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SOVIET PEDAGOGY AND THE AMERICAN EDUCATORS  
(1957-1965)

LA PEDAGOGIA SOVIETICA E GLI EDUCATORI AMERICANI  
(1957-1965)

*After the Sputnik shock (1957) a definite shift could be observed in the public pedagogical discourses of the United States. Having compared the Soviet and American education it gave the possibility (or a promise) to understand the reasons of the supposed communist superiority, which was confirmed by the technical success of the Soviet Union. This paper tries to describe a special field of the Eastern-Western relations in the Cold War: effects of the Soviet pedagogy in the United States, between 1957 and 1965. The reaction was mainly appreciative; the Soviet representatives and articles also appeared in the international organisations (UNESCO, associations of comparative education) and publications. We can analyse the reception of the Soviet pedagogy on four different levels, using various sources. First, by the articles and books related to the UNESCO, the Soviet educators could enter into the international community of scientists, which was a new development after 1945. The reports of the US delegations about the visitations in the Soviet Union showed the importance of this topic on the next level, the governmental sphere. The third stage will be constituted by the works of the academic sphere (representatives of the universities and institutions); and at the end, a book and a journal will give an example how the Soviet pedagogy formed the public opinion in the United States. The basic corpus of this paper is established by the contemporary publications (articles, books, essays, etc.) in the Western hemisphere, and the official reports of the US administration.*

Dopo lo shock dello Sputnik (1957) si manifestò un cambiamento preciso nei discorsi pedagogici pubblici statunitensi. Comparare l'educazione sovietica e americana ha dato la possibilità (o l'auspicio) di comprendere le ragioni della presunta superiorità comunista, che fu confermata dal successo tecnico dell'Unione Sovietica. Questo articolo cerca di descrivere un campo speciale delle relazioni tra Est e Ovest nella Guerra Fredda: gli effetti della pedagogia sovietica negli Stati Uniti tra il 1957 e il 1965. La reazione fu principalmente di apprezzamento; i rappresentanti e gli articoli sovietici comparirono anche nelle organizzazioni internazionali (come l'UNESCO o le associazioni di educazione comparata) e nelle pubblicazioni. Utilizzando diverse fonti si può analizzare la ricezione della pedagogia sovietica su quattro diversi livelli. In primo luogo, per quanto emerge dagli articoli e dai libri connessi all'UNESCO, gli educatori sovietici entrarono a far parte della comunità scientifica internazionale, un nuovo risvolto dopo il 1945. I resoconti delle delegazioni statunitensi sulle visite in Unione Sovietica mostrarono poi l'importanza di questo argomento al livello superiore, la sfera governativa. La terza fase è stata poi costituita dalle opere del mondo accademico (rappresentanti delle università e delle istituzioni); in ultimo, un libro e un diario daranno un esempio di come la pedagogia sovietica abbia formato l'opinione pubblica negli Stati Uniti. Il corpus fondamentale di questo articolo è rappresentato dalle pubblicazioni contemporanee (articoli, libri, saggi, ecc.) del mondo occidentale e dai rapporti ufficiali dell'amministrazione statunitense.

*Key words: socialist pedagogy; Soviet education; school-reform; educational transfer; US Office of Education.*

Parole chiave: pedagogia socialista; educazione sovietica; riforma della scuola; transfer educativo; US Office of Education.



## *Introduction*

«There is no doubt, that an international debate began about the technical development of the Soviet Union. Now even conservative American university presidents wrote positive articles (about the Soviet education model)»<sup>1</sup>.

György Marosán said these sentences, the strong man of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSZMP), to argue the necessity of the Hungarian school reform and follow the Soviet practice. The statement was true in a certain sense; just over a year that the 1956 Hungarian revolution was repressed by the Soviets and sympathies of the communist ideology declined even amongst leftist western thinkers (Judt 1992). On the contrary, in the same period, several admiring writings were published in the USA, about the quick development of the Soviet Union. The Sputnik and ballistic missiles (which were able to reach the coast of America) filled the everyday people in the Western hemisphere with fear and wonder at the same time. We can formulate a hypothesis, that in this short period of time, between 1957 and 1965, the United States and the Soviet Union both tried to use the hard power, and the later defined "soft co-optive power", when the culture, technology or the education of a country "are attractive, others will more willingly follow." (Nye 1990, 167). In this paper I will focus on how the American officials and scholars reacted to the Soviet challenge.

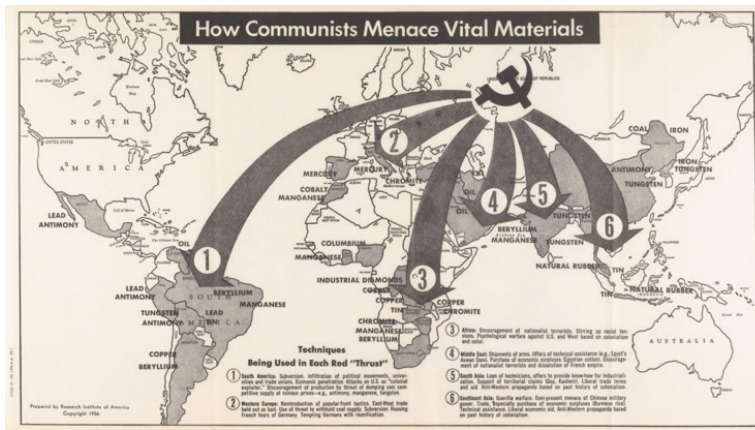
To support this new form of rivalry, fresh ideas emerged related to the Cold War and Eastern-Western relations in the late 1950's, like peaceful coexistence or competition: space race and educational race meant different aspects in this complex international environment. The idea of educational race responded to the process of destalinization; after the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Soviet Communist Party the Committee on Un-American Activities held a Symposium in the US Congress and House to map the new Soviet directions and intentions (Picture 1. shows how the Soviet influence could see from this perspective). During the lectures a question was aroused by the Research Institute of America: «Who will win the educational race? The Russians expect to overtake our economic superiority by producing more engineers, technicians, and scientists»<sup>2</sup>.

Next year a Democrat Senator from Oregon, Richard Neuberger declared in the Congress, that «reports indicates (...) we are failing in this educational race»<sup>3</sup>. The numbers showed a future shortage from engineers, scientists and skilled manpower; compared with the Soviet outcome from the secondary and higher education. Also other warnings led to the enactment of the legislation, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958 (Barksdale Clowse 1981; Rudolph 2002), with increasing funds to research and development, targeted to win the race.

<sup>1</sup> Jegyzőkönyv a Politikai Bizottság 1958. február 18-i üléséről [Report about the session of the Political Committee, 18 February 1958]. 288 f. 5/67. ö. e. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives].

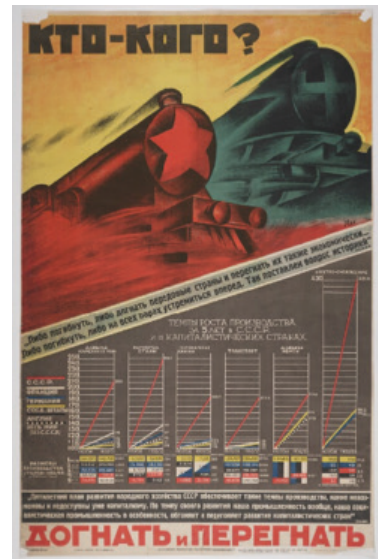
<sup>2</sup> The Great Pretense. A Symposium on Anti-Stalinism and the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. May 19, 1956. Washington DC: Committee on Un-American Activities, U.S. House of Representatives, 88.

<sup>3</sup> Congressional Record – Senate, January 17, 1957, Washington, 681.



Picture 1. How Communists Menace Vital Materials (source: The Great Pretense, 1956: 84).

The slogan «Catch up and surpass» by Khrushchev (1959, in Russian: «dognat’ i peregnat’», DIP, see: Scherrer 2014) strengthened the feeling amongst Americans to lose the rivalry between the two world orders, because the Soviet communist leader prognosticated to overtake USA’s economic output by 1970 (Jersild 2011). Khrushchev honestly believed that the Soviet Union would overtake USA in the field of living standards and qualities of goods, and until 1980, the communist society would have been built up (Majtényi 2018: 41, 175). On the other hand, the détente allowed to assert progressive, socialist movements in the United States more effectively, which could be an aftermath to the McCarthyism, too. A paradigmatic change could be recognised in the US foreign policy during the Kennedy-administration, which might have enhanced the future closer position between the Soviet Union and the United States (Garthoff 2001; Hofmann 2007). It had been a long journey from the 1950’s slogans of containment, roll-back and liberation (Borhi 1999) to the new order of competitive coexistence. Picture 2 presents an earlier version about this motto, and the race of the two world systems; a question was arising at the top of the poster: Kto-kogo? (Who will beat whom?), as the two locomotives ran into the future.



Picture 2. Kto-kogo? Dognat’ i peregnat’. Soviet poster from the 1920’s. (source: The Woodburn Collection, National Library of Scotland, P. 137/1)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The Woodburn Collection, National Library of Scotland, P. 137/1. Retrieved from: <https://digital.nls.uk/74506240>. Accessed: July 11, 2018.

Naturally, this process had got a convergence dimension, in the aspect of culture, economy, technology, politics and of course, education. Pedagogy was revalued from this point of view, as Stalin stated originally in an interview, dated 1934: «Education is a weapon the effect of which is determined by the hands which wield it, by who is to be struck down» (Stalin and Wells 1945, 20). Two decades later, Khrushchev reformulated the sentence for the new age, when he made a speech in front of Hungarian scholars, at the Academy of Sciences: «the planned reform of the secondary and higher education will be the new Sputnik»<sup>5</sup>. This period of the school-reform and its effects is the background of my study, my main topic is the connection between the Soviet pedagogy and American educators. To sum up my introduction, during these years the issues of education were in the focus of the interest (both in the Soviet Union and in the USA), with much larger scope and power than before or after. We can examine the impact of the Soviet pedagogy in the United States on different levels (see Table 1).

Levels	Elements and actors
Transnational	UNESCO, exchange programs
National/governmental	official delegations to the USSR, legislation, Lacy-Zaroubin agreement
Academic sphere	universities and intellectuals, articles
Public opinion	journal, book

Table 1. Levels and elements of the Soviet educational influence in the USA.

This distribution and later analysis follows the top-down design, with uncertain boundaries among the actors. For example, the studied organisations (like the Comparative Education Society) were founded in the USA, but made international cultural exchange, so I decided to study them on the supreme level. The actors took place in a tangled situation related to the finance (non-governmental organisations or governmental bodies), and their scope (national and transnational), so this table may be questionable, but a useful tool to consider different aspects of this topic. Before the detailed description, it is crucial to give a brief overlook about my subject's theoretical background.

### *Theoretical background: interpretative models*

Three dominant interpretative models follow, with enough explanation power to highlight the main aspects in this field (I marked the most important scholar to the particular viewpoint in parentheses):

<sup>5</sup> Feljegyzés. Hruscsov elvtárs akadémiai beszédének visszhangja [Reflexions about Comrade Khrushchev's speech at the Academy]. MSZMP KB TKO. 288 f. 33/1958/3. ő. e. Szerényi Sándor, 1958. április 11. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár.

- the western leftist intellectuals, who influenced the public opinion widely about the Soviet Union (Hollander 2017);
- idea of the educational transfer (Steiner-Khamsi 2006, 2012, 2014);
- and the international context of the peaceful coexistence and competition (Kalmár 2014).

Every approach emphasises different elements of the Eastern-Western relations, connected with the decades of 1950's and 1960's: Hollander underlined the «responsibility of the intellectuals» (this phrase refers to a Noam Chomsky's essay from 1967, against the Vietnam war), power of the influencers to form the suppositions, beliefs and sometimes prejudices in the public opinion. Representatives of the comparative education examine mainly the role of the institutions, policies, and their cross-cultural transformations; meanwhile the historical analysis of the coexistence focuses on the ideology, Party-politics and decision-making processes.

### *Role of the leftist intellectuals in the Western world*

Philosophers, scholars, writers and other intellectuals had bigger influence power in the 1950's, 1960's, to form the public opinion, sometimes the decision-making, than before World War II, or after 1968. In his famous monograph, *Political Pilgrims* (firstly published in 1981) Paul Hollander paid attention to the partly forgotten generations of sympathizers, tourists or «fellow travellers» (Hollander 1992: 133; 2017: 27-28), whose journeys to the Soviet Union and travelogues might motivate positive attitudes toward existing socialism.

The lack of critical distance and facing to negative symptoms; distorting judgments by the illusions were generally typical to the political left in the Western world. Crimes of the Stalinist Soviet system and later weaknesses were not recognised by them, or defined as unavoidable development of the struggle against bourgeois order and power: from this point of view, «the worst socialism is better than the best capitalism» (famous quotation from the Hungarian Marxist philosopher, Georg Lukács, see: Rényi and Pándi 1967, 22). According to Hollander, there were two flourishing periods, when this perspective reigned the public discourses in the USA: the 1930's and the 1960's, 1970's. Interestingly, analysing late 1950's missed from the *Political Pilgrims*, although these years are worth studying. Different delegations were sent to the Soviet Union after 1957 by the US Office of Education, universities or research institutes; and individual travellers continued visiting the communist country.

We should neither exaggerate nor underestimate this impact and always consider the specific historical context: consequences of McCarthyism, destalinization, decolonisation, the Sputnik shock etc.; which could amplify the sympathies toward Soviet Union in the western societies.

### *Idea of the educational transfer*

The entitled idea has been widely known since the foundation of the UNESCO; it has influenced the interrelations between super powers and the reform processes in the Third World (Beech 2006), from 1945 to the age of globalisation (Auld 2014; Forstier et al. 2016). The USSR and the Ukrainian and Belorussian SR officially joined UNESCO in 1954, which was a quick change in the Soviet politics, one year after Stalin's death (Kulnazarova 2017), and caused an emerging impact of the socialist countries in the comparative education. This international field of Eastern-Western mutual influences and meetings creates the opportunity to sketch a new, broader perspective of the Cold War and the Soviet-American connections (Major and Mitter 2003) through educational lenses.

The key notion of educational transfer refers to the transnational moving of pedagogical ideas, institutions, discourses, practices and policies (Cowen 2009; Phillips 2009) or in other phrases as borrowing and lending ideas; translation, adaptation, reception and transformation discourses, like a travelling reform (Steiner-Khamsi 2006, 2012, 2014; Kim 2017a). The various approaches are reflected in the aspects of levels and actors of educational policies; related to the national and transnational standards (Klerides 2014), governmental institutions and NGO's (Kim 2017b). In my study this means that literally the results of Soviet pedagogy were interpreted and explained in a certain ideological context to the American audience (both to the publicity and policy-makers). The government ordered reports aimed at winning the race in the bipolar world, in the economy, education, living standards, technology, etc.

### *Coexistence and competition*

After 1953 a new phase had started in the history of Cold War: confrontation and war tensions were changed by the so-called peaceful coexistence and competition. As Khrushchev introduced the new Era in his famous article in the Foreign Affairs:

I have been told that the question of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems is uppermost today in the minds of many Americans – and not only Americans. The question of coexistence, particularly in our day, interests literally every man and woman on the globe (Khrushchev 1959, 1).

The goal remained the same to Moscow – defeat capitalism –, not just in military capacities, but in technologies, economic outcomes, cultural and ideological performance. The first steps were made in cultural diplomacy, before the date of this writing, the American and Soviet ambassador made a contract (Lacy-Zaroubin Agreement, 1958) to develop mutual exchanges in cultural, technical and educational areas (Jamgotch 1985; Richmond 2003).

Melinda Kalmár, Hungarian historian, named two main motives in this process (2014): the scientific-technical revolution (beginning use of computers, automation, etc.) and the adaptation pressure. These resulted a new type of power and ruling

system in Soviet Union and in the satellites, with sharing capacities and responsibilities among the Party centre, the ministries and governmental bodies, involving experts into the preparing period of the decision-making mechanism and emerging importance of the intellectuals (Slapentokh 2014; Hollings 2016) – the Post-Stalin Era characterised by each of these features.

It should not be forgotten, that new conflicts started in this relatively peaceful period, like the Cuban Missile Crisis, building the Berlin Wall or the U-2 incident. Concluding: convergence and divergence were in progress at the same time in the Soviet-US relations, which generated a complex situation.

### *Limitations and levels of analysis*

The starting point is 1957-1958 in this study: after the Sputnik-Shock the main events were (in my point of view) the school-reforms in the Soviet Union and USA (polytechnic education and the National Defense Act), and the beginning contact of the two sides (Lacy-Zaroubin Agreement). The finishing date is 1965, after Khrushchev's fall the socialist school-reforms were nearly over in the countries of the Eastern Bloc, and in the United States the Higher Education Act was legislated to enforce colleges and universities – by the late 1960's the space race was won by the NASA and the Soviet Union began to drop behind even more in other dimensions of the competition.

There are two main restrictions in my analysis. One is, that the real Soviet propaganda had existed, supported by the Soviet Union (Barghoorn 1964), with a publisher to the western audience (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow), but I do not want to give a detailed analyse this kind of propaganda, I will show only one example (the *Soviet Education*) about it. My main goal is to introduce the scholars, writers and associations in the US, who were involved in the dissemination of the socialist pedagogy, from the international organizations to particular interests of institutions and scientists. The second aspect warns the one-sided nature of the analysis: The Soviet influence will be presented mostly in a positive, appreciative way on the following pages, because the influential sources (publications) used this approach. It should always be taken into consideration, that there had always been existed the opposite view, the critique of the Soviet position – for example, there was a negative and disapproving interpretation about the previously mentioned peaceful coexistence (Kennan 1960). This should be a subject of another study, from my perspective the supportive attitude is more interesting.

### *The transnational level*

In the 1950's the UNESCO extended its scope, connected with the decolonisation, it is called the East-West Major Project, appreciating the Asian and Arab states and their values (Wong 2008). After having been opened, the socialist Bloc fitted into this widen perspective: in the divided world the opposites began to recognize each other's characteristics. The Soviet officials utilized the situation and venues of the UNESCO

to make cooperation with underdeveloped countries, got new allies, strengthened its position and promoted the propaganda about Soviet achievements in building the communism (Kulnazarova 2017, 265).

The International Social Science Journal provides a good opportunity to illustrate this impact. The journal was founded by the UNESCO in 1949, since the late 1950's Soviet authors could have already published in it. For example, in 1959, a special issue came out, called «Teaching of the Social Sciences in the U.S.S.R.». N. A. Konstantinov, Professor at the Lomonosov National University (Moscow) wrote a short article (1959) about the current situation of pedagogy in the USSR. It shows the other side's attitude: Konstantinov adapted his writing to the requirements of the Western publicity to create a positive context to the topic.

Soviet pedagogy (...) does not break completely away from the teaching traditions of the past (...) but it transforms (...) in a socialist society. (...) Students are required to be familiar with Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, Helvetius, Diderot, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel and Spencer, and also with contemporary American and West European teaching theories... (Konstantinov 1959, 186).

They were followed by listing of Russian tradition, Marxist-Leninist ideology and the works of Krupskaja, Makarenko etc., but the first mentioned pedagogical canon was constituted by Western authors. It was an ideal (or distorted) image about the content of the teacher training to suit the other (not socialist) needs and reveal the openness of the Soviet pedagogy.

Stanislav Strumilin, leading analyst of the planned economy (Kaser 1990), presented the Soviet education as a product of the communist modernisation (Strumilin 1962), which was a recurrent argument to demonstrate the superiority of the socialism. According to the Marxist logic, the growing numbers of the school attendance, graduates; the quantity of qualified youngsters turned into quality after a short time – this was the magic rule of numbers, to achieve the goals of the Plan (Olek 1998). Reading brochures, decrees, other documents of Soviet, communist propaganda, we always face tables, like Strumilin published in 1962:

TABLE 1. Increase in enrolments within the U.S.S.R. since Tzarist times (in thousands of pupils)

Type of school	1914	1930 <sup>1</sup>	1940	1950	1960
Secondary general (grades V-X)	506	2 042	13 796	14 612	17 392
Specialized secondary	36	587	975	1 298	2 060
Higher educational establishments	112	288	812	1 247	2 396 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>2 917</b>	<b>15 583</b>	<b>17 157</b>	<b>21 848</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>588</b>	<b>749</b>

1. 1930 is taken as the base year, representing 100.  
2. 2.6 million in 1961 (*Prauda*, 25 October 1961).

Table 2. Increase in enrolments within the U.S.S.R. since Tzarist times (Strumilin 1962, 636).



These numbers on Table 2 were impressive, but the average reader could not read between the lines or looking beyond the surface: behind the outcomes there were discriminating regulation in the further education (excluding bourgeoisie), preference the children of the working-farmer classes, sometimes lower standards etc.

UNESCO started a new series in 1962 («Monographs on Education»), the third title was edited by Sergei Grigorevich Shapovalenko (1963), the main ideologist and educator of the polytechnic education (the most important feature of the 1958 started-Soviet school reform). The authors of the volume were (among others) Kairov, President of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, former minister of education (1949-1956)<sup>6</sup>; or Skatkin, member of the Research Institute on Methods of Instruction of the Academy (DeWitt 1961, 83) and other representatives of the Soviet education sciences. The book tried to make a wider accessibility (and perhaps popularity) to the socialist pedagogy, with distributing the results of the school-reform.

These publications show an emerging interest globally, give more information and a positive image about the education in the Soviet Union. To go closer the US-level of the impact, we should take a look at other organisations' work. The Comparative Education Society (CES, nowadays it called Comparative & International Education Society, CIES) ensured the place to build relationships toward the Soviet Union: it was founded in 1956, at a New York University Conference (Epstein 2016, 14-15). The most important founders will occur later in the study: George F. Z. Bereday, William W. Brickman and Gerald H. Read, who became influential actors of the comparative education, Brickman was the first president of the CES, between 1956 and 1959. In 1958, before the US State Department made the exchange agreement (Lacy-Zaroubin), a five-week trip was financed by the Society to the Soviet Union, with Brickman's and Read's leading, and a seminar was held twice in the Soviet Union, in 1958 and in 1960 (Epstein 2016, 14, 215). Furthermore, the Ford Foundation asked Read to establish contacts with Soviet educators, through the assistance of the US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Llewellyn Thompson (1957-1962); several study tours were organised in this way (Epstein 2016, 215). A growing number of the exchange programs (related to the higher education) indicated the convergence too, which I can only refer to (Prokofiev, Chilikin and Tulpanov, 1961).

### *Publications of the US Administration*

Before the exchanges started, the first detailed description about the Soviet education system came out in 1957 (*Education in the USSR* 1957). The report was edited by the Division of International Education, and introduced by Lawrence G. Derthick, United States Commissioner of Education between 1956 and 1961. Numerous experts were involved in collecting the sources for this work: from the universities of

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ivan-Andreyevich-Kairov>. Accessed: July 15, 2018.

Harvard, University of Oklahoma, MIT, University of Washington, Ohio State University; government supported research institute (National Research Council); and official bodies of the Department of State, National Bureau of Standards, US Bureau of the Census. The attitude of the communist country changed, comparing with the early 1950's: Lyudmila Dubrovina, Deputy Minister of Education of the RSFSR and the Embassy of the Soviet Union in Washington both helped the editors' work, as in the introduction stated: «Because the Soviet Union is proud of its educational system, it makes more information about its plans and programs available...» (*Education in the USSR* 1957, 2). Despite the authoritarian nature of the Soviet system, this work respected the evolution and results of the communist education.

One of the American participants should be highlighted: Nicholas DeWitt, staff-member at the Russian Research Centre, Harvard, visited the Soviet Union repeatedly between 1958 and 1961, due to the grants of the National Research Council, foundation of the National Academy of Sciences. That is how his basic monograph was created in this issue, with the title, *Education and Professional Employment in the U.S.S.R.* (DeWitt 1961). It suggested serious consequences for the US administration, as a result of the dynamic growth of Soviet scientific and engineering manpower. For example, the Soviet Union trained 1.8-fold engineers as many as in the US, between 1928 and 1959 (1,117,800 Soviet vs. 620,300 American engineers), albeit we cannot simply compare these numbers, because of the different nature of the two categories, and in the field of Arts & Humanities the USA won (DeWitt 1961, 451-453). The numbers might horrify the US policy-makers, as the «Soviet higher education is unquestionably a success, posing not only a temporary challenge, but a major threat in the long run struggle between democracy and totalitarianism» (DeWitt 1961, 548). The main goals of the work might be the analysis and interpretation, learning from the experiences to overcome.

The role of the National Research Council was remarkable in this period. Its Office of International Relations (OIR) was supervised by Howard P. Robertson, a famous mathematician and physicist, from 1954 to 1956 he was the Scientific Advisor to the Nato Commander in Europe. Between 1957 and 1961 he worked as the Chairman of the Defense Science Board, and member of the President's Science Advisory Committee (Greenstein 1980: 345). The 1957-1958 Annual report of the OIR communicated a «substantial increase» in the number of exchanging scientists (90 Soviet came to the US, and 77 American went to the USSR), the turning point was 1954, when a significant change could be observed on the part of the Soviet Union (*National Academy of Sciences* 1957-1958, 16). An interesting research direction can be outlined here: the function of the Eisenhower-administration in this convergence, but this may be a subject of another study. Relating to the Central Eastern European region, especially Hungary, László Borhi already made this analysis. Based on his researches, the 1956 revolt and revolution (in Poland and Hungary) changed Washington's goals and strategies, for a slow evolution, stabilisation and bridge building between East and West (Borhi 2018, 138-139), which could affect positively the cultural-educational exchange programs.

The Lacy-Zaroubin Agreement (27 January 1958) meant the final breakthrough in the field of exchanges: after that, the first official American mission («the first exchange group») visited the Soviet Union, in May-June 1958.

Lawrence G. Derthick was the leader of the delegation, the delegates came from the Office of Education, professors from different universities and research institutes, for instance George F. Z. Bereday, teacher of comparative education, at the Teachers College Columbia University (he was also a co-founder of the Comparative Education society, as I mentioned before). After the visitation a book was published (see Picture 3), in the foreword Derthick emphasised, that during the 7000 miles trip they saw «what was really going on» in the Soviet schools. The US-USSR comparison appeared, with a sad conclusion again:

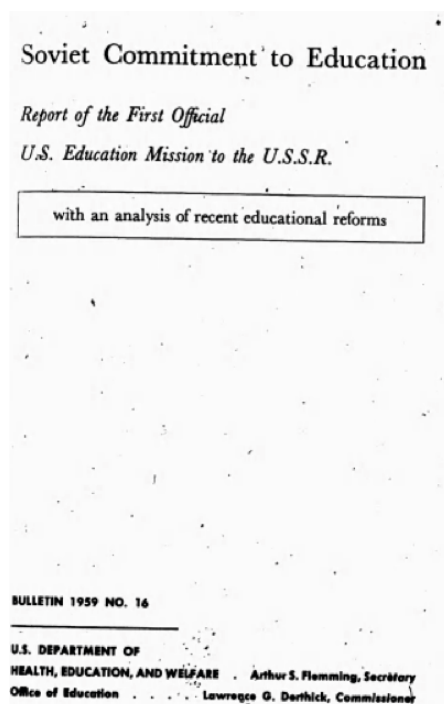
We make no effort to compare the schools of the United States with those of the U.S.S.R., for we must measure the progress of each by its own separate goals. But we do emphasize that, whether we like it or not, competition has been imposed upon us by a nation of vast resources, a people of seemingly unbounded enthusiasm for self-development, governed by a ruling hierarchy which is determined to use that self-development to cast about the world the shadow of Communist domination.

To sense this issue at first hand is indeed a sobering experience. We came back deeply concerned about our poorer schools now suffering from neglect. But we returned with a new appreciation and renewed faith in the American system... (*Soviet Commitment to Education* 1959, xi).

These sentences were written down by the head of the US education. We do not know the background of this surprising statement (shocking the government, publicity, get more finance etc.), which expressed a dominant opinion (belief) toward the Soviet education. After returning, Derthick summed up his experiences, in the National Press Club, in Washington, on June 13 1958:

We were simply not prepared for the degree to which the USSR as a nation is committed to education as a means of national advancement... Our major reaction therefore is one of astonishment – and I choose the word carefully – at the extent to which this seems to have been accomplished... Ten American educators came away sobered by what they saw. (cited by: Nearing 1958, 30).

Then he listed the Soviet achievements of teacher preparation, school finance, for-



Picture 3. Cover of the Soviet Commitment to Education (1959).

eign language-teaching, involving parents, staff assistance – all of these declarations could be the results of the manipulation techniques in introducing and visiting Soviet schools by the hosts (to these techniques, see: Hollander 2017).

A second representative commission went to the Soviet Union in the Spring of 1959 (the visitations were mutual), guided by William K. Medlin, a Specialist in Comparative Education for Eastern Europe (Division of International Education). Two other experts accompanied him, Clarence B. Lindquist, Chief for Natural Sciences and Mathematics (Division of Higher Education), and Marshall L. Schmitt, Specialist for Industrial Arts (Division of State and Local School Systems), all of them were employed at the Office of Education. A more focused bulletin came out from this trip (*Soviet Education Programs* 1960), concentrated on the sciences and polytechnic training, from three different perspectives: foundations (planning and central ideology), curriculums and teacher preparation. A lot of useful data were listed in the appendixes, like instruction programs, statistics or courses (see Table 3 to a subject, called Fundamentals of Production). There were two types of polytechnic education in the Soviet Union: one was the industrial type for the urban schools (as we can see), the other was the agricultural production for rural schools.

<b>Course Outline for Polytechnic Instruction (Grades 8 through 10)</b>				
<b>Fundamentals of production (grades 8 through 10 in urban schools)</b>				
Program	Class hours	Exercises	Practical work	Total hours
1	2	3	4	5
<b>I. Machine Study (Grade 8) <sup>1</sup></b> .....	40	6	56	102
A. Introduction.....	2	0	0	2
B. Elements of the Technology of Metals:				
Topic 1. Machine-Building Materials.....	4	2	0	6
Topic 2. Processing of Metals by Cutting.....	6	0	12	18
Topic 3. Assembly and Finishing of Items.....	4	0	12	16
C. Basic Information about the Mechanisms and Machines:				
Topic 1. Parts of Machines and Their Junctions.....	4	0	4	8
Topic 2. Construction and Work of the Mechanisms.....	14	0	14	28
Topic 3. Construction and Work of Machines.....	6	4	14	24
<b>II. Fundamentals of Industrial Production in the Form of a Specific Enterprise (Grade 9) <sup>2</sup></b> .....	30-50	0	302-182	422
A. General Acquaintance with Industrial Enterprise. (Study of production branch, production of enterprise, raw materials of enterprise and auxiliary materials, technology and techniques of production, and supply of power and water for enterprise). B. Industrial Practice:	30-50	0	0	30-50
1. During study year.....	0	0	106-86	106-86
2. During summer period..... (Work in main shops, auxiliary shops, and plant laboratory and on testing finished products, and individual tasks at work-benches.)	0	0	96	96
<b>III. Automobiles (Grade 10) <sup>3</sup></b> .....	40	0	38	78
A. Introduction.....	2	0	0	2
Topic 1. Automobile Engine.....	4	0	0	4
Topic 2. Crankshaft and Gas-Distributing Mechanisms.....	2	0	6	8
Topic 3. Cooling System.....	2	0	2	4
Topic 4. System of Oiling Engine.....	2	0	2	4
Topic 5. Feeding of Engine.....	4	0	4	8
Topic 6. Ignition System.....	2	0	2	4
Topic 7. Power Transmission of Automobile.....	4	0	6	10

Table 3. Details from the Polytechnic Instruction (*Soviet Education Programs* 1960, 227).

There are some common characteristics about these government documents: comparison between the Soviet Union and USA, answers to the communist challenge, utilizing the experiences in the educational race to compensate the assumptive disadvantage. The experts and intellectuals (I will give a detailed description about them in the next chapter) took a big part in the collection of data and analysis.

### *Intellectuals and the academic sphere*

The leftist/progressive intellectuals' Eastern travels had been an ongoing tradition since the 1920's, according to Paul Hollander's concept of political pilgrimages (Hollander 2017); after 1958 the American academics also engaged in the circulation (Hester 2016). The opposite direction is better known and revealed: let's think about the Eastern émigrés' life stories (an interesting example, particularly about scholar exchanges: Vinovskis 2015), but there is one substantial difference. The refugees of the Eastern Bloc rarely returned to their home country, meanwhile the western «fellow travellers» usually made their journeys to the Soviet Union for a limited time only and published their reports in the «Free World».

There were some emigrant scholars in the United States, who became experts of the Eastern/Soviet education, during their American career, like George Fijalowski Zygmunt Bereday (the middle two names are usually not described). Bereday has been an often cited author in the comparative education, he was originally born in Poland in 1920 (to the biographical notes, see: Ohles, Ohles and Ramsay 1997, 25). At the beginning of the World War II, Bereday served in the Polish cavalry, after the collapse he became a paratroop officer in Great-Britain, from 1940-1945. During this period, he graduated at the Oxford University, then moved to the USA, earned PhD, joined the Teachers College, Columbia University, as a professor of comparative education (from 1959). This interdisciplinary field was very new at this time, Bereday justified its legitimacy with this statement: «The Sputnik has unleashed a veritable storm of comparisons of American education with foreign education systems». He suggested in this 1958 article, that their education system might be better than the American, which caused a «mistaken envy» (cited by: Nordtveit 2015, 3). He edited a lot of influential works, like *The Politics of Soviet Education* (1960) and *The Changing Soviet School* (1960, with Brickman and Read, based on a summer tour in 1958); and worked as an exchange professor in Moscow in 1961. The actors of the comparative education arena linked to each other in many ways, which could be started in November 1956, when Brickman convened a meeting with college teachers, a group from UNESCO and experts from the US Office of Education. The result was the intention to professionalize the comparative education, with organizing tours behind the iron curtain (Nordtveit 2015, 4), this event takes into consideration the important role of the networks, a possibility to further research.

Beyond the academic works, a lot of reports and travelogues were published by scholars and intellectuals for the wider publicity. George S. Counts was an emblematic figure of the progressive movement in the United States, rooted in John Dewey's

theory, his works typify the continuity through decades of the leftist thought and sympathies toward Soviet Union (to the biographic sketch, see: Lagemann 1992. Keenan 2002; 2003). From 1927 to 1955 he was the member of the faculty Teachers College, Columbia University; after his retirement, Bereday got a tenure in 1959 at the same institution. Counts made two study tours to the Soviet Union (1927, three months, 1929, seven months – he drove 6000 miles all alone in Model A Ford), as an early discoverer of the New World, which could solve the social problems, Counts wrote two volumes about it: *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia* (1930), *The Soviet Challenge to America* (1931). He also translated a Soviet schoolbook about the Five-Year Plan, became a best-seller in 1931 and «took America by storm», because the efforts of Soviet engineering (Mickenberg 2010, 103). Although he disappointed in the Soviet Education in late 1940's, another book came out in 1957, *The Challenge of Soviet Education*, continued the appreciative attitude of the former travel descriptions, forecasted Soviet superiority in the future, because of the effectiveness of an authoritarian system (Counts 1957).

The next case is Scott Nearing, radical thinker, environmentalist, political activist and educator, who made a two month-journey to the Soviet Union in 1925, before Counts, evaluated the new education as a revolutionary experiment (Nearing 1926), perhaps the first American record about this topic. Helen and Scott Nearing's main work of their life was to made a sustainable community in the rural (Saltmarsh 1998), Scott returned to the subject of Soviet Union after the Sputnik shock (from November 1957 to January 1958 he was on a trip there), with a telling title: *Soviet Education. What does it offer to America? An illustrated eyewitness report* (Nearing 1958). He constructed the image of an open and free Soviet education system, marked a great development since 1925, using metaphors like the education here was as an «open book», «world's largest educational laboratory» etc., predicted a brighter future, based upon the progress of sciences. The conclusion was closer to a utopia, than the reality.



*Today it's ship models. Some day these boys at Sverdlovsk Pioneer Palace may design, build and operate real ships*

Picture 4. A Group in the Pioneer Palace (Nearing 1958, 13).

The book covered with illustrations, like Picture 4., those implied that in the egalitarian society of the Soviet Union, everyone could be a naval engineer or an astronaut (Nearing 1958, 14). The *Soviet Education* looks like a propaganda brochure, for example, the table of contents was the following:

1. The search for better schools (Foreword)
2. Then came the revolution
3. How the Sputniks were built
4. World's largest educational laboratory
5. In 1925... Beginnings
6. Soviet schools are free—Bottom to top
7. Where education builds for life
8. The search for aptitudes and talents
9. Young pioneers and youth: Opportunity
10. Education for every person, every purpose
11. Science: Its study, application
12. Where teachers are honoured
13. Music, drama, sports
14. Unifying theory and practice
15. Integrating school and factory
16. Full-time education
17. The new internat, the boarding school
18. Educational experiments
19. What education experiments revealed
20. Getting results
21. What American educators say

The book was published by the American Russian Institute (San Francisco) – the Institute founded in 1946, by a Russian-born art professor at Stanford, Victor Arnautoff, to support cultural relations between the USA and USSR, maintained a library and an information service, as an article reported in *The Stanford Daily* (“American-Russian Institute Formed”) on August 2 1946. Arnautoff was accused of taking part in «the Communist conspiracy» in 1955; his university president stated, that «No proven Communist should hold a position at Stanford», and in 1956, Arnautoff was summoned before a subcommittee of the House Un-American Activities Committee (Cherny 2013). I would to not convict or justify Arnautoff, the most important is the context here: after the Era of McCarthyism such a publication either involved the denunciation of communist sympathies, or confirmed the statements in it, not necessarily linked to the facts.

I list some scholars (and their short essays about the Soviet development) at the end of this chapter, whose were typical in this topic. The first is Frederic Lilge, who was born in Germany, in 1934-1935 he spent a year at the University of Rochester, then made an academic career at the Berkeley, where he was promoted professor in 1958 (these events are a bit similar to another émigré scholar Bereday). He studied the German disaster (the antecedents of Nazism in the universities) and the Soviet educa-

tional ideology and practice – the latter connected with his first trip to the Soviet Union in April and May 1958 (independently from the Derthick-delegation), and a book about Makarenko. Lilge had got connections to the before mentioned scholars, as the member of the Comparative Education Society, and the National Committee on Soviet and East European Area Fellows of the Ford Foundation<sup>7</sup>. Lilge wrote down his impressions based upon the visiting of Soviet schools, universities, Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and the Ministries of Education; with objectivity and a little distance about the overall admiring for the achievements of Soviet schools (Lilge 1959); so this article may be considered as another approach, comparing the previous ones.

William K. Medlin (leader of the second official delegation in 1959) worked for the Office of Education in this period, specialised in the issues of educational planning and policy. In an article, he analysed the role of the Soviet Pedagogical Academy and the new school plans, presented the Soviet school reform for the first time (Medlin 1958). Medlin became the staff member of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1960; from here, a graduate, named Leslie W. Ross, published a paper, called *Some Aspects of Soviet Education*, ended with the conclusion: «even when it is viewed apart from the machinations of the Communist party, the Soviet educational system is a highly efficient and successful enterprise» (Ross 1960, 550). This time, Harlan Hatcher was the President of the University, who headed a State Department educational mission to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1959 (*Proceedings...* 1998, 297) – in a speech («Our Soviet Neighbors») he stated that the inspiration of the Soviet education was the United States of America (cited by Ross 1960, 539). Herbert C. Rudman, Professor of Education (Michigan State University) is my last example. He visited the Soviet Union in the second half of 1958, when the school reform was announced by Khrushchev and met Shapovalenko, whose words were reflected to western educational ideas: «We want to make our schools more comprehensive for some and terminal for others» (Rudman 1959: 253). Rudman studied later the less known field of the administration structure and decision making-mechanism in the Soviet education, and a monograph came out, published by the Office of Education (Rudman 1964). This aspect rather expresses differences, than similarities between the American and Soviet system.

To summarise the work of the intellectuals, we can recognize a continuity from the 1930's to late 1950's, accumulation of publications in 1958-1959, and a mainly positive attitude toward Soviet Union, with some concerns about the authoritarian nature of the education. The same feature (like discipline and well behaviour in an average Soviet school) could be interpreted two opposite ways, depended on the chosen perspective: firstly, the lack of freedom caused it; secondly, this was the result of the development and progress. The balance turned rather to the second attitude, the main goals were to translate and understand the new school reform in the Eastern Bloc, in a mutual learning process.

<sup>7</sup> University of California at Berkeley, Courtesy of University Archives, The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA 94720-6000. 1985. University of California: In Memoriam. Accessed: July 19, 2018. <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/info>, <http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb4d5nb20m&brand=calisphere>.



*Forming the public opinion: an example of a journal and a book*

My last two cases show how the wider (not just the professional) public was formed, though the measure of any publication's influence and scope is very questionable. In conjunction with the above mentioned school reform, a new periodical appeared in the USA, the *Soviet Education*, it had been existed from 1958 to 1991, with the subtitle: *a journal of translations* (currently – from 1992 to nowadays – its name is *Russian Education & Society*). In the first two volumes (November 1958-1959) all articles were transcriptions from the *Sovetskaya Pedagogika* (journal of the Russian Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, Moscow): at the beginning the editorial board aimed to by-pass the language barrier and give information from the first hand (Read 1959, 194). Some emblematic headings from these two years: «Preparing for Life – the Most Important Goal of the Young Communist League» (Fedotova 1958), «Regarding the Strengthening of Ties Between School and Life and the Further Development of the Public Education System» (Khrushchev 1958), «Building Communism in the Schools» (Goncharov 1959), «Putting Lenin's Teaching on Education and Training into Creative Practice» (1959).

This was the dialect of Party-decrees and regulations, a normative and prescriptive using of language, gave only one possible way to teach and learn. From an external view it should be seen as a propaganda brochure, with these articles the Western audience became acquainted with the so-called Bolshevik language (Kotkin 1995), how the socialist education constructed its reality, how the new Soviet man was brought up (Krylova 2017). There was another perspective too: from an inner point view, this was the antidote of misbeliefs, rejection and ignorance, related to the Soviet issues, amidst average people and the majority of the American press – as Gerald Read declared (1959, 194). The question is raised here, what the influencers, intellectual elite, or opinion formers were reflecting, representing? This issue expresses the importance of discourses, the categories created by scholars, politicians etc., or in other words: the «social construction of reality» (Berger and Luckmann 1991). Naturally, another question emerged here: Who transmitted this ideological universe? The editorial board was hidden, we only know the publisher of the journal, International Arts and Sciences Press, Myron E. Sharpe, economist, who was heard by the Committee on Un-American Activities in 1962, accused him of Soviet propaganda (Communist Outlets... 1962) – the final consequence is unknown.

«By the time American schoolchildren get Jack and Jill up that hill, Soviet children of the same age will probably be discussing the hill's altitude, mineral deposits and geo-political role in world affairs» – that was a sentence from a blurb of a best-seller book. Its impressive title sounded like this: *What Ivan Knows That Johnny Doesn't*, by Arthur S. Trace (1961). The author was an associate professor of English at John Carroll University, teaches Renaissance literature and literary criticism; the study based upon the comparisons of textbooks and curricula in the USA and in the Soviet Union. Trace diagnosed a great disparity in mathematics, basic sciences and humanities, a poor quality of teaching these important subjects in the USA; the main focus was to propose a significant improvement. These statements had been a long tradition in the

United States (and other countries too): in 1955, Rudolf Flesch published his famous book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, to criticise reading methods, which might cause functional illiteracy (Levine 2018, 62). The comparative experts blamed Trace's work to oversimplify a complex problem and his outsider, incompetent view (e. g. Brickman 1963), even so the book had a great influence.

### *Conclusions: Comparison in reality*

We can summarise some characteristics about the reception of the Soviet pedagogy. First, every question of the education was loaded full with ideology, not just in the Soviet Union, but in the United States, too. Secondly, the positive attitudes toward the socialist pedagogy were results of the Sputnik shock, by the mid-1960's this effect began to disappear. An interesting question raised here: Did the Soviet superiority really existed in this period in any field, which might cause these panic reactions, or did they root in these articles? The answers seem a bit surprising first. The often cited temporary advantage in the weapon-arsenal had been never real, the famous missile-gap (more Soviet missiles than American) was based on an estimate to President Eisenhower, called Gaither Report (*Deterrence and Survive in the Nuclear Age* 1957). The prognosis intended to make pressure on the decision-makers to enforce the military-industrial complex, then Kennedy used it to criticise the insufficient performance of the Eisenhower administration (Preble 2003): and the suspected fall-back became reality. The frequent mention of the communist challenge could be an argument in the discourses of internal affairs, against political opponents or to mobilize resources in different areas. This is the third important conclusion: the processes of the international competition between the two blocks had been always interdependent with the internal affairs of these countries, which is an interesting direction for further researches.

According to the politics, to prepare the American society against the common enemy, it was an imperative need to amplify the Soviet threat, meanwhile, overseeing other data, the American superiority became clear, related to the GNP, consumption, investments, national defence in this period (*US and USSR...* 1966). The educational outcomes included in the DeWitt monography (1961): there were more graduates on elementary, secondary and higher levels; the effectiveness of the American labour was twofold; in all important fields, America was the first. These are just some arguments, which were known amongst the decision-makers, but they stressed the much less significant opposite evidence to prove Soviet superiority. There was only one exception, in the number of engineering and medical graduates and candidates leaded by the Soviet Union, but it distorted the differences between classification systems of the disciplines and scientific qualifications (candidates vs. PhD). The Soviet data was unreliable and manipulated, the comparison can be evaluated now as impossible, because the systems characterised by incommensurability (like the scientific paradigms, Kuhn 1962), but the two sides always tried to contrast and measure its and the others' production. This compelling need is worth studying deeper.

## Acknowledgements

Supported by the ÚNKP-17-4 New National Excellence Program of the Ministry of Human Capacities. The author would like to thank Prof. Iveta Kestere (University of Latvia, Riga), Prof. Maris Vinovskis (University of Michigan, USA) and Prof. Christian Ydesen (Aalborg University, Denmark) for their generous help, and his mother, Emőke Csík for proofreading.

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