

Russian and Soviet schooling: educational legacies, institutional reforms and national identities*

Dorena Caroli

The history of schooling has always represented an important area of research for specialists in Russian and Soviet history. Western scholars have gradually shifted their interest from pedagogical theories to the analysis of school systems understood as complex systems of educational norms, institutional aspects and national identity¹. This was exactly what had happened after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the Russian experts in education revealed a marked inclination to renew their research topics and methodologies².

This critical review has no pretensions to be exhaustive; nonetheless, it is an attempt to present the main studies of the Russian and Soviet school systems in a *longue durée* perspective. It will therefore aim at analysing all the different features of the Tsarist and Soviet schooling. On the one hand, in the Tsarist Autocracy, schooling had to carry out the political and national project of educating the nobility, building a new class of liberal Intelligentsia and “russifying”

* I wish to express my gratitude to Gerlind Schmidt (Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung, Frankfurt am Main) and to Theodore R. Weeks (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale) for their helpful suggestions. I also thank Elena Poggi and Angela Ruth Logue for the linguistic revision of the text.

¹ For a comparison with the European school system, see D. Julia, *Riflessioni sulla recente storiografia dell'educazione in Europa: per una storia comparata delle culture educative*, «Annali di storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche», 3, 1996, pp. 119-147.

² D. Caroli, *Nuove tendenze nella storia dell'infanzia, dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche nella Russia post-comunista (1986-2006)*, «History of Education & Children Literature», II (1), 2007, pp. 377-392.

the ethnic minorities. On the other hand, the Soviet government and the Communist Party unified and centralised the school system to shape the Communist classless society – dominated by the proletariat – in order to facilitate the social mobility necessary for the planned development of the country³. In spite of their very different aims, these school systems had something in common, that is to stem illiteracy and to assimilate the non-Russian population. Although Tsarist and Soviet reforms had failed in their attempt, they led to an effective increase in the literate population. According to the Soviet scholar E.N. Medynsky, the population censuses conducted in 1897, 1926 and 1939 showed a very important change: respectively 24.0 per cent, 51.1 per cent and 81.2 per cent of the population aged 9-50 were literate⁴.

This review – divided into three parts – will analyse the historiography of the Russian and Soviet school systems. In the first part, the evolution of the schooling system from the Reign of Peter the Great (1682-1725) until the October Revolution (1917) will be presented; in the second part there will be an analysis of the “United Labour School” reform – introduced during the October Revolution – and the following reorganisation of the school until the decree on compulsory primary education (25th July 1931). It will also evaluate the changes caused by the planned economy from the end of the 1920s until the pre Second World War period. Finally, in the third part, this review presents the reforms undertaken during World War II until the “Khrushchev School Reform” (1958), which led to the introduction of compulsory secondary education (1973). This review will also present the different reforms of literacy and schooling in relation to the changes in educational politics, the main debates among pedagogues and the organisation and didactical aspects of the school practices.

1. *Literacy and Schooling in Tsarist Russia from Catherine II until the October Revolution (1762-1917)*

While the history of literacy in Modern Russia and in particular the role of the Church and the Army have not yet been analysed, J. Mc Clelland, M. J.

³ N. Nar, *The Campaign against illiteracy and semiliteracy in the Ukraine, Transcaucasus, and Northern Caucasus, 1922-1941*, in G.L. Kline (ed.), *Soviet Education*. Foreword by G.S. Counts, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD., 1957, pp. 139-159; A. Kappeler, *Russland als Vielvölkerreich: Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall*, München, Beck, 1992; Y. Slezkine, *The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism*, «Slavic Review», 53 (2), 1994, pp. 414-452; T.R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia. Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914*, Dekalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 1996; T. Martin, *The affirmative Action Empire. Nation and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2001.

⁴ E.N. Medynskij, *Narodnoe obrazovanie v SSSR*, Moskva, Akademija Pedagogičeskich Nauk RSFSR, 1952, pp. 24-25.

Okenfuss and F. Nethercott have approached some more general aspects of the history of culture: the role of the Academy, the diffusion of humanism and the reception of the platonic philosophy in Russian academies from the middle of the XVII century until the middle of the XIX century⁵.

Okenfuss is the author of a very important monograph on the history of childhood in Russia⁶. He was among the first to completely devote his studies to the Russian school system. To be precise, he has studied the influence of Jesuit schools on Orthodox Schools during the last decades of the XVII century and at the beginning of the XVIII century. He argues that «the statutes of the Kiev brotherhood college were modelled on those of the Jesuit schools, and in places word-for-word borrowing was involved». The *curricula* of the subjects taught at the Orthodox Kiev School were identical to those of Jesuit schools in Poland, where the struggle against Lutherans had led to the introduction of such a *curriculum* by the Catholics and the Orthodox of the European classical grammar schools. The Jesuit notion of education is visible in the subjects taught and textbooks used (*De institutione Grammatica Libri Tres*, by Emmanuel Alvarez, 1572). Indeed, Latin remained the major subject in the Kiev school and the principal language of instruction. On the basis of this school, Peter the Great restructured the Moscow school and all the diocesan schools – about 26 in 1750 – which were not necessarily religious or theological academies⁷.

Isabel de Madariaga has analysed the reform undertaken during the Reign of Catherine II (1762-1796), which was at the basis of the development of the Russian school system. Inspired by the culture of the Enlightenment – aimed at the *fabrication de l'homme idéal et du citoyen parfait* – Catherine's school policy can be divided into two phases. The first phase was characterised by the nomination of Counsellor I.I. Betskoy, the founding of a special Commission and the publication of the *General Plan for the Education of Young People of both Sexes* (12th March 1764). This reform, which provided for the opening of the Institute for Noble Girls – the first female school – and of the first Russian orphanage, led to the control on foreign tutors and, most of all, strengthened the secondary military education and technical-vocational schools. However, the reform did not affect the primary schools managed by Orthodox priests or by officers of lower ranks, and the literacy centres founded by landowners. In

⁵ J. Mc Clelland, *Autocrats and Academics: Education, Culture and Society in Tsarist Russia*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1979; Max J. Okenfuss, *The Rise and Fall of Latin Humanism in Early-Modern Russia: Pagan Authors, Ukrainians, and the Resiliency of Muscovy*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1995; F. Nethercott, *Russia's Plato: Plato and the Platonic Tradition in Russian Education, Science and Ideology (1840-1930)*, Burlington, Ashgate, 2000.

⁶ M.J. Okenfuss, *The Discovery of Childhood in Russia. The Evidence of the Slavic Primer*, Newtonville, Oriental Research Partners, 1980.

⁷ M.J. Okenfuss, *The Jesuit Origins of Petrine Education*, in J.G. Garrard (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century in Russia*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973, pp. 106-130 (110, 112).

1755 and 1764, some gymnasia were founded in Moscow and in Saint Petersburg in order to prepare the youth for universities (Moscow and Saint Petersburg) and the Academy of Sciences (Saint Petersburg). These gymnasia were attended both by the sons of the nobles and those of other social classes, who were called *raznochintsy*⁸, which means not belonging to the noble rank – i.e. military, clergy and serfs.

During the second phase, Catherine II turned her attention to the question of education in the context of the *Statute on Local Administration* (1775), according to which local authorities were to establish schools – managed by the Boards of Social Welfare – at both a district (*uezd*) and province (*gubernia*) level. Interested in Johann Basedow's conception, Catherine invited one of her disciples to open a Philanthropinum in Saint Petersburg. On Diderot's advice and thanks to the visit of Joseph II to Russia, Catherine adopted the Prussian system, which had been reorganised after the abolition of the Society of Jesus (1773). Joseph II adopted the school methods applied in Prussian Silesia by an Augustinian abbot, Johann Ignaz von Felbiger, who had participated in the school reform in 1774. Felbiger's teaching method involved the choice of the same textbook for all the pupils, who should read simultaneously to better memorise the content. This method also guaranteed a uniform teaching system, which matched the schools of a multi-language and multi-culture Empire⁹.

In September 1782, Catherine founded the Commission for the Establishment of Schools, leading to the standardisation of the school system in the Russian provincial capitals, as well as teacher training and the publication of text books. One of the most important members of the Commission – directed by P.V. Zavadovsky – was the mathematician F.U.T. Aepinus. He had suggested to Catherine that she ask Joseph II for an Orthodox adviser to help her introduce to the Russian provincial capitals, cities and villages the Austrian system of the *Trivial-, Real- and Normalschule*. Joseph II had sent her the Austro-Serbian reformer F.I. Jankovich de Mirjevo – also recommended by Felbiger – who had carried out the reform in the Habsburg territories, where people spoke Serb-Croatian and were of Orthodox faith. Jankovich's intervention was particularly important for text books, because he translated several text books (written or approved by Felbiger) about different subjects (history, geography, reading, writing, arithmetic, Latin, Greek, grammar) from German and Serb-Croatian. Jankovich himself prepared a catechism, which was approved by Aepinus and Catherine. In 1782, the Commission introduced these new teaching methods in the schools of the capitals and started to control whether or not private schools were using the authorized textbooks¹⁰.

⁸ I. de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, London, Phoenix Press, 1981, pp. 488-502 (491-493).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 495.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 495-496.

On the model of Felbiger's Serb-Croatian works, the Commission also published texts concerning the moral task of the teachers – the *Guide to Teachers* (1783) – and for pupils – *The Duties of a Man and Citizen* (1783) – in order to raise citizen awareness towards the State, God and the family. *The Duties of a Man and Citizen* was a treaty enriched by passages from the New Testament; nevertheless it had the hallmarks of the Enlightenment, since the teaching of religion was foreseen on the basis of texts published by the Commission itself – and not by the Church. Before 1819, this text was reprinted eleven times, and then it was outlawed by the Metropolitan Filaret because it was founded on a secular moral and not on religion, which had instead acquired a predominant role in the Russian school system of the XIX century.

The reform activity was completed by the publication of the *Russian Statute on Education* (5th August 1786) establishing a wide net of primary and secondary schools in the province capitals and elementary schools in the districts, all of which were free and open to all social classes (nobles and liberal Intelligentsia, i.e. the *raznochintsy*). According to this Statute, primary schools had two classes lasting one year each and aimed at teaching literacy and calculating, integrating basic lessons with religion and moral education. Secondary schools had four classes, the last of which lasted two years. These schools integrated the teaching of technical subjects – physics, drawing and architecture – with the classic ones such as history, geography, classical or modern languages – Tatar, Arabic and Chinese. This Statute – which neglected rural schools – significantly boosted the opening of schools in Russian and Baltic provinces for a total of 165 schools, 394 teachers, 10,230 male pupils and 858 female pupils. These figures doubled in the following four years, then lessened after Catherine's death. This Statute also introduced substantial changes in other educational institutions – such as the Cadets Corps of the Army and the Navy – in order to enhance military education and most likely the education of the *raznochintsy* too¹¹.

Under the tsars Aleksander I (1801-1825) and Nicholas I (1825-1855), the school system became quite conservative in the sense that

boy serfs were soon banned from public gymnasia; these schools were disconnected from the district schools, and girls were debarred from both. Parish schools were meant to be chiefly for peasants, district schools primarily for merchants' children, and gymnasia for nobility. Nevertheless elementary education expanded, under the auspices of several different ministries and the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church, whose clergy had run rather primitive literacy schools (*shkoly gramoty*) for hundreds of years¹².

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 498-499.

¹² J. Dunstan, *Girls and Schooling in Imperial Russia. An Outline mainly from Western Research*, «Education in Russia, the Independent States and Eastern Europe», 14 (1), 1996, pp. 8-21 (13).

Indeed, schooling became a part of the reactionary autocracy thanks to the creation of a Central Educational Apparatus and the establishment of the Ministry of National Enlightenment (1800-1825). This issue has been analysed by P.L. Alston, who has outlined the reorganisation of the school system (24th January 1803), aimed at improving elementary school in every provincial district and projecting a secondary school in every provincial capital. For this reason, the provinces were grouped into six educational districts, and six members of the central school administration had to represent the interests of their area in Saint Petersburg. In order to provide continuous progression, the most important change concerned the transformation of Catherine's major schools into 4-year provincial schools and Catherine's minor schools into 2-year improved elementary district schools¹³.

From 1810 to 1821, Sergei N. Uvarov (1786-1855) was at the head of these educational districts. According to Catherine Wittaker, Uvarov was «the foremost autodidact of his time», whose personality was emblematic of the «aristocracy of Knowledge [which] began to replace an aristocracy of birth in Russia». From 1818 to 1855 he was president of the Academy of Science. From 1833 to 1849, as Minister of Education, Uvarov conceived education as a mirror of the Empire ideology of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality”. Whitaker also argues that

Uvarov was born in a generation nurtured on the rational ideals of the Enlightenment and on the polite society of the old regime, but there then followed more than a half a century of searching, a Romantic chaos that alternated between revolution and reaction, both of which Uvarov loathed. [...] Part of the Uvaronian “system” – promoting monopoly and centralization, assuring political loyalty, muting dissidence, and maintaining educational standards at the highest contemporary levels – endured to the extent that it remained part of the present-day Soviet system¹⁴.

The centralisation of national education represented the starting point for the school system development: the number of literacy schools and rural schools increased from 1,500 in 1838 to 21,400 in 1865, with 413,500 pupils (10 per cent female), but then decreased in the 1880s¹⁵.

In his brilliant research – *When Russia Learned to Read. Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* – Jeffrey Brooks analyses the increase of common literacy between the serf emancipation and the Bolshevik Revolution, emphasizing the development of Tsarist schooling: the Peasant School of Literacy (*shkoly gramoty*), which responded to the literacy needs, the *zemstvo* schools,

¹³ P.L. Alston, *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1969, pp. 20-30.

¹⁴ C.H. Whittaker, *The Origins of modern Russian Education: an intellectual biography of Count Sergei Uvarov, 1786-1855*, De Kalb Illinois, Northern Illinois University Press, 1984, pp. XII-XIII.

the Church Parish schools and the State schools, financed by the Ministry of Education. J. Brooks offers a detailed description of school attendance – which corresponded to half of the school-age population aged 8-11 – as well as the school *curriculum*, text books and the teachers' status¹⁶. Elliott Mossman argues that, from 1861, Lev N. Tolstoi (1828-1910) founded several schools in Jasnaia Poliana (province of Tula), which represented the expression of his conception of an antiauthoritarian and free education¹⁷.

The school reform started in 1864 – in the period of the Great Reforms – and has been thoroughly presented by Jean Saussay. He has analysed the political debates about popular education between liberals (K.D. Uschinsky) and democrats (N.G. Chernyshevsky), which anticipated the law on primary education (14th July 1864), the expansion of which was due to the liberation of the serfs (1861)¹⁸. This law did not provide for the State's intervention on literacy but represented the victory of a conservative clerical trend: the predominant role was indeed not played by the Ministry of Education, but rather by the Church and the Clergy. According to Saussay, «l'instruction religieuse était d'ailleurs imposée et figurait en tête des matières au programme». The clergy would play an important role not only in the management of popular schools, but also in the teaching activity itself. The Ministry of Education played instead a limited role in primary education and had to abandon the idea of centralising the six types of existing paying primary schools – Parish schools, popular schools and the schools pertaining to the different Ministries. In 1874, during the Reign of Aleksander II, D.A. Tolstoi – the new Minister of Education – introduced a new control system: 34 inspectors had to control what happened in the schools of the different provinces, through provincial and district councils. However, the clergy failed definitively in this mission in popular schools and Tolstoi had to organise five pedagogical courses to train teachers¹⁹. Allen Sinel has examined the policies and reforms of the Russian Ministry of Education under the direction of the Count Dmitry Tolstoi. He has presented the reforms which shaped Russian secondary and primary education, and pointed

¹⁵ J. Dunstan, *Girls and Schooling in Imperial Russia. An Outline mainly from Western Research*, cit., p. 13.

¹⁶ J. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read. Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1985, pp. 35-58 (36-37).

¹⁷ E. Mossman, *Tolstoi and Peasant Learning in the Era of the Great Reforms*, in B. Eklof (ed.), *School and Society in Tsarist and Soviet Russia*. (Selected Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate, 1990), Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, The Macmillan Press LTD., 1993, pp. 37-69. As for Tolstoi, see L. Froese, *Ideengeschichtliche Triebkräfte der russischen und sowjetischen Pädagogik*, cit., pp. 87-143.

¹⁸ J. Saussay, *Le débat public sur l'enseignement primaire au début des années 1960*, «Revue des Études Slaves», 58/2, 1986, pp. 123-158.

¹⁹ J. Saussay, *La loi du 14 juillet 1864 sur l'enseignement primaire et la reprise en main sous le Ministère de D.A. Tolstoj*, *ibid.*, pp. 159-173 (p. 159).

out that secondary schools had to convert the Tsarist educational system in a tool to be used by the Autocracy²⁰.

The debate about popular education became very intense in Russia, since it represented an important aspect of the Imperial policy-making and the emancipation of the peasant population (1861), which underwent many social changes until the Revolution of 1905²¹. In this regard, Ben Eklof – one of the most important experts on Russian education – argues that

the expansion of schooling in the Russian countryside after 1864 brought basic education within the reach of the majority of peasants in the European heartland by the time of World War I, but that this expansion was initiated by the purposeful self activity of the anonymous peasant million. The elite contribution – whether by the local *zemstvos* of officialdom – began on a large scale only after the great famine of 1891-1892 [...]; before that date it was peasants who supplied the energy, money and effort to launch and maintain the school expansion campaign²².

According to Eklof, the expansion of rural education in Imperial Russia represents a myth, since «a large proportion of the expansion of the school system was in reality a process of formalization, of registration and incorporation of previously functioning peasant schools into the official network»²³. In the following decades, there were important changes in the educational policy: by the 1880s, the *zemstvos* had begun to maintain local teachers and to support literacy schools, which generally offered two years of instruction rather than the minimum of three, even though the peasants would pay 43 per cent of the costs of schooling. In the years 1900-1908, the Ministry of Education increased the control on peasant schools by doubling the number of inspectors in the countryside and by assuming the financing of school construction and maintenance²⁴.

These trends are also confirmed by the data presented by John Dunstan:

the 1870s were a period of marked growth in secular primary education, from over 9,000 schools and 283,000 pupils in European Russia in 1865 to nearly 23,000 schools with 1.2 million children by 1881. The reaction then to the assassination of Aleksander II was characterised by a slowdown in the development of secular (*zemstvo*, commune, Ministry) primary schooling and a countervailing spurt in the growth of church primary edu-

²⁰ A. Sinel, *The Classroom and the Chancellery: State Educational Reform in Russia under Count Dmitry Tolstoy*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1973.

²¹ A. Sinel, *The Campaign for Universal Primary Education in Russia 1890-1904*, «Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas», 30, 1982, pp. 481-507.

²² B. Eklof, *The Myth of the Zemstvo School: The Sources of the Expansion of Rural Education in Imperial Russia: 1864-1914*, «History of Education Quarterly», 24 (4), 1984, pp. 561-584 (561-562).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 576.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 571, 576. See the monograph by E. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools. Officialdom, Village culture, and popular pedagogy, 1861-1914*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1986.

cation, from over 4,000 schools with nearly 105,000 pupils in 1881 to almost 32,000 schools with 981,000 youngsters in 1894. In the 1890s the *zemstvos* began to campaign energetically to develop primary education and enthuse rural teachers. Church and secular primary schooling both approximately doubled their enrolments between the accession of Nicholas II and the 1905 revolution, reflecting the new and growing convergence of attitudes to that level of education as essential for progress²⁵.

During the Reign of Aleksander II, the percentage of girls in the school population increased from 8.2 per cent in 1856 to 17.7 in 1878 and 32.2 in 1911. The national education law of May 3rd, 1908 opened the way to universal compulsory primary education. As for secondary education, there was a slow-down during the Reign of Alexander III but after that, gymnasia for boys and girls significantly spread with the advent of Nicholas II: 364 gymnasia for boys with 136,800 pupils and 499 gymnasia for girls with over 157,000 pupils in 1904²⁶.

The thorny issue of imperial school politics among the ethnic minority – included the school system introduced for Jews in 1844²⁷ – has been tackled by Robert P. Geraci in his fascinating book *Window on the East. National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*. In this well documented monograph, Geraci analyses the attempt Russians made to render nationality a stable category of identity, and how schools could be used in the cultural assimilation, in particular that of Muslims in the region of Kazan (Tatarstan)²⁸. Geraci also examines

whether and how Russians transferred their conceptions of self onto the peoples of their “Eastern” or non-European domains [...] by examining three institutional-cultural spheres in Kazan that were concerned with the integration of Eastern peoples: the church (religion), the schools (pedagogy), and the University (science)²⁹.

Indeed, Geraci focuses on nationality – “Russianness” – in order to examine the «variety of criteria – political, psychological, racial, linguistic, historical and so on – that [Russians] have employed to define the category of “Russian”»³⁰. The fourth chapter of the book is entirely devoted to two very different pedagogical systems for non-Russians launched in the 1860s and 1870s and developed in the Kazan region among the so-called *inorodtsy* (alien population):

²⁵ J. Dunstan, *Girls and Schooling in Imperial Russia. An Outline mainly from Western Research*, cit. pp. 15, 17-18.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16. See also C. Johanson, *Women’s struggle for higher education in Russia, 1855-1900*, Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987.

²⁷ Of particular interest are Z. Halevy, *Jewish schools under czarism and communism: a struggle for cultural identity*, New York, Springer Pub. Co., 1976; J.E.O. Screen, *The Helsinki Yunker School, 1846-1879: a case study of officer training on the Russian Army*, Helsinki, SHS, 1986.

²⁸ R. P. Geraci, *Window on the East. National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2001.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

«Il'minskii's religious schools for Orthodox Christians and a network of schools for Muslims that concentrated on teaching the Russian language as a foundation for Russification»³¹. The difference between the two systems was that

Il'minskii used the Orthodox religion as the primary tool of cultural assimilation of Christian and animist of non-Russian while relying on native non-Russian languages as media of instruction. The other school system, called the Russia-Tatar schools [*mektebs and medresses*], accepted Islam as the religion of its subjects and sought to Russify by means of the Russian Language. It was designed and administered by the Ministry of Education with particular attention to the Kazan region. The two systems reflected fundamentally different visions of Russia national identity and its relations to the Empire³².

The attack of Il'minskii's system – «as a means to spread Christian Enlightenment not only to children but to the whole of the rural Kriashen community» – was caused not only by the voluntary principle of his missionary work among Tatar-Muslims, but probably by the failure of the Russification project among minorities.

The failure of cultural Russification in the Baltic provinces has been described by E.C. Thaden, M.H. Halzel and T.U. Raun³³. Although the study of Russian had been established in the Baltic schools since 1875, school systems and teachers' seminaries were still controlled by the Baltic German nobility and by the Lutheran Church³⁴. For this reason, an imperial *ukaz* ordered «the compulsory instruction of the Russian language in all primary and secondary schools of the Dorpat Educational Region» (1885) and the government «transferred the Lutheran rural elementary school and teachers' seminaries from the sphere of the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Education in order to lessen the control of the nobility and the Church»³⁵. Traditionally, resistance to Russification was stronger among the Estonians, especially the Intelligentsia. Even though the Educational Statute for Estonia (1875) called for the teaching of Russian in all Lutheran rural elementary schools within five years, in 1880, Russian was a school subject only in 42 per cent of the township schools in Estonia and in 48 per cent of those in Northern Livonia. The loss of elementary education in the native language was considered as «the bitterest blow of

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 116-157 (116).

³³ E.C. Thaden, *The Russian Government*, in Id. (ed.), *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 54-75; M.H. Halzel, *The Baltic Germans*, *ibid.*, pp. 168-178; T.U. Raun, *The Estonians*, *ibid.*, pp. 314-326. See also J. Miąso, *Educational Policy and Educational Development in the Polish Territories under Austrian, Russia and German Rule, 1850-1918*, in J. Tomiak et al. (eds.), *Schooling, Educational Policy and Ethnic Identity. Comparatives studies on governments and non-dominant ethnic groups in and non-dominant ethnic groups in Europe, 1850-1940*, Darmouth, New York University Press (European Science Foundation), 1991, pp. 163-184.

³⁴ E.C. Thaden, *The Russian Government*, cit., pp. 58-59.

³⁵ M.H. Halzel, *The Baltic Germans*, cit., pp. 168-178 (168).

Russification by both the Estonian Intelligentsia and the masses of the rural population. [...] The educational reform shattered the myth of the benevolence of the Tsarist regime and produced a profound pessimism about the Estonian future»³⁶.

Wladimir Süß's most recent book is also very interesting for the study of schooling among non-Russian minorities. Süß has focused his work on schooling and the German minorities, in particular those of the regions of the Volga and the Black Sea, from the beginning of the XVIII century until the October Revolution³⁷.

Whereas the imperial politics ascertained the limits of Russification and interethnic politics, the pedagogical movement of the late Imperial Russia was characterised by different trends such as the anthropocentric approach and the principle of labour (V.F. Odoevsky, V.G. Belinsky, A.I. Herzen and N.I. Pirogov), the pedagogical ethnic-national conception (K.D. Uschinsky), the idea of social education (N.G. Chernishevsky and N.A. Dobroliubov) and free education (I.I. Gorbunov-Posadov and K.N. Wentzel). Leohnard Froese has analysed how popular education influenced socialist and revolutionary pedagogues. He has noticed that they were interested in active pedagogy (J. Dewey) and in the co-educational system³⁸.

Many scholars have also investigated the question of the “professionalization” of teachers – a very slow process, as it was in Italy for instance. Christine Ruane has focused her attention on the everyday life of teachers, the development of the professional ethos, the role of gender in the development of this job, and women's entry into the teaching activity after 1871. Ruane has also analysed the slow conquest of a professional status devoid of prejudices after 1890, as well as the emergence of the Social aid societies for teachers in Saint Petersburg and Moscow and the development of the Congresses for the Education of teachers, organised by the Ministry for Finances³⁹. This last aspect has also been developed by S.J. Seregny and by J.D. Morison, whose purpose was to investigate the creation of a teacher class in the Russian countryside, its participation in the Revolution of 1905 but also the repression of the teach-

³⁶ T.U. Raun, *The Estonians*, cit., pp. 314-326 (315-316).

³⁷ W. Süß, *Das Schulwesen der deutschen Minderheit Russland. Von der ersten Ansiedlungen bis zur Revolution 1917*, Köln Weimar Wien, Böhlau Verlag, 2004.

³⁸ L. Froese, *Ideengeschichtliche Triebkräfte der russischen und sowjetischen Pädagogik*, Heidelberg, Quelle and Meyer, 1963, pp. 45-86. See also J. Dunstan, *K.D. Ushinsky: Trail-Blazer of Educational Thought in Russia*, «Journal of Russian Studies», 30, 1975, pp. 25-27. See also M. Mervaud, *Herzen, Ogarev et l'éducation du peuple*, «Revue des Études Slaves», 58/2, 1986, pp. 175-195; B. Eklof, *Worlds in Conflict: Patriarchal Authority, Discipline and Russian School, 1861-1914*, in Id. (ed.), *School and Society in Tsarist and Soviet Russia*, cit., pp. 95-120.

³⁹ C. Ruane, *Gender, Class, and Professionalization of Russia City Teachers 1860-1914*, Pittsburgh and London, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994. For the courses and institutions in 1912-1916, see also W.H.E. Johnson, *Russia's Educational Heritage*, Pittsburg, Carnegie Press (Carnegie Institute of Technology), 1950, pp. 206-225.

ers by the Tsarist government, which used to consider them in a very ambiguous way until World War I⁴⁰.

Finally, higher education has been studied in detail by Trude Maurer, who has analysed three important aspects of the history of university in Tsarist Russia: 1) the implementation of university legislation in Russia from the Napoleonic age to the Russian revolution; 2) the university's involvement in the Revolution of 1905, aiming at the creation of the "academic Union"; 3) a collective biography of Russian Professors. Maurer has conducted the most exhaustive study on this topic and has presented in detail both the political context and the institutional changes in Russian Universities⁴¹.

2. *The Revolution of the School System (1917-1939)*

The history of the Soviet school system – created during the October Revolution and which developed until the reforms of 1931 – has been analysed from different points of view, such as the history of the pedagogy or the institutional changes. Some experts have considered the Soviet school system of the 1920s as a transposition of the Marxist pedagogy based on labour and aimed at educating the "New Man"⁴². For instance, L. Froese, J. Bowen. G. Hillig and K. Kobelt have studied in detail the different conceptions of the revolutionary pedagogues and schools officers (N.K. Krupskaya, A.S. Makarenko, S.T. Shatsky and V.N. Shulgin)⁴³.

⁴⁰ J.D. Morison, *Les instituteurs de village dans la Révolution de 1905 en Russie*, «Revue des Etudes Slaves», 58 (2), 1986, pp. 205-219; S.J. Seregny, *Russian Teachers and Peasant Revolution. The Politics of Education in 1905*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1989; Id., *Teachers, Politics and the Peasant Community in Russia, 1895-1918*, in B. Eklof (ed.), *School and Society in Tsarist and Soviet Russia*, cit., pp. 121-148.

⁴¹ T. Maurer, *Hochschullehrer im Zarenreich: ein Beitrag zur russischen Sozial- und Bildungsgeschichte*, Köln/Weimar, Wien, Böhlau, 1998. See also B.A. Ruble, *Second Metropolis. Pragmatic Pluralism in Gilded Age Chicago, Silver Age Moscow, and Meiji Osaka*, Washington D.C., Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001, pp. 174-206.

⁴² See for example L. Froese, *Ideengeschichtliche Triebkräfte der russischen und sowjetischen Pädagogik*, Heidelberg, Quelle und Meyer, 1963; M.A. Manacorda, *Il marxismo e l'educazione, Marx, Engels, Lenin*, Roma, A. Armando Editore, 1964 (2nd ed., 1976). Recent essays about the well-known pedagogue S.T. Shatskij, see L.E. Holmes, *Shatskij: Reformer and Realist (Introductory Remarks to F.A. Fradkin's "S.T. Shatsky's Last Years")*, in B. Eklof (ed.), *School and Society in Tsarist and Soviet Russia*, cit., pp. 149-153; F.A. Fradkin, *Soviet Experimentalism Routed: S.T. Shatsky's Last Years*, *ibid.*, pp. 154-175.

⁴³ I. Lézine, *A.S. Makarenko, pédagogue soviétique (1888-1939)*. Préf. de H. Wallon, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1954; J. Bowen, *Soviet Education. Anton Makarenko and the Years of Experiment*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1962; L. Froese, *Ideengeschichtliche Triebkräfte der russischen und sowjetischen Pädagogik*, cit., pp. 188-193, 217-227; J. Dunstan, *V.N. Soroka-Rosinskij (1882-1960)*, *Soviet Teacher, in Fact and Fiction: the Double exposure of Viniksor*, Lewinston, Edwin Mellen Press, 1991; G. Hillig, S.C. Weitz (eds.), *Stand*

O. Anweiler, S. Fitzpatrick, W. Berelowitch and L. Holmes have examined the features of several Soviet reforms, the Sovietisation process and the experimental education. They started with the Soviet school system organisation and didactics, which had the important task of creating the new Soviet society on the basis of the new Communist values and the new social relations⁴⁴. There have been many debates about elementary and secondary schools, which were focused not only on the length of schooling and organisation but also on the role of labour education, which was to mould the young generation for the country's industrial development.

The German scholar Oscar Anweiler has retraced the history of the Russian and Soviet school system from the end of the XIX Century to 1931. Anweiler has conducted a detailed analysis of the "culture of pedagogy" as well as of the reforms of the United Labour School, from its foundation (30th September 1918) until the decree of September 5th, 1931, when Stalin's school reform restored the traditional subjects and the authoritarian role of the teachers inside the schools. Anweiler has also analysed the pre-Revolutionary heritage, the pedagogical trends of the beginning of the century, the Bolshevik school politics, Lenin's program of 1919, the different debates among the Revolutionary pedagogues about the Marxist doctrine, the development of the *New Economic Politics* (1921-1927) and the *First Five-Year Plan* (1928-1932). Anweiler has examined the programmes and methodology of the teaching – in particular the *Dalton Plan* (elaborated by H. Parkhurst) and the *Complex Method* (inspired by W.H. Kilpatrick) – and the debate about the theory of the "gathering away of the school" (V.N. Shulgin) abandoned after the decree of September 5th, 1931. This decree was of fundamental significance, because it awarded the direction of the school policy-making to the Communist Party⁴⁵.

In a more recent article, Anweiler analyses the organisational structure of the Soviet school system and the importance of decentralisation. Indeed, the *Rules for the Organisation of Public Schools in the Russian Republic* (1918) established that the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment was to progressively take the direction of the school system. The Constitution of 1923 confirmed the leading role of the Commissariat, but established that Governmental institutions had the important task of determining the principles of nation-

und Perspektiven der Makarenko-Forschung. Materialien des 6. internationalen Symposions (28 April-2 Mai 1989), München, Minerva Publikation, 1994; K. Kobelt, *Anton Makarenko – Ein stalinistischer Pädagoge. Interpretationen auf dem Hintergrund der russisch-sowjetischen Bildungspolitik*, Frankfurt/M., Peter Lang, 1996.

⁴⁴ For the common education and co-educative system, see E.T. Ewing, *Gender Equity as a Revolutionary Strategy: Coeducation in Russia and Soviet Schools*, in Id. (ed.), *Revolution and Pedagogy. Interdisciplinary and Transnational Perspectives on Educational Foundations*, New York, Palgrave Publication, 2005, pp. 39-59.

⁴⁵ O. Anweiler, *Geschichte der Schule und Pädagogik in Russland vom Ende des Zarenreiches bis zum Beginn der Stalin-Ära*, Berlin, Quelle & Meyer Verlag, 1964.

al education. Thereby, the reforms of the 1920s were characterised by a moderate federalism in teaching, with some cases of centralisation in the Federal or autonomous republics. Although the Communist Party's task was to steer the educational policy at the Republican level, there were considerable differences in the organisation of the primary, secondary and vocational school system, in the elaboration of the programmes and in teachers' education. In particular, such differences emerged from the very beginning of the 1920s in Ukraine, where the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment expressed a different conception of education compared with the Russian People's Commissariat for Enlightenment. This explains why the Russian republic's school system represented a model of teaching for the other republics.

From 1928 to 1934, the main decisions regarding education were taken by the Communist Party and by the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union. The introduction of the planned economy led to the end of the General Direction for vocational teaching (*Glavprofobr*) in 1930 – subsequently managed by economic institutions (*Vesencha*) – which represented the first step towards a separate management of the Soviet school system. In 1932, a Committee for High Technical Education was founded by the Russian Central Executive Committee. In 1946, the Committee for High Technical Education became the Ministry for High Education and only in 1959 the Federal and Republican Ministries for Education were established⁴⁶.

Sheila Fitzpatrick was among the first to deal with the educational and cultural politics of the post-revolutionary period (1917-1921). In her study about the foundation of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment (that is the People's Commissariat for Education), Fitzpatrick analyses the process of elaboration of the Commissariat's politics, its structure, the relations with the other government institutions and in particular with the Communist Party. She has also focused on the role of V.I. Uljanov/Lenin (1870-1924) and of the main characters of the Commissariat's educational policy – A.V. Lunacharsky (1875-1933), M.N. Pokrovsky (1868-1932), N.K. Krupskaya (1869-1939) and E.A. Litkens (1888-1922). Fitzpatrick has analysed the main area of action of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment: the school system management (primary, secondary and vocational), and culture and scientific research. As for the school system, the Commissariat was steered towards the American and European movement of active schools and progressive education: school programmes related to the social environment, different relationships between teachers and pupils, labour education and gymnastics. After a description of the revolutionary personality of Lunacharsky – the People's Commissar for Enlightenment which had the mission to “enlighten people” – Fitzpatrick describes the foundation of the Commissariat, the Department responsible for vocational education,

⁴⁶ O. Anweiler, *Centralisme et fédéralisme dans le système d'enseignement soviétique*, «Revue des Études Slaves», 58/2, 1986, pp. 229-243.

culture and scientific research and finally its reorganisation of 1921. The reform of the school and educational institutions – colonies and children’s gardens – was strictly connected with the evolution of the cultural policy of the People’s Commissar for Enlightenment and its reorganisation⁴⁷.

The history of the “United Labour School” during the 1920s has been analysed by W. Berelowitch and L.E. Holmes, who have studied the reforms from many points of view. In his study on the Sovietisation of Soviet schools, Berelowitch has pointed out the function of ideology in the whole system of Communist education: the ideological education of teachers, the connection between schools and Youth Communist organisations, the propaganda of atheism, the ritualism of school life and the leader cult after 1924. The school was to become a *gigantesque école* and fight against illiteracy – 50 per cent of the population was illiterate. Berelowitch has also analysed the psycho-pedagogical movement (P.P. Blonsky), which tried to organise the school reform on the basis of child psychology (in Russian *pedologija*)⁴⁸.

Holmes’s analysis presents the debates about primary and secondary school reforms, the dichotomy between reforms and reality in the revolutionary period, the compromise between the People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment and the teachers during the New Economic Policy, and the Cultural Revolution (1928-1931), which introduced a general compulsory education (25th July 1931). According to Holmes, the fact that Lunacharsky’s supported a 9-year “polytechnical” education has stirred harsh debates between the People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment, the Height Council of Economy’s (*Vesencha*) members and the Communist League of Youth (*Komsomol*). In fact, Lunacharsky’s position did not match with the economical needs nor fight against juvenile unemployment. However, during the 1920s, the People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment managed to prevent the transformation of secondary schools into vocational schools – Factory apprenticeship schools (*Fzu*) and *technikumy* – in an attempt to preserve “polytechnical education” – understood as non-specialized education. Holmes has also analysed the evolution of *curricula*, the didactical experimentations of progressive education, teachers’ behaviour, text books and school programmes. Nonetheless, Factory apprenticeship schools failed in their purpose – exactly as primary schools had done – and their management was transferred to economic institutions with the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. In August 1930, the First Polytechnical Congress brought a deep change: secondary schools introduced a specialized training from the V to the VII class and were now directly managed by the factories.

In this perspective, James C. Mc Clelland’s essay is very interesting. Mc Clel-

⁴⁷ S. Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment. Soviet Organisation of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky. October 1917-1921*, Cambridge-London, Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 26-36, 43-58, 227-236.

⁴⁸ W. Berelowitch, *La soviétisation de l’école russe, 1917-1931*, Lausanne, L’Age d’Homme, 1990.

land has focused on the dilemma of whether to support the general polytechnical education or rather the specialized education. This debate has characterised the reform of the “United Labour School” and divided experts such as Lunacharsky and Krupskaya, who considered the polytechnical principle to be a fusion of Kerschensteiner and Dewey’s conceptions with the Marxist ideology. The 9-year school based on labour – for children from 8 to 17 – provoked several debates within the Commissariat itself and also within the Ukrainian People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment, which supported a 7-year school system based on common education. In practice, between 1921 and 1925, the school attendance rate fell below that of 1914, when only half of the school-aged children in the countryside entered the school. In 1925, less than 50 per cent of the children attended the 3-year schools. Only 16.2 per cent of the children attended a complete cycle in the cities against 1.9 per cent in the countryside⁴⁹.

The question of polytechnical education – the most thorny but important issue of the history of Soviet education – has been analysed by Anna Gock, who has very exhaustively presented the debates on this topic in which N.K. Krupskaya, P.P. Blonsky, A.G. Kalashnikov, M.M. Pistrak and V.N. Shulgin were engaged. These Soviet pedagogues had very divergent ideas about the polytechnical principle and the role of both general education – in particular in the second degree school – and vocational education. Gock stresses the position of A.S. Bubnov – the People’s Commissar for Enlightenment from September 1929, the Soviet propaganda on polytechnical education during the First Five-Year Plan and the progressive liquidation of the polytechnical education from 1931 to 1937. Gock also points out that the concept of polytechnical education reflects the awareness of economic backwardness and the need to modernize society and economy⁵⁰.

Fitzpatrick’s book on the educational and cultural politics between 1921 and 1934 is particularly crucial to the understanding of the role of schools in social mobility. Fitzpatrick has given us a clearer picture of policy making, by focusing not only on the education system, the educational methods and the attendance of school, but also on the attack on illiteracy, the treatment of the «bourgeois and professors», mass education in the countryside, the impact of the Cultural Revolution on schools, and finally on the new education policies (1931-1934). Fitzpatrick has dedicated an entire chapter to «the making of a proletarian Intelligentsia», which means to the process of access to higher edu-

⁴⁹ J.C. McClelland, *The Utopian and the Heroic: Divergent Paths to the Communist Educational Ideal*, in A. Gleason, P. Kenez, R. Stites (eds.), *Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution. Bolshevik Culture*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985, pp. 114-130.

⁵⁰ A. Gock, *Polytechnische Bildung und Erziehung in der Sowjetunion bis 1937. Bildungspolitische und Pädagogische Diskussionen und Lösungsversuche*, Berlin, In Kommission bei Otto Harrassowitz Weisbaden, 1985. See also L.H. Holmes, *Magic into Hocus-pocus: The Decline of the Labour Education in Soviet Russia’s Schools, 1931-1937*, «Russian Review», 51 (4), 1992, pp. 545-565.

cation, which developed considerably and was reorganised at the beginning of the 1930s⁵¹. Marianne Krüger-Potratz has outlined the history of the pedagogical thought during the Cultural Revolution and the famous theory of the “withering away of schools” elaborated by Shulgin⁵².

The picture of the educational institutions of this decade has been completed by M. David-Fox’s research, which describes the pre-revolutionary Party schools and the three main institutions devoted to the Party Height Education – the famous Sverdlov University, the Institute for Red Professors, and the Socialist Academy (Communist)⁵³. In a very original research, based on archival material, Thomas Ewing deals with

the elementary and secondary school teachers who filled the rapidly expanding system of Soviet education in the 1930s. The study begins with the difficult position of teachers on the so-called “school front”, and ends with the severe impact of mass repression at decade’s end⁵⁴.

Ewing discusses the role of the teachers in the campaign for universal education and argues that

mass schooling thus stands at the point of convergence between policies and institutions of the state, on the one hand, and interests and aspirations of the people, on the other. Occupying a strategic location in the universal education campaign, teachers enacted and embodied this common ground between regime policies and community expectations. The expansion of education should also be recognised; however, as a process of state formation. [...] The teachers were involved in both dimensions of this process, as substantial quantitative increases were accompanied by fundamental changes in the lives of individuals⁵⁵.

Ewing affirms that there was an increase of 19 million pupils in ten years – 11 million in the primary schools and 8 million in the secondary⁵⁶ – even though these data hid the repression of teachers. With the real repression of pedology (4th July 1936), «the Central Committee decree and subsequent policy decisions were aimed directly at teachers’ efforts to avoid so-called “difficult” or “backward” pupils»⁵⁷. More than half million teachers were examined by special control commissions, which dismissed those who did not cor-

⁵¹ S. Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union (1921-1934)*, Cambridge-London-New York-Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

⁵² M. Krüger-Potratz, *Absterben der Schule oder Verschulung der Gesellschaft?: die sowjetische Pädagogik in der zweiten Kulturrevolution 1928-1931*, München, Wewel, 1987.

⁵³ M. David-Fox, *Revolution of the Mind: Higher Learning among the Bolsheviks, 1918-1929*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1997.

⁵⁴ E.T. Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism: Policy, Practice, and Power in Soviet Schools of the 1930s*, New York, Peter Lang, 2002, p. 3.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁵⁷ E.T. Ewing, *Restoring Teachers to Their Right: Soviet Education and the 1936 Denunciation of Pedology*, «History of Education Quarterly», vol. 41 (4), 2001, pp. 471-493 (p. 487).

respond to the social origins and the political Faith requested by the Party: about 22,000 teachers were dismissed after the arrest of some of their relatives in the summers of 1936 to 1940⁵⁸. Andrej S. Bubnov himself (1883-1940), a People's Commissar for Enlightenment, was expelled by the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1937.

The year 1937 represented a crucial year for the history of schools, because the so-called "model schools" were closed, including the famous "School No. 25" (1931-1937) attended by Stalin's son and daughter and by the children of the Party leaders and of the Muscovite elite. According to Holmes, the «School No. 25 story illustrates the awesome power of the Communist Party and Soviet state, both of which exercised a daily presence in the lives of the school's administrators, teachers, and pupils». The history of this school is representative of the transformation of "totalitarian schools" based on Communist education and the ideological control of pupils through the use of a unique text book and rigorous discipline. Holmes describes the everyday school life, the didactics, leisure activities and financing strategies of the school maintenance⁵⁹. The school then abandoned the methods of the Revolutionary progressive education and restored the traditional lesson system with school subjects – literature, history, geography – based on the Marxist history and literature text books. The school had to close following a major financial crisis. According to Holmes, the budget of education was progressively curtailed between 1937 and 1953⁶⁰. After that, there was a period of recovery for schooling and the literacy rate remained constant with 31-33 million pupils until the 1960s⁶¹.

These studies are based on a huge collection of archival material, which has also enabled us to analyse school exercise books and "children's writing" – one of the new trends of the history of education. During the International Conference of 2007 – *School exercise books. A complex source for a history of the approach to schooling and education in the 19th and 20th centuries* – A. Salnikova and V. Bezrogov examined children's autobiographies and the assimilation of the "Sovietness" during the 1920s and 1930s⁶². During this confer-

⁵⁸ E.T. Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism: Policy, Practice, and Power in Soviet Schools of the 1930s*, cit., pp. 227-258 (cfr. 233, 242); L.E. Holmes, *School and Schooling under Stalin, 1931-1953*, in B. Eklof, L.E. Holmes, V. Kaplan (eds.), *Educational Reform in Post-Soviet Russia. Legacies and prospects*, London-New York, Frank Cass, 2005, pp. 56-101 (cfr. p. 64).

⁵⁹ L.E. Holmes, *Stalin's School Moscow's Model No. 25, 1931-1937*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999, p. 17.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁶¹ R.B. Dobson, *Higher education in the Soviet Union: Problems of access, equity, and public policy*, in G.W. Lapidus, G.E. Swanson (eds.), *State and Welfare USA/USSR. Contemporary Policy and Practice*, Berkeley, University of California (Institute of International Studies), 1988, pp. 17-59.

⁶² See the papers by V. Bezrogov, *Old crow quills draw the new world? An Elementary School-children's Written Exercises in the 1920s – the beginning of the 1930s's Russia: Draft Reconstruction of the Writing World of the First Soviet Generation* and by A. Salnikova, *Transformations in*

ence, I have myself analysed the evolution of the didactics of literature and natural science on the basis of school exercise books of pupils of the Tolstoi's school in Jasnaia Poliana, of the two famous Soviet heroes Zoia and Aleksandr Kosmodemianskie – who attended the “Okt'iabr” school in Moscow – and of some pupils of the Biological Station for young naturalists “K.A. Timiri-azev” (Moscow). These exercise books mirror the teaching activity and the educational praxis of that time, which aimed at educating the patriotic feelings and the devotion for the Fatherland based on the Russian tradition⁶³. These new sources shed a new light on Soviet and Stalinism schools and have enabled scholars to delve into new unexplored fields of the history of “totalitarian education”.

3. *The Soviet School from World War II to the “Khrushchev School Reform” (1940-1958)*

The history of the Soviet school during World War II has been analysed in detail by Dunstan, who argues that the crisis in Soviet schools was not caused by the War itself, even though it definitely led to shortages of buildings, teachers and textbooks. Dunstan's book is divided into three parts: the school in the 1930s, the school during the War and the school after the War. In the first part, Dunstan analyses the Stalinist school system and schooling in the territories into which the Soviets had moved after the German invasion (i.e. Finland, the Baltic States and Bessarabia). The bulk of the research is constituted by wartime schooling and upbringing, teachers' turnover, the dismantling of co-education and the dropping out of children. In the third and last part, Dunstan describes the reforms of 1943 – which fixed single-sex schools and lowered the school starting age. He also examines several organisational aspects such as the restoration of school buildings, the lack of teachers – 14 per cent below the pre-war rate – and children's recovery at the three stages of schooling⁶⁴. Also vocational education was reorganised during the War: a National Reserve System of Labour was created and charged by the Factory apprentice-

Russian Children's Texts during the First Years of the Bolshevik Rule: Internalizing 'Sovietness'?, to be published in J. Meda, D. Montino, R. Sani (eds.), *Quaderni di scuola. Una fonte complessa per la storia delle culture scolastiche e dei costumi educativi tra Ottocento e Novecento. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Macerata, 26-29 Settembre 2007)*, forthcoming)

⁶³ D. Caroli, *I quaderni di scuola e la didattica della lingua, della letteratura e delle scienze naturali in Russia e in Unione Sovietica (1860-1940) / School exercise books and the didactics of language, literature and natural sciences in Russia and in the Soviet Union (1860-1940)*, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ J. Dunstan, *Soviet Schooling in the Second World War*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997. See also W. Moskoff, *Soviet Higher education policy during World War II*, «Soviet Studies», 38 (3), 1986, pp. 406-415.

ship schools, which had been separated from the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment in 1929. In 1959, the Chief Administration of Labour Reserve became the All-Union Ministry of Labour Reserve, which expanded the network of vocational-technical schools⁶⁵.

As J.J. Tomjak underlines, the XIX Congress of the Communist Party (1952) announced an important decision to reintroduce polytechnical training in schools. The Ministries of Education and the Russian Academy of Science then began to elaborate the content of polytechnical education. The outcome of the debates was the *Khrushchev Memorandum* (21st September 1958), followed by the publication of the law «on strengthening the relationship of the school with the life and the further development of the system of public education in the country» (24th December 1958)⁶⁶.

The “Khrushchev School reform” concerned the reintroduction of polytechnical education, which was possible thanks to the introduction of the 8-year school – instead of the 7 – and of a general compulsory education⁶⁷. Secondary education – for pupils aged 15-16 – should be based on the connection between education and productive labour. After 7 years of school, pupils had three options to complete their education: a) schools for the rural worker youth; b) secondary schools for general and polytechnical education; c) technical institutes and centres for specialised education⁶⁸.

On the basis of new archival material, the French historian Laurent Coumel has declared that the reform of 1958 would not only provide a remedy for industry and agriculture labour force shortages but also modify the mechanisms allowing access to secondary professional education, which had led to the exclusion of the less privileged from classes VIII, IX and X⁶⁹. Indeed, before this reform, 284,000 pupils attended school in 1950, while after the introduction of compulsory secondary education in 1973, this number increased to 4 million in 1980⁷⁰.

The “Khrushchev School reform” – in spite of the “opposition” to Khrushchev described by Coumel himself – was elaborated in the continuity of the historical tradition of the decree of September 5th 1931, on the basis of

⁶⁵ O. Anweiler, *Centralisme et fédéralisme dans le système d'enseignement soviétique*, cit., pp. 229-243.

⁶⁶ J.J. Tomiak, *The Soviet Union*, Newton Abbot, David & Charles, 1972, pp. 11-38.

⁶⁷ G.S. Counts, *Khrushchev and the Central Committee Speak on Education*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1959.

⁶⁸ L. Volpicelli (ed.), *La scuola nell'U.R.S.S. e la legge Kruscev*, Roma, A. Armando, 1959, pp. 227-244. See also M. Pagella, *Viaggio in U.R.S.S. Cose mai viste nel mondo sovietico della scuola e del lavoro*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1958.

⁶⁹ L. Coumel, *L'appareil du parti et la réforme scolaire de 1958: un cas d'opposition à Hruščev*, «Cahiers du monde russe», 47/1-2, 2006, pp. 173-194.

⁷⁰ R.B. Dobson, *Higher education in the Soviet Union: Problems of access, equity, and public policy*, cit., pp. 17-59.

which the Communist Party had assumed the direction of the school policy-making. The Federal Ministry for the whole school system was created only later, in 1966. Until this date, the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment represented the only model for orientating school reforms in Soviet republics. Furthermore, after 1979, three different Ministries for Schools – secondary vocational and higher education – and a State Committee for the Education of Vocational and Technical Education were established⁷¹.

However, as shown by Dunstan, «the basically academic and cognitive-oriented reaction to Khrushchev's "polytechnical" programme was quite short-lived» but the anti-vocational lobby was still active in 1983. The reform of January 4th 1984 concerned both primary schools and the vocational training system, and aimed at achieving universal secondary education. This reform also aimed at lowering school starting age to 6 instead of 7. The 3-year primary school would be reorganised as a 4-year school, and the 8-year incomplete school as a 9-year school. Secondary general schools were increased from 10 to 11 years – or 12 with completion of vocational-technical education⁷².

The school system developed in Russia and in the former Soviet republics is characterised by a transformation process – still ongoing – which has been weakened by the centralised education system and by the slow process of democratisation⁷³. Eklof, Holmes and Kaplan have made an important contribution to our understanding of the institutional transformation of the Russian school system and its financing – which has been reduced from 4.5 per cent in 1994 of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to 3.2 per cent in 1999 – and in particular of its "inside history": the *curricula* reform with an increase in humanities; the re-writing of text-books; the adoption of the mother tongue

⁷¹ O. Anweiler, *Centralisme et fédéralisme dans le système d'enseignement soviétique*, cit., pp. 237-238.

⁷² J. Dunstan, *Soviet Education Beyond 1984: a commentary on the reform Guidelines*, «Compare», 15(2), 1985, pp. 161-167 (162). See also I.F. Protchenko, *School reform in the USSR*, «Soviet Education Study Bulletin (Bulletin of the U.K. Study Group on the Soviet Education)», 3 (1), 1985, pp. 1-17 (2).

⁷³ J. Sutherland, *Problems in the Russian school after Gorbachev 1992-1994*, «Education in Russia, the Independent States and the Eastern Europe», 13 (1), 1995, pp. 3-14; Y. Gautier, *Pour une école de l'ouverture. Entretien avec Vladimir Kinelev ministre de l'éducation de Russie*, «Le monde de l'éducation», novembre 1996, pp. 49-53; G. Schmidt, *Das Bildungswesen Russlands ein Jahrzehnt nach dem Umbruch – Die ethnisch-nationale Bildung und Erziehung und die "BildungsTransformation"*, in H. Döbert, H.-W. Fuchs, H. Weishaupt (eds.), *Transformation in der ostdeutschen Bildungslandschaft. Eine Forschungsbilanz*, Opladen, Leske und Budrich, 2002, pp. 131-151; J. Muckle, *Russian Concepts of Patriotism and their Reflection in the Education System Today*, «Tertium Comparationis. Journal für International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft», 9 (1), 2003, pp. 7-14; G. Hillig, *Erziehung im Kibbutz – ein Überblick für Pädagogen in der postsowjetischen Ukraine*, *ibid.*, 9 (2), 2003, pp. 188-222; R. Motika, S. Reichmuth, M. Kemper (eds.), *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*, London, Routledge, 2005; G. Schmidt, *Russische Föderation*, in H. Döbert, W. Hörner, B. von Kopp, W. Mitter (eds.), *Die Schulsysteme Europas*, Heidelberg, Springer Verlag, 2006, pp. 437-457.

language in all the schools of the former republics of the Soviet Union – such as Estonia – and the changes caused by the Bologna Process (18th-19th June 1999) on the higher education system of Russia and of the former Soviet republics⁷⁴.

Dorena Caroli
Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Educazione e della Formazione
Università degli Studi di Macerata (Italy)
dorena.caroli@unimc.it

⁷⁴ See B. Eklof's introduction to B. Eklof, L.E. Holmes, V. Kaplan (eds.), *Educational reform in Post-Soviet Russia. Legacies and prospects*, cit., pp. 1-20 (11).