jury of the Government Commission on historical textbooks was published.⁶³ Of the 46 books and manuscripts submitted, none was considered worthy of the first prize. A second prize of 75,000 rubles was awarded Shestakov's textbook Kratkyi Kurs Istorii SSSR (A Short Course in the History of the USSR); ten million copies were ordered for October 1937. Detailed summaries of the contents of Shestakov's book were published,⁶⁴ and an article on it by the author appeared in Istorik-Marksist.⁶⁵ Consolation prizes of 5,000 rubles each were given to Mints, Nechkina, Genkina, Pankratova, Gudoshnikov and Glyazer.

It seems ironical that in spite of all the help Shestakov and his group had received from the highest qualified scholars and the highest political authorities of the USSR, their work was found to be worthy only of a second prize. There can be no question here of any false modesty, since the Jury found many shortcomings in all manuscripts, Shestakov's included, which had to be eliminated "both in the further work on the study of the history of USSR, and in the teaching of history in the

⁶³The reprint was published in Krasnyi Arkhiv, LXIII, (1937), 210-223.

⁶⁴Pravda, August 25, 1937.

⁶⁵There are some discrepancies between Shestakov's description and his textbook published the same year. Shestakov's own account sounds like genuflections before the Marxist ideology while the textbook itself follows lines almost acceptable even to "bourgeois" historians. I-M, III (1937), 85-98, passim.

school".⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the Jury claimed a "first victory" on the historical front, achieved by the "unmasking" of the "anti-Leninist school of Pokrovsky" which had formerly handicapped and hindered the whole historical scholarship.

The Soviet historians put into the foundations of their work the directives of Comrade Stalin and the generalizations of Marx, Engels, and Lenin which were deliberately ignored and falsified by the "school" of Pokrovsky and the Trotskyite-Bukharinite agents of Fascism.⁶⁷

While the problems solved in the process of preparation of Shestakov's textbook had a great significance for the Soviet historiography, the Party was also acutely interested in the educational and propaganda value of the new textbook both in the school and "in the cause of Communist education of the masses".⁶⁸ In the face of the rising danger from Nazi Germany, as already pointed out, the Party desperately tried to rally the masses around itself. Through history, by describing the glorious past of Russia, the leaders hoped to create love and patriotism for the Soviet State. In the words of Shestakov, the Party tried to:

⁶⁶"Postanovlenie Zhyuri pravitel'stvennoi komisii po konkursu na luchshii uchebnik dlya 3i4 klassov srednei shkoly po istorii SSR", Pravda, August 22, 1937.

⁶⁷Pravda, August 22, 1937. By this time, Bukharin too was out of favour even though only the previous year he had been appointed by Stalin as a member of Zhdanov's committee on the new textbook together with Radek.

⁶⁸Shestakov, p. 85.

Educate among the masses love and patriotism for the Soviet State, and organize the masses for resistance to the Fascist aggressor. History can tell a great number of instructive facts about the struggle of the peoples of USSR against interventionists and aggressors.⁶⁹

Therefore a tremendous campaign of mass indoctrination was undertaken on a large scale. The daily newspapers and the periodical press published numerous articles with a patriotic appeal.⁷⁰ Plays, novels, films, poetry and music were saturated with patriotic themes.⁷¹ Old regime heroes like Suvorov and Kutuzov, and even a saint, Alexander Nevsky, were brought back from seemingly eternal oblivion to which they had formerly been condemned. Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great were shown as progressive leaders of their country, and some even saw the prototype of Stalin in them.⁷²

"The Marxist-Leninist textbook of history of USSR is the most important tool of Communist education in our school", claimed Istorik-Marksist.⁷³ History was called upon to play a most important role in the political education of Soviet citizens, "conscious builders of Socialism and dedicated patriots to their Motherland".⁷⁴

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰"Znat' istoriyu narodov SSSR", Pravda, August 22, 1937.

⁷¹Cf. H.W.L. Dana, "Patriotic Plays in Soviet Russia", The Russian Review, (November, 1941), 65-73, passim.

⁷²In his conversation with E. Ludwig, Stalin denied any claim to such a parallel. (Sochineniya, XIII, 105)

⁷³I-M, III (1937), 142.

⁷⁴Ibid.

Thus, by abandoning Pokrovsky's school of historical thought and Marxist interpretation, Soviet historical science became almost totally pragmatic. Soviet writers had become "engineers of human souls" as Stalin had demanded of them when he ordered them to produce works which were in harmony with the dictates of contemporary life. And, as Zhdanov said when speaking of the tasks of Soviet authors,

To be engineers of human souls, means to stand with both feet on the sure ground of real life . . .
Soviet literature must be able to show our heroes
and must be capable of having a glimpse into our
future.⁷⁵

Theory and practice were thus finally reconciled in a dialectical fashion, the purity of Marxist ideology having lost the argument in the dialogue.

⁷⁵As quoted by A.M. Pankratova, Istoriya SSSR (Moscow, 1941) III, 357.

CHAPTER SEVEN

POKROVSKY AND STALIN

Closely interlocked with the whole development of Soviet historiography and the teaching of history in the school was the life and activities of M.N. Pokrovsky. This study would seem incomplete without a closer look at the fate of this remarkable man. It seems fitting to devote a whole chapter to him, particularly in view of the recent attempts of some Soviet historians to rehabilitate Pokrovsky's good name, and of the Party to use him, once again for its own purposes.

Mikhail Nikolaevich Pokrovsky was born in a middle class family in 1868. He attended one of the best classical gymnazia in Moscow. In 1891 he graduated from the Historical-Philological Faculty of the University of Moscow, where he studied under Klyuchevsky and Vinogradov. After graduation he taught history in Moscow secondary schools, and from 1895 to 1902 he was lecturer in pedagogical courses in Moscow.

Between 1896 and 1899 he wrote several articles on the history of Western Europe for Readings on the History of the Middle Ages, edited by P.G. Vinogradov. In 1904 he contributed to the Bolshevik newspaper Pravda an article on "Idealism and the Laws of History".

In 1903 Pokrovsky was forbidden to give public lectures because of his political views. Two years later he joined the Bolshevik party and took active part in the uprising in Moscow. Between 1905 and 1907 he was a member of the editorial board of the Bolshevik press.¹ In 1906 he was elected member of the Moscow Committee of the Bolshevik party, but continued his scholarly activities, and published a number of articles in Granat's History of Russia in the Nineteenth Century.²

In 1906-1907 Pokrovsky became member of the Moscow Committee of the Bolshevik party. He attended the London Congress in 1907 where he was elected member of the Bolshevik Centre. The following year he was compelled to emigrate. During his exile Pokrovsky completed his major historical work, Russian History from the Earliest Times.³

¹M.N. Pokrovsky, Russkaya Istoriya v Samom Szhatom Ocherke. (10th ed.; Moscow: Partizdat, 1932), p. V.

²On Alexander I, foreign policy, the peasant reform of 1861 and on the Decembrists. M.N. Pokrovsky, History of Russia from the Earliest Times to the Rise of Commercial Capitalism, trans. J.D. Clarkson and M.R.M. Griffiths (New York: International Publishers, 1931), p. XV.

³M.N. Pokrovsky, History of Russia from the Earliest Times to the Rise of Commercial Capitalism, trans. and ed. J.D. Clarkson and M.R.M. Griffiths (New York: International Publishers, 1931). This History of Russia was published in 1910-1912 in five volumes: (pp. VII, XV). The five volume work included some chapters by collaborators on religion and the Church written by N.M. Nikolskii and V.N. Storozhev (p. XV). In the fourth edition (Moscow, 1922-1923) and subsequent editions all but Pokrovsky's own work was eliminated. The English translation was based on the seventh edition (Moscow, 1924-1925). In the English

This work was an attack on the "idealistic" foundations of the traditional Russian historiography and was based on historical materialism and the analysis of historical development from the point of view of class interests and revolutionary action.⁴

Joining in 1909, in Paris, the Menshevik group "Vperyod", formed in opposition to Lenin's "Bolshevik Centre", Pokrovsky, in co-operation with Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, Gorky and Ldov formed the so-called "Capri School", and one year later the "Bologna School".⁵ But,

translation these four volumes have been compressed into two.

There are some discrepancies in Western sources about the date of the first publication of Pokrovsky's work and on the number of volumes in which it first appeared. A.A. Skerpan ["Russia and Soviet Russia", The Development of Historiography, ed. M.A. Fitzsimons et al. (Harrisburg, Penn.: The Stackpole Co., 1954) p. 357.] gives the following information: "first edition, 4 vols., Moscow, 1907-1910"; A.G. Mazour [Modern Russian Historiography, 2nd ed., (New York: Van Nostrand, 1958), p. 187] has: "4 vols., Moscow, 1913-14"; A. Avtorkhanov [Stalin and the Soviet Communist Party (Munich: Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1959), p. 19] states: "His main work, . . . , in four volumes, had appeared as far back as 1907-1912".

⁴Skerpan, A.A. ["Russia and Soviet Russia," The Development of Historiography. Ed. by M.A. Fitzsimons et al. (Harrisburg, Penn.: Stackpole, 1954), p. 357.] maintains that Pokrovsky "fell under the influence of economic materialism," and that his view was not dialectical but economic materialism.

⁵The course of studies lasted from August to December 1909, but the student body split as a result of Lenin's attacks and moved to Paris, where a three week course was organized by the "Bolshevik Centre". The "Vperyod" group retorted by organizing yet another "school" in Bologna which lasted from November 1910 to March 1911. This school too was opposed by Lenin. To counteract the possible pernicious influence of this course, Lenin organized a school of his own at Longjumeau near Paris, where studies continued from May to September 1911 under Lenin's personal direction.

in early 1911 he broke his relations with this group. In 1914 he published the first volume of An Outline of the History of Russian Culture. During the war Pokrovsky collaborated on the newspapers Golos and Nashe Slovo, and in August 1917 returned to Russia where he participated in the revolutionary activities of the Moscow Bolshevik organization.

He was a staunch supporter of armed rebellion by the proletariat and edited the bulletin of the Military Revolutionary Committee.

Pokrovsky distinguished himself as an organizer, scholar and ideologist. In November 1917 he was appointed Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the Presidium of the Moscow Soviet, and one week later he was elected chairman of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies. In 1918 he was chairman of the Sovnarkom.⁶ In May of the same year he was appointed Vice-Commissar of Education, which he remained until his death in 1932.

Pokrovsky was a member of the Brest-Litovsk peace delegation, and was also made life-long chairman of the State Council of Scholarship (GUS). He directed the reorganization of the Central Archives, founded and directed various theoretical and ideological institutions such as the Communist Academy, the Institute of Red

⁶Council of People's Commissars.

Professors, the RANION⁷, and others. He was the initiator of the Workers Faculties (Rabfak) and founded a number of Marxist societies, among which the most noteworthy was the Society of Marxist Historians. Pokrovsky founded and edited a number of ideological and scholarly journals, such as the Krasnyi Arkhiv, Istorik-Marksist, Bor'ba Klassov, Vestnik Komakademii, Pod Znamenem Marksizma, etc.; and he became a member of the Academy of Sciences in 1929.⁸ He was also a member of the board of directors of the Institute of Lenin. In 1929 he was the leader of the delegation of Soviet historians in Berlin and at the International Congress of historians in Oslo.

Pokrovsky also took part in the affairs of the Party. After the Sixteenth Party Congress he was elected member of the Presidium of the Central Control Commission (TsKK); he was also member of the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) of the USSR and of the All-Union Central Executive Committee (VTsIK).⁹

Pokrovsky was a prolific writer and edited a great number of documents and monographs, particularly on the history of the revolutionary movement and on foreign policy.¹⁰

⁷Russian Association of Scientific Research Institutes of Social Sciences.

⁸Skerpan, p. 357.

⁹Pokrovsky, Russkaya Istoriya. p. VII.

¹⁰A fairly detailed bibliography can be found in Istorik-Marksist, VII (1928), 215-231.

The editor's preface of Pokrovsky's Russkaya istoriya v samom szhatom ocherke (Brief History of Russia), published by the Party Publishing House, states that in his works is given "the most brilliant Marxist analysis of the Russian historical process".¹¹

Indeed Lenin himself had the highest regard for Pokrovsky, his work, and for his Marxist conception of Russian history. Having read the manuscript of his Brief History of Russia, on December 5, 1920 Lenin wrote the following letter to Pokrovsky.

I congratulate you very heartily on your success. I like your new book Brief History of Russia immensely. The construction and the narrative are original. It reads with tremendous interest. It should, in my opinion, be translated into the European languages.

I will permit myself one slight remark. To make it a text book (and this it must become), it must be supplemented with a chronological index. This is, roughly, what I am suggesting. 1st column, chronology; 2nd column, bourgeois view (briefly); 3rd column, your view, Marxian, indicating the pages in your book.

The students must know both your book and the index so that there should be no skimming, so that they should retain the facts, and so that they should learn to compare the old science and the new. What do you say to such an addition?¹²

¹¹Pokrovsky, Russkaya istoriya, p. V.

¹²Pokrovsky, Brief History of Russia. tr. D.S. Mirsky (New York: International Publishers, 1933), p. 5. Chronological tables were included in the appendix as Lenin had suggested. C. Mehnert incorrectly attributes Lenin's letter to Pokrovsky's History of Russia rather than to the Brief History. He refers to this book as "the bible of every Soviet historian", but contradicts his own generalization in the substance of his whole book. C. Mehnert, Stalin versus Marx, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952), p. 12.

Lenin's trust in Pokrovsky's ideological orthodoxy and his regard for Pokrovsky's organizational capabilities are also well illustrated by the latter's appointment to the leadership of the GUS. According to the personal testimony of Lenin's wife, N.K. Krupskaya, the leader of the Bolshevik Party regarded the GUS as the most important instrument in the reorganization of the system of education, and by extension, of the ideological indoctrination of the many millions of young Soviet citizens.

Soviet education had to be based on new foundations and the new school curriculum saturated "with the spirit of dialectical materialism" and the "essence of Marxism"; teachers and professors had to be shown "precisely what constitutes Marxism in education, and how one should formulate a whole series of scientific disciplines in a Marxist way".¹³

. . . Lenin maintained that the crux of the matter was in the transformation of all teaching and education on the basis of new, Marxist principles, and in the reorganization of the curriculum and the whole school system in the spirit of Communism, Marxist theories and Communist ethics¹⁴

This was a complex and delicate undertaking which required great organizational abilities and ideological orthodoxy, as well as a great deal of patience and

¹³N.K. Krupskaya, "M.N. Pokrovsky", (1928), Pedagogicheskie Sochineniya, (11 vols.; Moscow: APN, 1958-1963), II, 330.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 331.

relentless energy. Lenin was fully aware of the difficulties involved. But, as Krupskaya wrote in 1928,

Without this work the Communists could never hope to gain the support of the teachers and professors for their cause. Vladimir Ilich believed that if this work is not carried out, then we shall not be able to lead the non-party masses The founding of the GUS was the beginning of this work to which Vladimir Ilich attributed such an exclusive significance. And the most suitable person for this task, in Vladimir Ilich's opinion, was Mikhail Nikolaevich [Pokrovsky], whom he profoundly respected and highly valued.¹⁵

Krupskaya's claim of Lenin's trust in Pokrovsky and his high esteem for him was clearly confirmed by Lenin himself on February 7, 1921 when he wrote:

In the Commissariat of Education there are two comrades with tasks of an exclusive nature. These are the People's Commissar, Comrade Lunacharsky, responsible for the general leadership, and the deputy, Comrade Pokrovsky, playing a leading role, first of all, as the deputy People's Commissar, and secondly, as the Responsible Counsellor (and leader) on scholarly matters, and on problems of Marxism in general. The whole Party, well knowing both Comrade Lunacharsky and Comrade Pokrovsky, has no doubts whatsoever in that they both are, in the functions mentioned, unique "experts" in the NKP.¹⁶

Krupskaya, who for seven years worked under Pokrovsky's leadership, did not hesitate in 1932 to state that she "always used to go to seek his advice in difficult situations, and whenever new important problems arose".¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Lenin, "O rabote Narkomprosa", Polnoe sobranie sochinenii. (Moscow, 1958-1963), XLII, 478.

¹⁷Krupskaya, "K desyatiletiiu zhurnala Na Putyakh k Novoi Shkole", X, 499. See also her letter to

By being adviser to his wife, one may assume that both Pokrovsky and his work were well known to Lenin. Indeed, Krupskaya maintained that Lenin was acquainted with all the leaders of education, and thoroughly familiar with their work.¹⁸

Lenin's confidence in Pokrovsky's talents and his Marxist views, and Pokrovsky's unique position among Russian historians, made him the obvious choice of the Party for the leadership of the new Soviet historiography.

Pokrovsky had to build the Russian Marxist historical scholarship from the foundations. Apart from him and a handful of less known historians, there were no advocates of the Marxist concept of history. The traditional "bourgeois" historians, and even the more liberal scholars like Platonov, Milyukov and Petrushevsky, refused to acknowledge either Pokrovsky's historical concepts or, indeed, Pokrovsky as an authority.¹⁹

Faced with the urgent task of training Marxist scholars, both in history and other branches of the social

Pokrovsky of June 1920. "Po povodu proekta tezisov'ob ocherednykh zadachakh otdela edinoi trudovoi shkoly", ibid., 47-49.

¹⁸Krupskaya, "Otmetka, sdelannaya Leninym na knizhke Blonskogo 'Trudovaya Shkola'", IV, 435.

¹⁹Consequently history as a discipline was altogether abolished by the Party, history departments in the universities were closed, and history as a subject-matter ceased to be taught in the schools, giving room to Social Studies and related subjects. The Communists who were "but a drop in the ocean", as Lenin once said, met a temporary defeat on the "historical front".

sciences, the Party readily gave support to Pokrovsky's initiative for the creation of a series of institutions.

On February 11, 1921, Lenin personally signed a decree authorizing the creation of the Institute for "the training of Red Professors to teach economic theory, historical materialism, the development of social forces, modern history and socialist construction in the universities of the Republic".²⁰

A former member of the Institute of Red Professors referred to it as the "Theory Headquarters" of the Central Committee of the Party.²¹ Indeed, the faculty of the Institute boasted of a formidable array of Party leaders and scholars of great reputation. Among its non-Party members, according to Avtorkhanov, the faculty included the following scholars: Rozhkov, Platonov, Bakhrushin, Tarle, Grekov, Struve, Marr, Deborin, Preobrazhensky and Kosminsky. The Party professors included: Bukharin, Pokrovsky, Lunacharsky, Yaroslavsky, Radek, Vyshinsky, Varga, Ercoli-Togliatti and Kuusinen. Among the more important visiting lecturers were: Stalin, Kaganovich, Kalinin, Manuilsky, Bubnov, and Eideman.²²

²⁰Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1st. ed. XXVI, (1937), 600f.

²¹A.A. Avtorkhanov, Stalin and the Soviet Communist Party. (Munich: Institute for the Study of the USSR, 1959), p. 19.

²²Avtorkhanov names also Sergeyev, Gratsiansky, Krachkovsky, Meshchaninov, Rubin, Groman, Basarov, L.

As a Marxist historian, Pokrovsky was particularly interested in the economic history of Russia. In view of this he organized a wide search for, and collected documentary source material. On the occasion of the first publication of these in 1926 he wrote in Istorik-Marksist:²³

Our dream of reconstructing the economic history of Russia, concretely and in detail, on the basis of the wealthiest archival material, begins to materialize.²⁴

Pokrovsky's main concern, however, remained the struggle against bourgeois historiography. With the aim of interpreting history from the Marxist point of view and to combat opposing views, Pokrovsky organized the Militant Society of Marxist Historians. The purpose of this Society, as given by its constitution, was (1) the union of all Marxists engaged in historical inquiry, (2) the scientific study of questions of history and of Marxian methodology, (3) combating the "distortions" of the bourgeois historians; (4) assisting members of the Society to secure scientific literature, access to archives and scientific works, (5) the critical examination of historical literature from the Marxian point of view, and (6)

Axelrod, Mishulin and the younger Timiryazev among historians, and Krumin, Kviring, Ye. Preobrazhensky, Krylenko, Pashukanis, Berman, Mif, Leokin, Vikolarov, W. Pieck and Strakhov, a Chinese with a Russian pseudonym, among party professors. Ibid., p. 21. Avtorkhanov omitted the initials of these people.

²³The official journal of the Society of Marxist Historians founded by Pokrovsky, published for the first time in September, 1926.

²⁴I-M, II (1926), 210.

carrying on propaganda and popularizing the Marxist achievements in the field of history.²⁵ But the main purpose of all this activity was to remove the rising generation of historians from the influence of older scholars. While all members were supposed to be Marxist, there was no requirement that they be members of the Party. In November 1929, Pokrovsky declared that he and his school were following the only correct line, the essence of which was,

To liberate the Marxist historical literature of all the remnants of bourgeois ideology, remnants of which there have still been too many in that literature, and, secondly, in the merciless struggle with that very same bourgeois ideology when it has the impudence to come forward openly, something that has happened especially often in the last few years.²⁶

Opposition to his attempts to carry out the line set before him by the Party, Pokrovsky said, came to him only on the part of Trotsky, and partly from the group of N.I. Bukharin.²⁷ Whether this claim is fully truthful is difficult to assess. As it will be seen later, Stalin and his intimate friends had begun a campaign of persecution of Pokrovsky long before 1929, and certainly not without Pokrovsky's awareness of it. Perhaps Pokrovsky was referring only to his policy of struggle against the bourgeois historiography. But if so, then one can hardly

²⁵I-M, I (1926), 320.

²⁶Ts PA IML, f 147, Op.1, ed. Khr. 35, p. 140 as quoted by Sokolov, O.D. "Ob istoricheskikh vzglyadakh M.N. Pokrovskogo," Kommunist, IV (1962), 73.

²⁷Ibid.

believe that Trotsky and Bukharin would have tried to stand in Pokrovsky's way. After all, they too were against the bourgeoisie.

Stalin's attacks took the outward form of an ideological struggle rather than political, which it was in reality. In a letter to Maslov of February 28, 1925 Stalin stated his feelings about Pokrovsky's place in the new scheme of things. This letter was first published in 1947 under the title "A Letter to Comrade ME-RT," and because of its importance seems worth quoting at some length.

You are quite right in saying that the Communist Party of Germany has achieved enormous successes. There is no doubt that Brandler and Thalheimer belong to the category of the old type of leaders who have outlived their time and are being pushed into the background by leaders of the new type. Here in Russia too, the process of the dying out of a number of old guiding functionaries from the world of letters and old "leaders" has taken place. That process was more rapid in periods of revolutionary crises and slower in periods when we were accumulating forces, but it went on all the time. The Lunacharskys, Pokrovskys, Rozhkovs, Goldenbergs, Bogdanovs, Krassins, etc., such are the first specimens that come to my mind of former Bolshevik leaders who later dropped into secondary roles. It is a necessary process of renewal of the leading cadres of a living and developing party. Incidentally, the difference between Brandlers and Thalheimers and the comrades I have just mentioned is that, in addition to everything else, the Brandlers and Thalheimers are burdened with the old social-Democratic baggage, whereas the above-mentioned Russian comrades were free from such a burden.²⁸ [italics mine]

The old Bolsheviks, many of whom were selflessly dedicated to the ideals of a new order of things were

²⁸I.V. Stalin, "Pis'mo t. Me-rtu", Sochineniya (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1954), VII, 43.

rapidly replaced by a generation of opportunistic realists and pragmatic practitioners. This process was particularly accelerated after the rise of Stalin to the leadership of the Party. In 1925, however, Stalin was still either unwilling, or possibly not yet in the position to accuse those whom he wanted to dislocate of being deviationists and traitors. Nevertheless, by citing the name of Pokrovsky along with other persons who at one time had opposed Lenin, Stalin subtly planted an idea which he later fully exploited.

When pressed by Tsvetkov and Aypov, two students at the Institute of Red Professors, to express his views on this "outstanding Soviet historian", Stalin replied:

With regard to the question of the theory of the formation of the "system of Russian autocracy" I must state that I fundamentally do not share the theory of comrade Trotsky, while the theory of comrade Pokrovsky I consider basically correct, [italics mine] although not quite free of extremes and inclinations towards a simplified economic explanation of the process of the formation of autocracy.²⁹

Significantly, Stalin's letter was published only partially in his thirteen volume Works. The section just cited appeared for the first time in the Kommunist, the official organ of the Central Committee, in 1962. Also, from this quotation it is clear that Stalin regarded Pokrovsky's crucial and much debated interpretation of the

²⁹Stalin, "Unpublished letter to Comrades Tsvetkov and Aypov," Ts PA IML, f.3, op. 1, ed. Khr. 2817, p. 12, cited in Kommunist, IV (1962) 77.

formation of Russian Autocracy as "fundamentally correct" from the point of view of Marxist interpretation of history. The only criticism he could raise was the fact that Pokrovsky was inclined towards some simplifications.

In 1931 Pokrovsky himself as much as admitted this "inclination towards simplification"; but he attributed it to a deliberate rhetorical attempt to convince his readers. He simplified a few points in order to be better understood.³⁰ He also admitted that perhaps he had given too much emphasis to the role of Commercial Capitalism in the history of Russian Autocracy "thus somewhat obscuring the feudal nature of the Russian state".³¹ Consequently, in the Tenth Edition of his Brief History he changed the role of Commercial Capital from "founder of the state of the Romanovs" to that of "their main support and basis on which they built their bureaucratic monarchy".³²

Pokrovsky claimed that he had often been accused of having originated, under the influence of Bogdanov, the concept of Commercial Capitalism as an historical category. He refuted this accusation by pointing out Lenin's definition of Commercial Capitalism as a "clear and precise category which had preceded capitalist production in Russia".³³ Pokrovsky's only original contribution,

³⁰Pokrovsky, Russkaya istoriya, p. 4.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 4f.

³³Pokrovsky cited: Lenin, Works, (2nd. ed.) III, 134.

according to his own admission, was to draw certain political conclusions from this concept. However, he discovered twenty years later, he said, that already in 1894, Lenin had treated this problem in his "What is the Friendship of Peoples" in a very similar fashion, and that, therefore, this was in fact not an original contribution to historical scholarship in the first place. As a result of the discovery of this truth, Pokrovsky concluded, he fully understood why Lenin raised no objections whatever in 1920 to his interpretation of Russian history in the Brief History of Russia.³⁴

There are other reasons to believe that the persecution of Pokrovsky was of a political rather than ideological or scholarly nature.

Sometime in 1927, Kaganovich decided to try his hand in the field of history. He signed a decree appointing himself as a member of the praesidium of the Communist Academy.³⁵ As a result of his meddling in academic affairs, the situation at the Institute of Red Professors became extremely tense, as suggests a letter sent by the students of the Institute to the Central Committee.

Slander, double-dealing, irresponsible defamation of one's opponents and similar methods, unfortunately became common methods in their struggle. I

³⁴Pokrovsky, Russkaya istoriya, p. 4.

³⁵Kommunist, IV (1962), 77.

think it is not necessary to attempt to prove how difficult it is to work in such conditions when they vote for our resolutions while in fact they sabotage them; they declare a complete political trust in comrade Pokrovsky (such as the declaration of Comrade El'vov at the II Moscow State University) while at the same time they spread secret "cribs" ["shpargalki"] which politically discredit comrade Pokrovsky; they talk of the correctness of the political line of the leaders of the community, and at the same time await the downfall of that line etc. etc. These methods of struggle are carried out before the eyes of about three hundred students, future historians, whom we must educate as staunch fighters, and men of principle, on our theoretical front.³⁶

On May 28, 1928, Pokrovsky presided over a special lecture at the Institute of Red Professors delivered by Stalin on the subject of "The Grain Front".³⁷ According to an eye-witness account the aging Pokrovsky seemed very nervous when he introduced Stalin in a low but clear voice. At this occasion Stalin for the first time expounded in public his plan for the "Kolkhoz Revolution", the compulsory creation of collective farms, inaugurating the beginning of the end of the NEP, thus burying Leninism. Pokrovsky seemed greatly pleased at the end of the meeting because he "smiled like a benign bearded patriarch as he shook Stalin warmly by the hand".³⁸ Molotov was also present. Pokrovsky asked him to suggest to Stalin to call a special meeting of the Board of the Institute's Party organization.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Stalin, "Na khlebnom fronte", XI, 81-97.

³⁸Avtorkhanov, p. 8.

Stalin obliged. Gasping from asthma, Pokrovsky introduced the various members of the board: Orlov, economist; Yudin, philosopher; Konstantinov, philosopher; Shcherbakov, writer and historian, (otherwise secret reporter to the Central Committee about the Institute), Pankratova, historian.

When the latter was introduced, states the eye witness,

Stalin obviously wanted to begin a discussion with her but the 'bourgeois liberal' (as she used to be called by her student fellows at that time) a thin, spare little woman, melted away. Later on this 'bourgeois liberal', after a number of victories and defeats, disclosures and self-flagellations - an art in which she was unexcelled - reached the Stalinist Olympus.³⁹

Ironically Pokrovsky thus had the dubious honour of introducing the new leaders who only a few years later, dislodged and replaced the old guard. In the course of the 1930's the "Right Bukharinites" and the "Left Deviationists" were replaced by the new post-October generation of young Bolsheviks such as Malenkov, Shcherbakov, Khrushchev, Mikhailov, Suslov, Ponomarenko, Patolichev, and Koslov in the Central Committee apparatus; Bulganin, Pervukhin, Malyshev, Tevosian, Saburov, and Yefremov as industrial managers; Beria, Bagirov, Kruglov, Abakumov, Markulov, and Serov in the Secret Police; Mekhlis, Yudin, Mitin, and Pankratova as members of the Academy and Red Professors; Gromyko, Malik, Zarubin, and Pavlov in Stalin's diplomatic service.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid., p. 10. This was A.M. Pankratova, the "Judas" of the school of Pokrovsky.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 164.

By 1930 Pokrovsky's plan for the training of new Marxist intellectuals brought forth good results, and Stalin could reap a fresh crop of ideologically reliable lieutenants and politically loyal followers. That year saw an intensified attempt at a final elimination of the "bourgeois" elements on the "historical front",⁴¹ as well as the beginning of the end for the old guard.

Not without the co-operation of Pokrovsky some of the old Bolshevik historians were vigorously criticized and attacked. When it was the turn of Teodorovich to be criticized for his "errors", Emelyan Yaroslavsky,⁴² counting on his old friendship with Pokrovsky wrote him a letter asking him not to criticize Teodorovich and "not to maim an old Bolshevik". On February 27, 1930, Pokrovsky replied:

No one is maiming comrade Teodorovich. He is being "worked over" . . . ["ego prorabatyvayut"] . . . But if I decided to "stem out self-criticism" by the use of my personal authority, then I assure you, my dear comrade Emelyan, this will result in naught, except for the loss of my own authority.⁴³

Pokrovsky's "authority", which he was so anxious to preserve, by then, was only illusory and depended almost

⁴¹B.H. Sumner, "Soviet History", Slavonic Review, XVI (1938), p. 601.

⁴²Yaroslavsky became responsible editor of the Istoriik-Marksist in 1940. See No. IV-V of that year.

⁴³Ts PA IML, f. 147, op. 1, ed. Khr. 37, p. 26, cited in Kommunist, IV (1962), 77f. In actual fact, it was Pokrovsky who led the struggle against what was regarded as "anti-Leninist theories" of Teodorovich, Dubrovsky and others. Cf. I-M, I-II (1932), 8.

entirely on his usefulness for the Party leadership in their struggle for absolute supremacy. The behind-the-scenes attacks on Pokrovsky and the constant undermining of his position went on relentlessly.

On January 15, 1929, Pokrovsky attended a meeting of the praesidium of the Communist Academy. On his table he found a note signed by three members of the praesidium in which they suggested a thorough investigation of the Historical Section of the Academy. The note implied that in the field of history "great theoretical errors" were hiding, and that "criticism and self criticism" were completely lacking. Pokrovsky retorted in early February by sending with his report to the secretaries of the Central Committee and to Molotov, then Chairman of the People's Commissariate, a letter in which he described the situation on the historical front. The existence of this letter was first disclosed in 1962.

It is in fact becoming very obvious that at that time an attack against me was being organized by three members of the praesidium of the Communist Academy (who, as I heard in the course of conversations in the corridors, are being joined by some other members of the praesidium also.)

One should, therefore, throw out all academic pretense and speak out openly. That way the whole affair will be shorter and much livelier⁴⁴

Neither the academic pretense was thrown out as Pokrovsky requested, nor was the whole affair made short and lively. Pokrovsky was permitted in the same year to lead the delegation of Soviet historians to the International

⁴⁴Ibid.

Congress of Historians, and was given the honorific membership in the Soviet Academy of Science. His position and the outside symbols of his authority had not diminished although the political pressures continued in the form of ideological attacks.

Suffering from cancer for the last five years of his life but having been bed-ridden only for one month and a half, the aging Pokrovsky died in the Kremlin hospital on April 10, 1932. The departed scholar and Bolshevik leader was widely praised in the whole Soviet press. Many journals and magazines published long eulogies and printed his portrait framed in black as a symbol of mourning. A state funeral was prepared, and Bukharin was appointed by the Central Committee to deliver the official oration.⁴⁵ In a long speech in Red Square Bukharin praised Pokrovsky as a great scholar; but at the same time he did not neglect to mention Stalin as the "field marshal of the proletarian forces".⁴⁶

On April 12, 1932, Pravda published a eulogy written by Lenin's wife. Krupskaya wrote:

He was a Party member and a Bolshevik to the marrow of his bones, devoted to the struggle for the cause of the proletariat without reserve. His powers were declining but until the last moment he remained at his post.

⁴⁵Bukharin was most likely appointed by Stalin who probably had no intention of having any of his personal lieutenants associated with the name of Pokrovsky.

⁴⁶Avtorkhanov, p. 56.

An editorial in the Istorik-Marksist unequivocally declared that Pokrovsky had formulated a Marxist-Leninist explanation of Russian history and that he remained to the end a genuine Marxist-Leninist historian .

M.N. Pokrovsky was a Leninist historian who, without establishing any schools, as a faithful son of his Party for twenty-five years worked without resting his hands, formulating a Marxist-Leninist scheme of historical process. Being, after Lenin, a pioneer in this field, he carried out an immense work in the founding of a Marxist-Leninist theory of historical development and the history of the peoples of the USSR, and, in particular, established a concept of Russian historical process which, regardless of a series of mistakes, is a genuine Marxist-Leninist conception of historical development.⁴⁷

Not only were no official denials of the validity of the references to Pokrovsky's ideological orthodoxy and faithfulness to the Party forthcoming from the leaders, but also the publishing house of the Party (Partiinoe Izdatel'stvo) posthumously printed, with the official "imprimatur", the Tenth Edition of Pokrovsky's Brief History. Significantly this was the first edition, to this author's knowledge, in which Lenin's famous letter to Pokrovsky was published.⁴⁸

It can, therefore, be established beyond reasonable doubt that at least until 1932 Pokrovsky was regarded as an orthodox Marxist-Leninist historian. Consequently,

⁴⁷I-M, I-II (1932), 12.

⁴⁸The Ninth Edition was published in 1931 by Gosizdat, in Moscow and Leningrad without Lenin's letter. The German translation by W. Herzog, Geschichte Russlands (Leipzig, 1929) does not carry the letter either. Furthermore, the Russian Tenth Edition printed a facsimile of the letter, strongly suggesting its novelty.

the reasons for the furious attacks unleashed on Pokrovsky in 1936 as the leader of an "anti-Marxist" and "anti-Leninist" school of thought should be sought elsewhere than in the domain of ideology alone. C.E. Black is on the whole right when he suggests that the motives which led first to the establishment of Pokrovsky as the dean of Soviet historians and later to his posthumous liquidation "should probably be sought not in the writings of Marx and Engels but in the needs of the party and the state,"⁴⁹ and, one may add, of Stalin.

It is true that Pokrovsky himself admitted, more specifically about his major work on the history of Russia, that "the author has more than once had to correct his whole outline";⁵⁰ it is also true that he wrote to the secretaries of the Central Committee in February 1931: "I became accustomed to occupy myself with self-correction in the course of the years, and I am deeply grateful to all those who helped me in this".⁵¹ It seems incorrect, however, to draw conclusions from this that Pokrovsky's views were "unsound Marxism" as Professor Black suggests.

⁴⁹C.E. Black, "History and Politics in the Soviet Union", Rewriting Russian History, ed. C.E. Black (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 12. It should not, however, be assumed that at his establishment as the leader of Soviet historians Pokrovsky's views were not ideologically correct, and secondly, that his posthumous liquidation had no ideological motive whatsoever.

⁵⁰M.N. Pokrovsky, History of Russia from the Earliest Times to the Rise of Commercial Capitalism, trans. J.D. Clarkson (New York: International Publishers, 1931), p. XIII.

⁵¹Ts PA IML, f. 147, ed. Khr. 33, p. 39, cited by Sokolov, p. 75.

In his valuable book on the Rewriting of Russian History Black writes:

Some of Pokrovsky's principal ideas were attacked and discarded by his colleagues, and he in fact admitted in 1931 that his interpretation had not been well received. He nevertheless continued to maintain that his history was sound Marxism, and to cite the public approval that Lenin had accorded his work. [italics mine] ⁵²

In support of his argument Professor Black refers the reader to the Preface and first Appendix in the Tenth Edition of Pokrovsky's Brief History.

The above statement seems to rest on two assumptions which cannot be wholly accepted. First, it implies that Pokrovsky's history was in fact not "sound Marxism"; and secondly, that Pokrovsky was in the habit of citing Lenin's approval.

The first implication appears to contradict Black's own suggestion that Pokrovsky's downfall should not be attributed to ideology. It also negates the validity of Lenin's original approval of Pokrovsky's work. If Pokrovsky's concept was "sound Marxism" a decade earlier, and if that same concept no longer was considered as such in 1931 then surely it is the accusers of Pokrovsky who had changed their views, and therefore they should be regarded as deviationists. It can be argued that in spite of all the former criticism of Pokrovsky's views, his historical concept was still regarded as "sound Marxism" even in

⁵²C.E. Black, Rewriting Russian History (2nd ed.; New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 14.

1932. The Tenth Edition of his Brief History, to which Black also refers, was published posthumously by the Party Publishing house, and there is no reason why the Party editors could not have suppressed the publication of Lenin's letter.⁵³

The second implication of Black's statement, i.e., that Pokrovsky had repeatedly published Lenin's letter, can be dismissed on the following grounds: first, the Tenth Edition printed a facsimile of the letter in question giving strong support to the conjecture that it was published for the first time; secondly, the Ninth Edition, published in 1931 by the State Publishing House did not publish the letter; thirdly, the German translation of the Brief History, published in 1929, does not carry the letter either.⁵⁴ Finally, it seems illogical to claim that Pokrovsky had the habit of citing Lenin in approval of his views on history in the face of the fact that he was the official head of the ideological training of the Party theorists; a fact which in itself spoke with utmost clarity about Lenin's confidence in Pokrovsky's ideological "soundness".⁵⁵

⁵³The fact that the Party did not interfere with the publication of Lenin's letter in 1932 suggests either that it regarded Pokrovsky's views on Russian history as "sound Marxism", or that Pokrovsky had some powerful friends who tried to exonerate him almost four years before he was publicly degraded.

⁵⁴Unfortunately, the author had no access to any of the other editions.

⁵⁵Since there was no need, formerly, to justify his

Pokrovsky was confident that his views were basically correct, and he had no need to change them radically. In the Preface to the Tenth Edition of his Brief History, written on July 15, 1931, he stated that he had no intention of changing the general outline of his work which had been approved by Lenin, thus leaving the impression that pressure was used on him to revise his stand. But he added:

The revision of Leninism on whatever question, even partially, is an activity to which I am not used to at all; and I gladly leave it to others.⁵⁶

While Pokrovsky was unwilling to change the fundamental tenets of Leninism, he was quite ready, as we have seen, to revise minor details of his work in the light of "suggestions" from other scholars and Party leaders. But this willingness was neither based on spinelessness nor on admission of "erroneousness" from the point of view of an "immutable" dogma. As he put it,

Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action; . . . and the experiences of this action have in the most powerful way been reflected on the guidance. Not in the sense of principles: fundamentally we all to this day stand firmly on the Communist Manifesto of 1848. But history has taught us a far wider application of these principles to the interpretation of concrete historical facts.⁵⁷

views, the only other motive for "continuing" to cite Lenin's letter could be pure and simple vanity, a weakness of character of which Pokrovsky may or may not have suffered.

⁵⁶Pokrovsky, Russkaya istoriya, p. 3.

⁵⁷Pokrovsky, History of Russia, p. XI.

He, thus, openly recognized the fact that Marxism is, like the Party line, flexible in the face of practical realities. And he was willing to adapt his thinking, within limits, to the changing of Party policies. Writing about his major work, Pokrovsky had this to say:

During the period of time in which this book has been written the author was more than once forced to correct his whole outline. Who shall predict what form this outline will take after the final triumph of Socialism? One thing may be certain; every new explanation of the Russian historical process will be more materialistic and more sustainedly Marxist, than its predecessor.⁵⁸

Pokrovsky's "prophecy" that every new version of the historical interpretation of Russia's past, or every "rewriting of Russian history" to use C.E. Black's expression, will be "more materialistic and more sustainedly Marxist than its predecessor", proved completely utopian. As it turned out, the history of czars and ministers, which Pokrovsky thought were buried once and for all,⁵⁹ returned again, less materialistic, and less sustainedly Marxist than its predecessor.

In 1939 appeared a collective work edited by the Soviet Academy of Sciences, the content and purpose of which was unmistakably indicated by the title: Against the historical conceptions of M.N. Pokrovsky. It was followed the next year by a second volume entitled:

⁵⁸Ibid., p. XIII.

⁵⁹Cf. chapter "The Role of History", p. 48.

Against the anti-Marxist conceptions of M.N. Pokrovsky.

The campaign against the "anti-Marxist School of Pokrovsky" had reached its peak at the end of the 1930's. His whole school of thought was branded as "anti-Marxist". Pokrovsky's works were banned, including the Brief History which had been approved by Lenin.

The main criticism levelled against Pokrovsky's school concentrated on the following questions: (1) socio-economic formations (more specifically the role of Commercial Capitalism in Russian history), (2) the existence of "objective laws" applicable by the historians, and (3) the role of the individual in history.

These ideological arguments, however, were only a cover, or perhaps an ideological sanction for the real reason of the attacks on Pokrovsky and his school. The simple truth was that in response to concrete experiences, or simply, reality, the Party line had changed, and Pokrovsky's scheme of history, i.e., the Marxist scheme of history, was out of line, as has been pointed out in the chapter "Victory on the Historical Front".

An incident, reported in the Uchitel'skaya Gazeta on February 22, 1962, throws some light on why Pokrovsky's school had to go. In an article entitled "Podumaem ob etom tovarishchi!", (Let's think about it Comrades!), the Teachers' Gazette describes a meeting of the

teacher-activists⁶⁰ of Moscow, held on February 7, 1943, where the minister of education, V.P. Potemkin⁶¹ was the main speaker. He attributed all the difficulties in the teaching of history and the lack of knowledge among the students to the "so-called school of Pokrovsky". At the same time, he described Pokrovsky's Brief History as a "harmful and anti-patriotic" book. "This is what had poisoned the minds of our students", he exclaimed; and concluded by saying:

The most important task of our teachers is to liquidate the last remnants of these harmful and corrupting anti-patriotic tendencies.⁶²

It is not unrealistic to assume that Pokrovsky's views, and for that matter Marx's views on history became an obstacle for the Party when the need arose for stimulating the national patriotic feelings of the Soviet masses in general and the great Russian population in particular. Conversely, when that need disappeared the road for a return to the former views was open; and a new shift in the Party line would bring Pokrovsky's rehabilitation.

The first harbinger of such a change appeared in 1946 when in an article on the new tasks of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the RSFSR, its president, I.A. Kairov, drew attention to the implications for the Academy

⁶⁰Party members playing a leading role.

⁶¹The editor of Istoriya Diplomatii which won a Stalin prize.

⁶²Uchitel'skaya Gazeta, February 22, 1962.

of the latest decree of the Central Committee on the need to improve the "ideological training" in the school.⁶³ This was an indication that the time had come to reorient gradually the mind of the youth from "Russo-centrism" to internationalism once again, at least for foreign purposes; and such reorientation would sooner or later create a climate of opinion favourable to the ideas expounded by Pokrovsky. The Party line, however, was slow to change. Indeed, as late as 1955, A.L. Mongait and A.I. Pershits wrote an article showing the role of Stalin in the overcoming of the errors of "Marxism" and its "sociological schematism which had been overcome sometime before in the other fields of historical science, but of which there are still remnants in primeval history".⁶⁴

Instead of studying the abstract stages in the development of society, our scholars strive to bring out concrete and individual historical generalities, study the history of individual tribes and peoples. Particularly great importance is attached in the last years to questions of the origin and development of ethnical groups, blood tribes and nationalities.⁶⁵

But already in the same year the winds of change

⁶³I.A. Kairov, "Ocherednye zadachi akademii pedagogicheskikh nauk v svete postanovlenii TsK VKP(b) ob usilenii ideologicheskoi raboty", Sovetskaya Pedagogika, XII (1946), 3-11.

⁶⁴"Nekotorye voprosy per vobytnoi istorii v sovetskoi literature posle voennykh let", Voprosy istorii, I (1955), 139f.

⁶⁵Ibid.

were blowing. The Third (1955) Edition of Istoriya SSSR (Vol. II) in the bibliographical notes appended to each chapter included references to Pokrovsky for the first time in many years. Although these were invariably introduced by some such formula as "M.N. Pokrovsky and his 'school' championed the following erroneous doctrine which is contrary to the tenets of Marxism-Leninism", the fact that his name was mentioned was noteworthy.⁶⁶

The first issue of Voprosy Istorii in 1956 carried an editorial on the study of the history of historiography suggesting that the time was ripe for the rehabilitation of Pokrovsky.

In its time, the vulgarising errors of the so-called "school" of M.N. Pokrovsky were subjected to a just criticism of simplification. Nonetheless, one should not forget that together with the serious errors, in the works of M.N. Pokrovsky there were also some valuable elements. In order to define correctly the role of M.N. Pokrovsky in Soviet historiography, it is necessary to study his works, by taking into consideration the level of the historical science in those days.⁶⁷

The attempts of some historians to rehabilitate Pokrovsky were violently opposed by others who were probably too closely associated with the Stalinist Party line. During a conference convened by the History Faculty of Moscow University discussing the new history curriculum,

⁶⁶See also "Some Features of Recent Soviet Historical Writing", Soviet Culture, II (February, 1956), p. 6.

⁶⁷"Ob izuchenii istorii istoricheskoi nauki", Voprosy Istorii, I (1956), p. 11.

one of the historians expressed his alarm about the tendency of some historians "fully to rehabilitate the Pokrovsky school" of historiography. He believed, however, that the necessary struggle against this tendency could be waged even on the basis of the curriculum submitted.⁶⁸ The struggle for the rehabilitation of Pokrovsky continued relentlessly but could not bear fruit until there occurred a radical shift in the Party line.

In 1961 appeared an article in the official journal of the Central Committee, the Kommunist, written by a group of authors headed by M. Nechkina⁶⁹ dealing with some problems of the history of Soviet historiography. The writers stated:

In our opinion, it is necessary, without false exaltations and unfounded disparagement to render due homage to the great Marxist historian, a man of action in his time, who contributed a great deal to the Soviet historical science. We also consider it right to raise the question of the republication of the historical works of Pokrovsky. Do we not err by our onesidedness, by republishing the works of the better representatives of the bourgeois historiography (Solovyev, Klyuchevsky) while abandoning to oblivion the works of the outstanding Bolshevik historian?⁷⁰

⁶⁸Cf. R. Schlesinger, "The New Secondary School History Curriculum", Soviet Studies, I (July, 1959), p. 348.

⁶⁹Usually whenever a delicate problem is treated in the Soviet journals, a group of authors, as opposed to a single author, are given the assignment of writing the article. And one may almost establish it as an axiom that the more delicate the ideological problem, the larger the number of responsible collaborators on an article.

⁷⁰M. Nechkina, et. al. "Nekotorye voprosy istorii sovetskoi istoricheskoi nauki", Kommunist, IX (1961), 63.

The needed change in the Party line came at the Twenty Second Party Congress, inaugurating the concluding pages of the Pokrovsky saga.

The Academician L.F. Ilichev, one of the secretaries of the Central Committee and a leading ideologist of the Party, declared that the persecution and the subsequent condemnation of Pokrovsky and his school was a result of the cult of personality.

During the era of the cult of personality, perfectly inexplicable [sic] actions were permitted when the names of some great scholars were torn out from the scientific world. Such was the fate in particular, of the famous historian-Marxist, the old Bolshevik, M.N. Pokrovsky.⁷¹

While admitting that Pokrovsky had committed certain political and scholarly errors, Ilichev argued that this great historian had contributed a great deal to the Marxist approach to historiography in the Soviet Union. For his few errors, Ilichev continued, instead of being criticized in a friendly way as Lenin had once done,

Grave accusations were levelled against M.N. Pokrovsky during the cult of personality. He was declared the head of the anti-Marxist school of historiography, and all his works were branded as manifestations of vulgar sociology, economic materialism and bourgeois historiography.⁷²

⁷¹XXII s'ezd kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soyuz
(Moscow, 1962), I, 185.

⁷²Ibid.

After the Congress, on orders from the Central Committee, an All-Union consultative meeting of scholars was convoked in Moscow on December 25-28, 1961, where Ilichev, on behalf of the Central Committee, communicated to the assembled scholars from all branches the wishes of the Party and the new Party line. He demanded a radical investigation of the whole academic life in the USSR. The Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences without any delay followed up the instructions. The January issue of Voprosy Istorii reported Ilichev's speech, but the editorial struck a somewhat cautious line.

This does not mean that the rehabilitation of the good name of M.N. Pokrovsky as a Marxist historian indicates that one must pass over his errors and misconceptions, or that one must return to that level of scientific knowledge at which this scholar stood. The task of Soviet historians is to determine what is his true place in the Soviet historical scholarship.⁷³

Several articles dealing with a diversity of historical and ideological problems subsequently mentioned or discussed the question of Pokrovsky's contribution to Soviet historical scholarship. The most notable among these was O.D. Sokolov's article in the Kommunist, devoted entirely to the historical concepts of Pokrovsky. He openly admitted that Pokrovsky's role had been "distorted",

⁷³"Sovetskie istoriki obsuzhdayut zadachi nauki v svete reshenii XXII s'ezda KPSS", Voprosy Istorii, I (1962), 10.

and treated "unobjectively" and "incorrectly". This "greatest scholar-historian of that time" who had "collaborated with V.I. Lenin was declared the leader of the anti-Leninist and subjectivist, vulgarizing school of history".⁷⁴ As for Pokrovsky's Brief History, Sokolov wrote:

There is no doubt that Lenin regarded the publication of this book as one of the greatest achievements of the new historical science. He regarded it as Marxian, and suggested the inclusion of a chronological index based on the factual material contained in the book ("with the indication of the pages in your book"). Also was forgotten Lenin's advice about the need for a comparative appraisal of historical events, as given by the bourgeois and Marxist historians. Moreover, such a comparison, which beyond all doubt helped the reader to become convinced of the indisputable correctness of Marxism, was regarded, during the period of the cult of personality, almost as a propaganda of hostile concepts.⁷⁵

These statements are eloquent in themselves and hardly need any comment. One may, perhaps, conclude with some quotations from the most recent statement on the question of the rehabilitation of Pokrovsky, which appeared in the second number of Kommunist this year. P. Fedoseev and Yu. Frantsev declared that:

A new stage has begun in Marxist social science The measures of the Party regarding the consequences of the cult of personality and the restoration of the Leninist principles in historical scholarship are memorable milestones in [Soviet] historiography.⁷⁶

⁷⁴"Ob istoricheskikh vzgladakh M.N. Pokrovskogo", Kommunist, IV (1962), 69.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 72.

⁷⁶"Istoriya i sotsiologiya", Kommunist, II (1964), 62.

Memorable indeed they may be. But the real reasons for these changes, both the degrading and rehabilitation of M.N. Pokrovsky still elude the Soviet writers, or else they prefer not to write about them. If the reasons for Pokrovsky's initial rise and subsequent downfall should not be sought in Marxist ideology but in the changing interests of the Party and its Central Committee, then it may be reasonable to seek the reasons of his rehabilitation also in these quarters. Few indeed had written works which could better be used against the rising cult of personality in the Far East. As he had once been used by the Party in the ideological struggle with the bourgeois historians, Pokrovsky may again be used in another ideological struggle.

To conclude with Fedoseev and Frantsev, the roots of the conflict between Stalin and the school of Pokrovsky can be found "not in economic materialism, but in a different concept of the role of historical figures, and in the incompatibility of his views with the cult of personality".⁷⁷

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 63.

CONCLUSION

For the Communist Party of the Soviet Union historical works in general and the teaching of history in particular are part of the "scientific-pedagogical arsenal" with the aid of which "historical science must penetrate into the masses, and educate new millions of conscious fighters and builders of socialism". In other words, popular and scholarly historical writings and history textbooks are one of the most effective tools of propaganda and indoctrination in the hands of the Communist Party.

Soviet historians are not scholars but propagandists who are given specific instructions from above. The goals which Soviet historians must pursue vary with the periodic changes in the Party line which is determined more by pragmatic attitudes of Party leaders than by ideology. Stalin was a realist whose policies were shaped by realistic considerations rather than by Marxist theories which he readily and openly subordinated to the former. Those who refused to follow some of his ideologically unorthodox policies but placed ideology before expediency, he regarded as "people who are as far removed from Marxism as the sky is from earth".

Pokrovsky's adherence to Marxist interpretation of history left no room for Russian national traditions and national heroes. Faced with a racist and highly chauvinistic national threat on the part of Japan and above all Germany, the Party desperately needed means for arousing a national patriotism among the Russian masses. Thus, regardless, and perhaps because of his close allegiance to Marxism, Pokrovsky became a liability for the Soviet state, and his historical thought had to make room for what became known as the "nationalistic" trend in Soviet historiography and teaching of history.

Related to the German threat, and perhaps stemming from the new cult of Russian heroes, was the question of Stalin's cult of personality -- a phenomenon which ran directly counter to Marxist concepts of the role of historical figures. Since Marx and Marxist ideology could not be repudiated, Pokrovsky was artificially dissociated from Marxism, and with the ousting of his "historical school" many of the embarrassing Marxist concepts were also conveniently discarded.

It would be wrong to attribute the downfall of Pokrovsky to Stalin's personal feelings towards the scholar, or to a normal evolution of Soviet historiography, and even less to Pokrovsky's alleged anti-Marxist concepts. The

developments in the teaching of history in the Soviet School from 1917 to 1937 clearly show that Communist Party policies are shaped by pragmatic expediencies, and consequently, as Bubnov declared, school history and Soviet historiography in general must also be "pragmatic".

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

THE GUS PROGRAMMES IN SOCIAL STUDIES

As has been pointed out in the first chapter, history as a subject was eliminated altogether and social studies introduced in its place. Being essentially a study of contemporary problems from the point of view of Marxist philosophy and historical interpretation, social studies became the main instrument of the party in educating "conscious builders of Socialism".¹ Since the GUS programmes of social studies introduced in 1923² were a radical departure from former practices, and since it reflected the wishes of the Party with regard to history and indoctrination of school children, it seems fitting to give a full description of the new programmes.

The unified programme of 1923, or the "White Book", in its provision for social studies made a distinction between sovremennost' and "history". Sovremennost was translated by Wilson as "Present Age", but can also be translated, and perhaps with more precision, as "Current Events" or "Contemporary Life and Problems". As its name

¹See p. 32f.

²Cf. p. 26f.

suggests, this section dealt with current problems of life and struggle in Russia and abroad. On the other hand, the "history" section of the programme, served the purpose of explaining the present in terms of the past; but it was wholly episodic, and no attempt was made at any systematization of the subject or chronological organization. Only highly selected topics illustrating Marxist principles of socio-economic development and formations were studied.

The programme for the 1st year of 2nd degree or 5th year of education was practical and technical. It was based on village organization and on the work and experience of students in a rural economy, heavy reliance being placed on the use of local material. The "history" part of "social studies" dealt with the liberation of peasants in Russia, land laws, peasant uprisings in the West, the French Revolution and the struggle of peasants for land in Russia and elsewhere.³ The teacher was supposed to cover broad geographic and chronological areas for which he had not been properly trained and which were beyond the grasp of the majority of his pupils.

The 2nd year of 2nd degree, or 6th year of education (15-16 years of age) was also practical, but instead of dealing almost exclusively with agriculture and peasant problems, it concentrated on manufacture and industry.

Sovremennost' was devoted to the study of various branches

³I-M, III (1927), 162.

of industry (handicraft, manufacturing, and factories) and problems of labour organization. Under the general topic of development of industry in the USSR and abroad, the programme provided for the study of political economy and law (within the general theme: "Workers and Capitalists"), labour and capital, private property and means of production. Limited monarchy, republic, bourgeois dictatorship, democratic republic, capitalism, competition and "chaos in production", made also part of this section.

The section on "history" dealt with the chartist movement, "1848", the Communist Manifesto, I International, Paris Commune, II International, Capitalism in Russia and Autocracy. The events connected with the Revolution of 1905 and 1917 were presented in the form of a chronicle.⁴

In the 3rd year of 2nd degree Unified Labour School classes under sovremennost', the programme prescribed the study of Labour under Capitalism, planned economy under Communism, and the Soviet regime as the transition from Capitalism to Communism. In the "History" section, the "Imperialist War", Revolution of 1917, Provisional Government, and the October Revolution were studied.

There was a definite attempt at integration of the "history" and sovremennost' sections of the programme into a unified whole with all the other courses on the curriculum.

⁴Ibid., p. 163.

The 1924 version of the GUS programme, without introducing any radical changes, attempted to unify even further the whole course of studies. The programme for the 1st grade consisted of three parallel parts: (1) Nature, (2) Labour and (3) Society, which were integrated as much and whenever possible into one single trilogy.⁵

Under the title "Nature", the children studied: the appearance of the sky in the day and at night; rotation of the earth, and its effects on the seasons and the change of day and night; the moon as a satellite of the earth; the principal planets; eclipse of the sun; stars, etc. The section "Labour" included: astronomical discoveries and the calendar; their relation to the economic realities of agriculture, commerce and navigation. "Society" comprised general topics: dependence of primitive man on nature, its effect on his mind; appearance of religion, and religion as a means of exploitation as illustrated by slavery and feudalism; atheism as a means of achieving freedom from exploitation and religious slavery.

In 1925 appeared a new version of the GUS programme, the so-called "Red Book". In contrast to the 1923 variant, the new one shifted the emphasis from village to city life and problems. However as before, the social studies was subdivided into sovremennost' and history.⁶

⁵L.L.W. Wilson, The New Schools of New Russia (New York: Vanguard, 1928), p. 212.

⁶Cf. Programmy dlya pervogo kontsentra II stupeni (Moscow-Leningrad: GIZ, 1925), pp. 20-36 (section on social studies).

Under sovremennost' the following were studied: problems of agriculture and rural economy and secondary industry; the City as the centre of secondary industry, trade and handicraft production, factory, mill; conditions of labour and organization of workers at factories; relation between rural and urban region, the village and the city.

Within the section on history, the former material on peasants was included in the history of the rural economy in Russia and covered the following themes: economy based on serfdom, the system of serfdom, and landlord government; growth of capitalism and abolition of serfdom; development of capitalism in the rural economy and its consequences; the struggle of peasants for land, Pugachev rebellion; Crimean War; reforms of 1860's, agrarian movements of the second half of the 19th century.

For the 2nd year of the 2nd degree, the new programme provided the following general themes of study:

(a) sovremennost' comprising exchange between village and city (commerce, co-operation); principles of political economy (transport cost, price, money); organization of basic branches of Soviet industry and their development (economy, government and constitution of USSR, productive and cultural tasks of the country).

(b) history covered: social classes and class struggle; contradictions of labour and capital; revolutionary

activities of the workers in the West and in Russia; the Industrial revolution; workers' movements in England at the end of the 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries; Chartism, the 1848 revolution in France and Germany; the Communist Manifesto, I International its "epoch"; the Paris Commune and a general survey of the growth of capitalism in Europe; Russian developments at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th; growth of heavy industry, formation of the working class, alliance of landowners and capitalists, populism; beginnings of the Social War of 1914; the Revolution of 1917; formation of workers-peasants government.⁷

For social studies in the 3rd year of 2nd degree, or 7th year of education, the "Red Book" prescribed the following:

(a) Under sovremennost', the development of world economy, the Communist International and the development of world revolutionary movements; the Soviet regime as the transition from Capitalism to Communism, and the

⁷I-M, III (1927), 163. About 75% of the graduates from the Second Cycle could not expect to attend higher education. It was therefore necessary to give these students fundamental knowledge of "special subjects" so that upon graduation they may enter a vocation after a short period of training. These "special subjects" were to be chosen and taught in connection with the general education which adhered to a child centred philosophy of education. The Second Cycle, therefore, cannot be regarded as a professional training school but "polytechnical".

fundamental achievements of the Soviet regime in the USSR;

(b) Under history, an explanation of the "Epoch" of Imperialism in relation to the struggle of the Working class, the "Epoch" of II International, Russian social democracy, the Imperialist War of 1914, and the Treaty of Versailles and its consequences.⁸

The new programme laid much less emphasis on organic integration of social studies with the other aspects of the curriculum. Historical material abounded, and in a relative way was systematically presented, particularly in comparison to the 1923 version of the GUS plan.

In 1926 a subtle change occurred in the programme, perhaps not without the prodding of some "higher authorities".⁹ While the new version tackled the same tasks as the previous one, it added new topics such as the problems of East-West relations, problems of industrialization, and inaugurated an independent course of sovremennost' separated from "Social Studies", taking the place of the former politgramota.¹⁰ This, however, did not mean that "Social

⁸Ibid., p. 164.

⁹Pokrovsky in 1927 stated that "some people in high authority maintain that the course of history should be separated from social studies". I-M, IV (1927), 197.

¹⁰I-M, III (1927), 163.

Studies" became "History". Elements of political science, political economics and economic politics were introduced along with the former "History".

The new course of sovremennost' while not differing significantly from its former version, presented some evidence of an attempt at systematization and came to be regarded as the "ABC of contemporary events".

The new course consisted of three broad themes:

1. Village and peasant economy (Form of village economy, tools of production, stratification; large village economy; peasants and the October revolution; contributions of the village to the city and vice versa.)

2. City as the centre of production (Branches of production, heavy and secondary industry, factory, labour, organization and solidarity of working class; the Communist party and the Soviet Power in the city; trade and commerce in Soviet cities.)

3. Relations between City and Village (Administrative ties, cultural relations, leadership of the working class.)

In spite of the fact that since 1923 a unified programme was available, there was little if any uniformity in the curriculum and methods in the Soviet school because the GUS plan was not compulsory.

Almost at the same time as the "Red Book" appeared in 1925, experiments began with a new programme which, in

1927, was to become "compulsory to a certain extent".¹¹ Assistance in the preparation of the new programme was given by a number of scientific institutions and experimental schools where it was being tried out.¹² The planning demanded a great deal of co-ordination, and involved many experts and much guidance from Party leaders. Consequently it is a reflection on the constantly changing Party line that when the new programme was published in 1927, its preamble stated that it would be valid only "for the next two to three years", by which time there will be "definite results to aid in making a more final programme".¹³

¹¹Wilson, p. 200.

¹²The biological station for Young Naturalists, the Communal School of the Commissariat, Radishchev's and Malachor's Memorial Experimental schools, the Seventh Experimental Station, the Institute of Extra-Mural Methods, the Institute of School Methods, the Central Pedagogical Laboratory, the Leningrad State Council on Methods, and the Moscow Central Institute of Physical Training.

¹³Wilson, p. 201. The true reasons for the singularly frequent changes in programmes ought to be sought not in the field of pedagogy but rather in the political developments of the party and the country as a whole. This is particularly evident if we keep in mind the often repeated official statements on the essentially political nature of the Soviet schools, and the close relation of the programme to the daily actualities of Soviet life and politics.

The contents of the programme was said to be "comparatively new, without precedent either in European or American schools", except for mathematics and physics in general, which are "static subjects and therefore, already thoroughly standardized".¹⁴

To help the teachers of political science, special books were ordered. Teachers of literature and language were advised to get well acquainted with the "Marxist Critique" because their course was to be given in conjunction with political science.¹⁵ History as such was not introduced into the programme in general while in the programme of 8th and 9th years of education "Social Studies" was replaced by the more sophisticated "Political Science".

The whole course of studies was divided into "General" and "Special" subjects. The "General Subjects" included: Political Science, (5 and 4 hours per week respectively in 8th and 9th years), Russian Language and Literature, (4 - 4 hrs.), Mathematics, (4 - 4 hrs.), Natural Science (3 - 3 hrs.), Chemistry (2 - 2 hrs.), Physics (3 - 3 hrs.), Foreign Languages (2 - 2 hrs.), Art, (2 - 1 hrs.), Music, vocal and orchestral (2 - 1 hrs.), and Physical Training (2 - 1 hrs.) for a total of 29

¹⁴Ibid., p. 200.

¹⁵Ibid.

hours per week in 8th year and 25 hours in 9th year of education, or a grand total of 1,863 hours in two years of the Second Cycle of the Second Degree of general education.

The "Special Subjects" were given more importance¹⁶ as indicated by the number of hours devoted to them. They were grouped under three general headings: 1) Pedology, comprising Labour School Division (9 - 12 hrs. per week), Pre-School division (8 - 12 hrs.) and Political Training (9 to 12 hrs.); 2) Co-operation, including Agricultural Co-operatives (9 - 13 hrs.), and Consumer Co-operatives (also 9 - 13 hrs.); 3) Soviet Administration, consisting of Finance and Taxation (7 - 13 hrs.), Insurance (7 - 13 hrs.), and Expedition of Business (7 - 11 hrs.).

This general scheme was followed by detailed plans for the teaching of natural sciences, including evolution and some eugenics ("every man has a right to be born"); and physical training which included swimming and rowing, and political science.

The course in Political Science was divided into three parts:

1. History (Western Europe and Russia)
2. Sovremennost'
3. Political Economy

Each one of these general topics was further subdivided

¹⁶Ibid., p. 199.

into sections and subsections dealing with a variety of themes related to other subjects within the framework of a larger, general theme or "complex" which was studied for a certain number of days, weeks, or even several months.

The following is a rough outline of the general layout of the section dealing with the History of Western Europe.

I. Feudalism

1. Economics of the epoch. Predominance of Agriculture. Primitive technique. Natural character of the whole economy. Isolation and limitations of market. Condition of crafts.
2. Social classes under feudalism. Origin of the ruling class and its social foundation - land. Feudal hierarchy. Evolution of a free rural community into a class of dependent peasants. Various means to enlarge this class.
3. Feudal state organization of land owners. Difficulties. Necessity for a stronger organization of the ruling power; religious church and holy orders; military - knighthood.
4. Ideology of feudalism. Its religious character. Feudal religion: attributing worldly relationships to heaven. "Heroic inaction" the main feature of feudal psychology. Literature a glorification of hero, representing the ruling class.
5. General characteristics similar in every feudal state in different countries and across the ages, but on the same level of economic development. France, as the most typical. Feudalism in Russia. Its present forms in the Far East.

II. Town

1. Development of economic factors. Growth of exchange and trade during feudalism. Evolution of exchange markets into towns. Merchants' guild and unions of craftsmen. Their self-organization.
2. Class division in town. Upper, the patrician; middle, merchants and craftsmen; lower, craftsmen's helpers and unorganized craftsmen. City organization.
3. Class struggle in Towns:
 - a. Town against Feudalism - France.
 - b. Within a town: middle and lower against the upper - Novgorod, German towns, ancient cities; lower against the middle class - Flanders, Florence, Novgorod.
4. Urban culture higher than feudal culture. Craftsmen as creators of urban culture. Protest against feudalism. Heresy satire; the novel as apotheosis of a citizen.

III. Commercial Capitalism

IV. Industrial Capitalism and Middle Class Democracy

V. Utopian vs. Scientific Socialism

VI. National Labour Movements

- a. Failure of the II International.
- b. The Third International.

The number of hours prescribed for each of these themes indicate the relative importance attached to each of them by the planners: (1) feudalism (4 weeks, 4 hours per week), (2) town (4 weeks), (3) commercial capitalism (8 weeks), (4) industrial capitalism etc. (2 weeks), (5) utopian vs. scientific socialism (6 weeks), and (6) National Labour Movements (8 weeks) - for a total of 128 hours.

The part dealing with the History of Russia was subdivided into five sections:

1. Middle class liberalism and radicalism in Russia
2. Revolution of the people.
3. and 4. Revolution of the proletariat.
5. Russian Imperialism.

Sovremennost' was studied under nine subdivisions:

1. Socialistic Development as an Historical Epoch (2 hrs.)
2. Lenin's Theory of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat (8 hrs.)
3. Principles of Political Economy in Soviet Russia (10-12 hrs.)
4. Elements of Socialism in Economics (6 hrs.)
5. Private and State Capitalism (6 hrs.)
6. Patriarchal and Private Economy and Their Evolution (2 hrs.)
7. Soviet Regulation of the Relations between branches of economy (4 - 6 hrs.)
8. General Outlines of Soviet Economics (4 hrs.)
9. "Class Against Class" and USSR as a support of the world's Revolution. (Discussion and analysis of various stages and of oppressed nations).¹⁷

The last part of the course of Political Science was devoted to Political Economy and dealt with the following specifically Marxist themes:

1. Organization of trade and regulations of commerce.
2. Production and exchange in capitalistic system.
3. Exploitation by capitalists.
4. Distribution of profits among manufacturers.
5. Accumulation of capital and its crisis.
6. Principal inconsistencies of the capitalist system.
7. International economy during imperialism, from free competition to the monopoly of capitalists, finance, and imperialism and the fall of capitalism.

The overall programme was divided into two parts for 8th and 9th years respectively. The First Cycle covered history of Western Europe up to section 6 (Labour

movement, etc.) (97 hours) and political economy (68 hours): the Second covered section 6 (32 hours), Russian history (40 hours) and sovremennost' (60 hours). It was planned that political economy eventually would be taught in ninth instead of eighth year.

The planners had to face some serious difficulties in formulating this programme quite independent from those of a political nature. First , as the authorities admitted, they had no idea of the effects that this programme and its content would have on school children at large and on the general masses; secondly, they had no general textbooks to rely on; and thirdly, the vast majority of teachers were either untrained or unreliable.¹⁸

To overcome the first problem the planners had no choice but to wait and see what happened; the solution of the textbook problem depended on higher authorities. As for the third problem, they appropriately drafted a whole series of instructions for teachers to follow.

The teachers were advised to choose their material on the basis of the knowledge of their students from the previous course, limiting themselves to the "most important facts and stages". Teachers of political science were informed that eventually they would not have to teach fundamentals of geography when working with geographic factors in problems of industrialization because "a sound

¹⁸Ibid., p. 207.

course in geography" was provided in the First Cycle; in the meanwhile due to unsatisfactory progress in previous years they could dispense with geography for the "next two years".¹⁹

Special instructions were given for the "history" part of the Political Science course. The facts from the course of the First Cycle had to be generalized, and sociological analysis, with a moderate amount of economics, given. New facts necessary for understanding the universal development had to be provided together with a thorough analysis of historical processes. For the next few years the programme was not to include either history, pre-history or ancient history. A general acquaintance with ancient civilizations could be given through extra-curricular readings illustrated with lantern slides, which, the programme stated, would be better than a textbook without illustrations.

On the other hand, the programme did include "so-called" [sic] Middle Ages, Reformation, Renaissance, Nationalism and Civilization. These should be taught in the following manner:

Feudalism, as one of the world's phenomena, illustrated from the history of Europe, Russia, Far East, India, China, and Japan. The economic system and culture must be combined. As it would be impossible to cover all these areas in detail, only a few concrete examples should

¹⁹Ibid.

be used to illustrate general principles.

The growth of cities must be shown as being identical in antiquity in Western Europe, and Russia. The beginning of commercial capitalism and geographic discoveries should be linked. When studying the revolution in the epoch of commercial capitalism such as peasant wars in Germany or revolution in England, the social classes involved must be clearly shown, without a detailed discussion of each but a thorough analysis of the "most characteristic ones".

Absolutism and parliament oligarchy were to be pointed out as the "most typical forms of a capitalistic state"; Louis XIV, England of the 18th century, and Russian, Austrian and Prussian absolutism were to serve as examples.

The theme dealing with the culture of commercial capitalism (scientific achievements, struggle with mysticism, rationalism, materialism, geographic discoveries and inventions of the 18th century) was designed to bring the students to an understanding of the industrial development and economic theories of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The course of political economy was designed to give an idea of the system of capitalism. "Bourgeois" democracy had to be presented as the typical state in the epoch of industrial capitalism. On the basis of selected

facts from various European and American constitutions, problems of nationalities and Soviet government, the child was to gain the general idea that "bourgeois democracy" was not designed as a protection, but a modified form of exploitation of the toiling masses.²⁰

In discussing socialism, the teacher should emphasize the close connection between "revolutionary communism" and "scientific socialism". Consequently Russian history was to be taught entirely from the standpoint of preparation for the great Bolshevik Revolution. It was the task of the teacher to choose "brilliant examples" to prove the "universal" and "inevitable" laws of every historical process on the basis of a close connection between economic, political and social forms, and the foreign policy of a country.²¹ Marx himself would not have asked for more.

The course on sovremennost' aimed at enabling the student to understand capitalism and socialism, two opposite systems of government; to prepare him for struggle against the former while making him realize the advantages of the latter, and to prepare him for "the building of socialism" and the USSR. Political science must help the pupils to find their place in the constructive work of the USSR.

²⁰Ibid., p. 209.

²¹Ibid., p. 210.

After a few introductory remarks and a generalization lasting for two class hours, the teacher was to spend eight hours talking on Lenin and his significance for the world proletariat in general and the Soviet masses in particular. Following that, the teacher had to draw a clear picture of the state of Russian economy at the time of the Revolution, without going into too many statistical details, and then spend about ten hours explaining the nature of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and the reasons for its adoption after a period of "War Communism"; indicate the dangers of NEP and the means used by the Soviet government to overcome it, and at the same time demonstrate how one historical phenomenon is transformed into another. To create feelings of international solidarity the problems of NEP had to be compared to the problems of revolution in colonies.

Discussion of various divisions of state economy, Soviet problems connected with the raising of production, improvement of products and lowering of costs, explanation of these factors, description of the market as a regulator of the capitalistic system, the importance of the State Budget of the USSR for the past 3-4 years, and a comparison with those in Germany and England, revenues, tax, expenditure, army, navy, import and export and international trade, were all themes through which the teacher was to describe and explain sovremennost' or the present age in Marxist terms.

To provide them with practical training for their future profession the teacher was to furnish opportunities for students to take an active part in the work of Soviets (councils) and all kinds of public work.

While teaching in the higher grades was carried out on the basis of what vaguely resembled an organized subject-matter type of curriculum, the programme for the lower grades was based entirely on the project or complex-method. The whole year's work in a given grade was centred on one major theme, broken down into its component parts on a topical rather than subject-matter basis. For example, the grade I, fourth year (11-12 years) theme according to the 1927 programme was the "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics". Essentially it was a simplified summary of, or introduction to, the programme of grade II.²²

On paper this whole programme looked like a masterpiece. Its practical realization, however, was another matter. Clearly the tasks that the teacher faced were enormous by any standard and the programme carried the seeds of its own destruction. Semi-educated teachers and teachers opposed to the new regime were asked to give a synthesis of various sections of economy, describe and explain the reconstruction and industrialization of the whole country. This problem was so vast that even the planners of the programme realized that even under the

²²Ibid., pp. 212-245.

best conditions only the "dynamics of the class struggle, which is the most important subject", and not a chronological order of international events, could be taught.²³

How things worked out in practice could, perhaps, best be illustrated by an actual visit to a classroom in social studies. The following is a stenographic transcript of the review lesson in a Siberian school, based on the "complex-method". It appeared in the journal Prosveshchenie Sibiri, 1927. This journal tended to be frank and its information is generally highly reliable. Unfortunately in the translation it is difficult to recreate the exact nuances of the language used both by the pupils and their teacher. On the whole their language is very colloquial and definitely non-literary and in the following translation an attempt was made to reproduce it as faithfully as possible.

Topic: "Krepostnoe Pravo" (Serfdom)

Teacher: Where did the czars come from?

Answer: They were princes, rich men (he corrects himself) no, they were Slavs. The princes came with their warriors, through them the princes collected the rent.

Teacher: Good. Well, continue, where did the Slav tribes try to settle?

Answer: They moved to places where there were rivers, near Kiev and took away everybody who travelled.

Teacher: Where did the great waterway pass?

²³Ibid., p. 216.

Answer: Along the Volga.

Teacher: No, near Kiev. Well, and you, do you remember anything about the Times of Troubles?

Answer: Under Ioann Grozny (Ivan the Terrible) (he corrects himself), no, under Dimitri Donskoi (tells) when Ioann Grozny fell ill, he had a son, dumbish, he killed him, and then they found a tramp in Poland and decided to make him czar (continues the talk about False Dimitry and Boris Godunov).

Teacher: How did the czarist government develop after? Was the population satisfied with the Czar?

Answer: No.

Teacher: Naturally, not, clearly, he belonged to the rich.

Answer: The peasants begin to go on strike already under the first czar, for example Stenka Razin, Pugachev, but the strike did not help them but angered the landowners, and for the peasants it was worse thereafter.

Teacher: Yes, that worsened so much the lot of the peasants. What was done with the economy of Russia?

Answer: The economy worsened since they took big rent.

2nd pupil: No, they did not look after the peasants, and after that the economy began falling.

Teacher: That's true. Well, Sacha, tell, what do people do in a village husbandry?

Answer: Manufacturing, village husbandry, gardening . . .

2nd pupil: (He adds) And also improving of fields.

Teacher: Sacha, how is divided the economy?

Answer: On technical and chemical.

Teacher: No, on grain type. Where do people occupy themselves with sugar beets? After, why was sugar cheaper beyond the borders, what was the situation?

Answer: Our sugar was better, stronger.

Teacher: That is not true.

Answer: Beyond our borders sugar is extracted by machine.

2nd pupil: Because beyond the borders there was plenty of everything, that is why it was cheaper.

Teacher: No, children the tariff was great, the Russians collected, and our sugar went without tariffs. Well, that's fine, let's now move ahead. We have just now touched upon everything together, now, was society always such as it is today?

Answer: No.

Teacher: In the period of the division of the Russian state, what appeared? (He waits, there is no answer.) You don't know - feudalism, after that there were forms of economy - new, natural, capitalist (the talk goes on about forms) ²⁴

Thus in forty-five minutes the class covered practically everything from Rurik to sugar tariffs. This was the "complex-method".

The whole programme was subdivided into eight major themes.²⁵

1. The earth as a sphere and its effects on climate.
2. Explanation of the effects of climate and nature upon agriculture in the USSR. Primitive cultivation and the appearance of modern mechanized agriculture and as the apex of modernization the tractor was introduced by the Soviet regime.
3. The state and development of agriculture in various parts of the USSR with a constant comparison of the old and the new modes of production.
4. Agriculture of foreign lands; work of the Chinese in rice plantations, techniques of American farmers, agriculture progress in Belgium and Denmark etc.

²⁴Prosveshchenie Sibiri, III (1927), 20f.

²⁵Wilson, pp. 212, 245.

5. Northern States of USSR: exploration of the Arctic, voyages of Nansen and Amundsen, discovery of the two poles and so on.
6. Southern Russia and its special characteristics.
7. Industry in the Soviet Union beginning with the natural resources, their extraction and production.
8. Formation of the USSR.²⁶

Within the last theme were studied the feudalism in Russia, the liberation of peasants, the changes in the mode of life of landlords and peasants and the effect on their relations. Imperialism was shown as the government of landlords and capitalists, while the czar was presented as the richest landlord. Religion and church were created for the service of the rich. The struggle between capital and labour, and the political organization of labourers were illustrated from the history of the Russian Revolution by the illegal publications, demonstrations, etc. The failure of the Revolution of 1905 was attributed to lack of co-ordination of the revolutionary element. The war of 1914 and the consequent ruin of the country resulted in increased revolutionary activities and fall of czarism

²⁶There was definitely no attempt to show the superiority or primacy of Russian discoverers. On the contrary, the whole programme favoured international sentiments, and solidarity. It is perhaps this one that most closely resembles anything that one could regard as a course in history. It should be pointed out that the last theme was wholly integrated with the previous ones and, in a sense, constituted a kind of logical ending or conclusion for the rest of the school year's work.

in 1917. The provisional government was shown as representing the interests of the old ruling class, as illustrated by the continuation of the war. The work of Lenin and the Bolshevik party and the establishment of a government of peasants and soldiers was studied, and following the first Soviet edicts, peace, nationalism of the land and trade, and introduction of eight hour days. The programme listed numerous details from Soviet life and development, constantly pointing out the advantages of the new life and relating the struggle of the Russian workers with that of workers in other countries both economically advanced and colonial. Internationalism and solidarity with workers from the whole world were repeatedly stressed both directly and indirectly without any superiority attributed to any national or racial group. On the other hand there was a constant stress both implied and open, on a scientific explanation of nature and society, as opposed to a religious one. In fact, the programme itself stated the purpose of this theme: "To give children a scientific knowledge of the universe to counter-balance the religious conception of the origin of the world".

APPENDIX II

HISTORY CURRICULUM OF 1933

In 1933 the People's Commissariate of Education of RSFSR published its new programme for secondary schools in its Programmy srednei shkoly (gorodskoi i sel'skoi) 5-8 goda obucheniya. (Moscow: Uchpedgiz, 1933). The following is an outline of the programme of history.

Fifth Year of Education (pp. 4-8)

- A. History of preclass society (Primitive Communism)
(18 hrs.)
 - 1. Development of ancient human society.
 - 2. Clan.
 - 3. Primitive ideology.
 - 4. Topical talk and review.
- B. Fundamental aspects of the historical development of the Society in Ancient Greece. (14 hrs.)
 - 1. When and how appeared the most ancient states.
 - 2. The culture of oriental societies.
 - 3. Review.
- C. History of Slaveholding societies of Ancient Greece and Rome (44 hrs.)
 - I. Greece (21 hrs.)
 - a. Ancient period of Greek history.
 - b. Greek slaveholding states in the period of their growth (rastsvet).
 - c. The fall of slaveholding states of Ancient Greece.
 - d. Review.
 - II. Rome (23 hrs.)
 - a. Ancient period of the history of Rome.
 - b. Growth of Roman slaveholding economy.
 - c. Description of slave means of production and the fall.
 - d. Review.

Sixth Year of Education (12) (pp. 8-12)A. Origin and development of Feudalism in Western Europe (V-XI centuries) (19 hrs.)

1. Origin of Feudalism (V-IX centuries)
2. The structure of feudal society in Western Europe (IX-XI centuries)

B. Class Struggle in Feudal Europe (XI-XV centuries) (31 hrs.)

1. Growth of cities and commercial-moneyed relations.
2. Struggle of serfs against feudal landlords (XIV-XV centuries)
3. Class struggle in cities.
4. Formation of absolute monarchies.

C. Review (5 hrs.)D. Class struggle in the epoch of serf-feudalism in Eastern Europe (Russia) (22 hrs.)

1. Origin of feudalism.
2. Development of feudalism in XIII-XV centuries.
3. Review.

Seventh Year of Education (100 hrs.) (pp. 12-18)A. Class Struggle in Western Europe in the epoch of primitive accumulation of capital (XVI-XVII centuries) (33 hrs.)

1. Economic development of the countries of Western Europe and the great geographic discoveries in the XVI century.
2. Peasant War and Reformation in Germany.
3. Humanist movement as a form of class struggle of the rising English revolution of the XVII century.

B. Review and TestingC. Feudal-serfholding Russia and the peasant wars of the XVI-XVIII centuries.

1. Consolidation of feudal exploitation in the XVI century and Peasant War of 1605-1613.

2. Growth of class contradictions in the XVII century and the peasant struggle.
3. Formation of the Russian Empire and the peasant wars of XVIII century.

D. Testing

E. Industrial Revolution in England (9 hrs.)

1. Causes of Industrial Revolution
2. Industrial Revolution and socio-economic changes.

F. Great French Revolution and Class struggle in France in the first three decades of the 19th century. (21 hrs.)

1. Contradictions in France at the eve of the Revolution.
2. Overthrow of absolutism and the bourgeois monarchy.
3. Dictatorship of petty-bourgeoisie.
4. Bourgeois republic and the military-bourgeois dictatorship.

G. Testing

Eighth Year of Education (100 hrs.) (pp. 19-28)

A. Class struggle in England in the first half of the 19th century. (9 hrs.)

1. Socio-economic developments in England at the end of 18th and in the first half of the 19th century.
2. The first independent political movement of the proletariat (Chartism)

B. The Revolution of 1848 in France. (12 hrs.)

1. Class struggle in France in the first half of the 19th century.
2. February revolution and the July uprising.
3. On the road to Bonapartist dictatorship.

C. Revolution of 1848 in Germany. (15 hrs.)

1. Economic development and political structure of Germany in the first half of 19th century.
2. The stages of Revolution 1848-1849.
3. K. Marx and F. Engels - the founders of Communism.

D. Struggle for Independence and Civil War in America.
(7 hrs.)

1. Struggle for independence in the 18th century.
2. Civil War 1861-1866.

E. Testing.

F. Class struggle in Russia in the first half of 19th and the reforms of the 1860's. (17 hrs.)

1. Spreading of serf economy and sharpening of class contradictions.
2. Peasant movements and the reform of the 1860's.

G. The First International and the Paris Commune. (19 hrs.)

1. Socio-economic characterization of the epoch of the 1850's to 1870's.
2. The First International.
3. The Paris Commune.

H. Testing

I. The growth of capitalism in Russia in the second half of the 19th century and the mass workers movement.
(13 hrs.)

1. Growth of capitalism.
2. Revolutionary populism.
3. Workers movement.

J. Testing.

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