

## HOPE, HOSTILITY, AND INTEREST: WHAT MOTIVATED TEACHERS TO TEACH ABOUT THE SOVIET UNION AFTER WORLD WAR II

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Historically, the cold war was a watershed that separated two epochs: the time of abnormal, although compelled, partnership of two political systems and the period of peaceful coexistence with barely hidden hostility. The peacefulness of the latter, however elusive and vulnerable it was from time to time, has to be credited to the cold war, a relatively short period of time in world history, when humankind, and most importantly its leaders, realized how close our world was to self-destruction.

The importance of the cold war is hard to overestimate. Analyzing the origins of the cold war in history textbooks, J. Samuel Walker pointed out three distinctive periods in explaining its roots.<sup>1</sup> For almost twenty years the American public held the conviction that postwar tensions were a result of the Soviet Union's expansion and aggression. This opinion was also shared by the intellectual and political elite of the United States. Things started to change by the late 1960s, at the very height of the Vietnam War when historians sought to explain why Americans GI's found themselves thousands of miles away from Chicago and Los Angeles. New Left scholars more and more often pointed at the economic expansion of American capitalism as the primary reason for the cold war. These revisionists were immediately and decisively repulsed by traditionalists. The dispute prompted a bitter scholarly debate. Observing the arising controversy, Cashman and Gilbert hailed the existing diversity but warned against the inflexibility of a priori assumptions made by revisionists and traditionalists. They foresaw the emergence of a new approach to the study of the cold war, which materialized later and "placed the responsibility for the cold war on the ambitions and activities of both the United States and the Soviet Union."<sup>2</sup> This third approach was called post-revisionism.

Unlike the "hot war" that is thought about in terms of battlefields and number of casualties, the cold war was perceived first as the battle of ideas and only then as a prelude to a bigger deadly conflict. To the question "What are we fighting for in this war?" Osgood gave a straightforward answer, "We are fighting to preserve a way of life, a system of beliefs, an ideology, if you will."<sup>3</sup> Ideology became the biggest concern. There appeared two fronts: domestic and international, both requiring equal attention. Admitting in 1953 that the world was becoming more and more tired of "propaganda," Ralph White called for more effective and efficient propaganda.<sup>4</sup> Confronting "just propaganda" and propaganda, the author gave advice on how to make anti-Soviet and anticommunist propaganda more intelligible. Despite a number of the cold-war-era clichés, the article gives sound recommendations on how to fight the "cunning communists."

The demoralizing impact of cold-war propaganda on American society and its damaging effect on the creative sphere is described by Stephen Whitfield.<sup>5</sup> Literature, movies, television, science, and the media all became subject to ugly practices during the 1950s and 1960s. According to Whitfield, the threat of communism, although possible, was minuscule and negligible in comparison with the brainwashing campaign. The author came to the conclusion that the cold war was used as a pretext to justify restrictions and violations of civil liberties and also to subjugate culture to politics.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to note that the linguistic symbols of any epoch at first merely used as emphatic devices of speech, eventually end up as independent political, diplomatic, and ideological notions and terms, or even as historical markers that distinguish one period from another. People forget that those linguistic symbols were products of the time; after remaining in circulation the latter are perceived as

indices that determine a period in history not vice versa. The Red Scare of the 1920s, Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech, Khrushchev’s “We’ll bury you” declaration, or Reagan’s “Evil Empire” reference not only served as “epoch-markers” but also lived their own lives contributing additional dimensions and dynamics to the image of the events or phenomena for which they were created. The term “cold war,” coined by Walter Lippmann, required an enemy that was found easily and fast. For the Soviet Union the enemy was the “Aggressive Policy of American (British, French, you name it) Imperialism;” for Americans the foe was the enemy, but nonetheless more frightening—communism.

The communists never lacked for enemies. However, by the late 1940s the number of Communist Party members in the United States was incompatible with the anticommunist havoc surrounding them. Whitfield cites 43,000 in 1950, and only 32,000 a year later, comparable to the number of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran churches in America at the time.<sup>7</sup> A 1954 Department of Defense publication estimated there were about 25,000 communists in the United States. Nevertheless, as Ellen Schrecker wrote, “It is hard to have a witch-hunt without witches.” The Truman Doctrine, Taft-Hartley Act, Hollywood Ten hearings, McCarthy’s Wheeling, West Virginia speech, House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) proceedings, the Rosenberg trial, and many more political and propagandistic events of national importance contributed significantly to the anticommunist hysteria. Referring to the “evil nature” of communism, Whitfield states that its most vocal opponents in the 1950s did not even realize *how* sinister communism of the Bolshevik kind was. He quotes Philip Rahv in stating that communism was a threat *to* the United States but not *in* the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Demonizing internal and external enemies ranged from ordinary lies to more elaborate methods of combining real facts with threatening pictures.<sup>9</sup> In 1955 the Office of Armed Forces Information and Education in the Department of Defense issued six booklets united by the title that was self-explanatory, *Know Your Communist Enemy*.<sup>10</sup> Every booklet was devoted to a separate topic: *International Communism*, *Communism in the U.S.A.*, *Communism in the U.S.S.R.*, *In the Grip of the Kremlin*, and so on. The text of every brochure, although in most cases historically accurate, was summarized in a specific way so as to achieve the most propagandistic effect. One brochure about international communism had a picture of a huge octopus with stretching tentacles around the globe. The booklet about communism in the Soviet Union started with a collage that included portraits of Soviet leaders, shapes of the Kremlin towers and churches, a strange construct with a star on it that probably symbolized armor-plating (iron curtain), and a big clenched fist over it. Eventually personalization of the external enemy (the internal one was already identified) occurred quickly and logically. If communists threaten the United States, and the Soviet Union is the communist incubator and principal breeding ground of the disease, the external adversary can be pinpointed easily and accurately. Moreover, such switching from Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union helped many Americans who, as Adler and Paterson suggested, “were seeking relief from their frustrated hopes for a peaceful postwar world and from their shock in finding continued international tension after the close of a long and destructive war.”<sup>11</sup> Colegrove and Barlett in *The Menace of Communism* simply used in most cases the words communist, Russians, and the Soviet Union interchangeably.<sup>12</sup>

It is no wonder the campaign, with such a level of intensity, was so successful. All polls show strong negative American public opinion concerning the Soviet Union (or Russia) and communism during that period.<sup>13</sup> According to the NORC/GALLUP poll, 72 percent of Americans in the summer of 1954 wouldn’t allow a communist to make a speech in their communities.<sup>14</sup> The General Social Survey conducted by the University of Chicago National Opinion Research Center and Gallup Polls revealed the following data on “General Attitudes Toward Russia:”<sup>15</sup>

American Attitudes Toward Russia

	<u>Aug 1954</u>	<u>Sept 1954</u>	<u>Oct 1954</u>
Favorable	1.7%	0.4%	0.9%
Mixed	10.8%	8.5%	10.6%
Unfavorable	87.5	91.1%	88.5%

Mueller, who analyzed public expectations of war, found sharp changes during the late 1940s and early 1950s in comparison with the first postwar years. Until mid-1948, war expectations were five years or longer, whereas in 1949-1954 the war expectation period declined to a year or even half a year.<sup>16</sup>

Education was one of the areas affected by events, ideology, and rhetoric of the cold war. Progressive education whose heyday was during the 1930s and early 1940s, suddenly found itself under fire of criticism.<sup>17</sup> The resulting shortage of progressive educators inevitably led to an atmosphere of incompetence and suspicion in schools.<sup>18</sup> The cold war situation made educators with progressive ideas all but obsolete. Ravitch adds that it wasn't Russia or critics who killed progressive education, but the fact that it was no longer relevant to the times.<sup>19</sup> Evans points to the fact that progressive education, progressive social studies in particular, was attacked from several directions: one of them intellectually, the other ideologically based. He concludes, "If World War II signaled the death of progressive social studies, the cold war completed the act."<sup>20</sup>

The purpose of this article is to trace educators' rationale or motivation for teaching about the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1940s through the 1950s, and how their motivation changed during that period. It is argued that although there existed a general tendency and interest among social studies teachers to teach about the Soviet Union these motivations and interests were conditioned by different circumstances and, consequently, pursued different goals. People who are in political power in the United States and Russia now belong to the post-World War II generation. They learned about the Soviet Union/Russia and the United States from their parents, from the media, and in school. How did schools contribute to their knowledge and image of the other country?

### Hope

On October 22, 1944, in war-torn Europe, the Red Army was swiftly approaching the German borders; Riga was already in the hands of Russians, the Nazi had just been dislodged from Belgrade, and Aachen surrendered to American forces. In New York, President Roosevelt was delivering a speech to the Foreign Policy Association. Among the important issues concerning international politics the president recalled a conversation with a woman in 1933.<sup>21</sup> The woman told him about a visit to a newly built school where she saw a map of the world with a great big white space on it:

no name, no information, and the teacher told her that it was blank with no name because the school board wouldn't let her say anything about that big blank space. Oh, there were only 180,000,000 to 200,000,000 people in it, it was called Soviet Russia, and there were a lot of children and they were told that the teacher was forbidden by the school board even to put the name of that blank space on the map.<sup>22</sup>

The quotation above is taken from the news report on Roosevelt's speech in *The New York Times*. It is interesting to note that *The Washington Post* though promising to publish the full text of the speech condensed the abovementioned episode to two lines about the president's feeling of pride for the recognition of Soviet Russia in 1933.<sup>23</sup> Was the "shortened" version caused by the lack of newspaper space or by the reluctance of the conservative media to reveal the sentiments of FDR two weeks before the elections? It was obvious that the speech in the New York Waldorf Astoria was not a routine one. It was the longest speech Roosevelt ever made during the campaign, and he said what he was expected to say—the policy of "nonexistence" of the Soviet Union was over.

The average American knew very little about the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) before World War II. The general set of knowledge usually consisted of stereotypes like the "godless polygamists." Even officials felt sometimes confused and uncertain about the Soviet Union. In 1966 then Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey confessed:

I knew so little about Russian history that I was very poorly equipped intellectually or by experience or by aptitude to deal with the top man of the Soviet Union.... And so few of our people in the public life have any knowledge at all of these areas of the world. We deal so superficially, it's really almost frightening how superficial we are.<sup>24</sup>

Such ignorance was a result of limited contacts of Americans with the Soviet reality due to both little interest in foreign affairs during the Great Depression, on the one hand, and the closed xenophobic nature of the Soviet regime, on the other. Although *Life* decided to publish a special issue on the USSR in March

1943, with mostly favorable “pro-Soviet” materials on all 116 pages and a big photo portrait of a smirking Stalin on the cover, editors and designers had to use old pictures. The issue started with a note that “of all the great countries of the world, the USSR is the least known to Americans. For twenty-five years the Soviet Union has lived and grown behind the wall of secrecy and suspicion...,” which was followed by the apology for using old photos—new ones were unavailable because of the inability of *Life* journalists to enter the Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup>

It became obvious by the end of the war that the situation had changed, and more information about the USSR was needed. Kipling’s “Bear that walks like a man” could no longer satisfy interest in the nation that was victorious in the deadliest of all wars and emerged as a world power, one of the five that assumed responsibility for world peace. Were schools prepared to assuage the thirst for information about the USSR? It seems they weren’t. The era of the “big blank space” on the map couldn’t disappear without trace. There wasn’t enough truthful, balanced information about the nation that was recognized by the United States more than a decade earlier, in July 1933. From 1933 to 1944, *The Social Studies* published articles about twenty-five countries: five articles about Great Britain and Germany; four about Canada, France, and Switzerland; three articles about India and Japan; several other articles about Egypt, Peru, Burma, El Salvador and various other nations, and only one article about the Soviet Union in twelve years. The irony of the situation is that the article, about the Soviet five-year plan, was published in January 1933, six months before the country was officially recognized by the administration.

The first issue of the official journal of the National Council for the Social Studies, *Social Education*, appeared in 1937. *Social Education*, however, didn’t publish its first article about the USSR until 1945. Another national publication, *National Geographic*, for fifteen years from 1926 to 1940 published only four articles on Soviet Russia: in 1926, 1930, 1932, and 1937. Richard W. Burkhardt, Director of the Division of Teacher Preparation at Syracuse University, calculated in 1950 that geography textbooks dedicated 7 percent of their space to the Soviet Union; world history, 6 percent; American history, 1 percent; and books on modern problems, citizenship, and civics, less than 1 percent.<sup>26</sup> The author concludes, “we are not teaching our children about the world in which we live.”

One of the factors that caused lack of the first-hand information about the Soviet Union for the American general public was the overly suspicious nature and unpredictable behavior of the Soviet government itself. *Newsweek* reported the story of a group of enthusiastic American teachers and students who “cast admiring eyes on the Soviet Union—the greatest sociological laboratory in the world.” The group that first numbered twenty-five people attended American Summer School in Moscow University in 1933. They were steeped in Marxism and Leninism/Stalinism and returned home crusaders. Their recruiting campaign was a success when the second group of 212 traveled to Moscow in 1934. When the third group of 240 arrived in Russia in 1935 authorities canceled the classes without prior notice, explaining that the government “commandeered” most of the forty English-speaking Russian professors for other work.<sup>27</sup>

It seems fairly clear what moved educators to breathe new life into programs to study Russia. The war was over and the new world order was being built. The United States and the Soviet Union were victors and the whole world depended entirely on them. There still was almost a year until Churchill’s speech in Fulton, Missouri. Both nations were still allies. School students, however, knew very little about the USSR. Who could teach them? Did teachers know much? Leo Alilunas answered this question in 1946 with an unequivocal “No.” How could educators be prepared to teach about the Soviet Union if colleges and universities offered very limited opportunities to learn about it? It was only in 1943 that Cornell started the integrated course on Modern Russian Civilization. Harvard followed a year later, offering aid to secondary teachers with a workshop on Russia.<sup>28</sup> Although, as the author noted, there was an increase in the number of teachers that desired to work with materials about Russia in geography, history, civics, and other social studies courses, “the prospect is that most secondary school teachers will continue to find little opportunity in the near future to take college and university courses on Russia.”<sup>29</sup> The question of teachers’ motivation in those postwar months and years could be answered rather easily and unambiguously. Nobody did it better than Herbert Schuelke, a social studies instructor at the University of Chicago Laboratory School. “We have an educational obligation toward our pupils,” he wrote in 1945,

“to create an awareness and develop an understanding of the Soviet Union.”<sup>30</sup> To implement his ideas of awareness and understanding, Schuelke developed a curriculum, which was simply titled “Soviet Russia: A Curriculum Unit,” without specifying the age or grade for which this unit was designed. The objective of the unit was “to develop an understanding of the Soviet Union through the objective study of what Soviet Russia is, and of how it came to be what it is.”<sup>31</sup> The author saw the importance of his work in the fact that Soviet Russia was finding a place in the curriculum that made world history a broader concept.

In the same year, *The Social Studies* published two articles on the Soviet Union. The first of the two articles was titled “The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.”<sup>32</sup> The article contained succinct information about all spheres of life in the Soviet Union. The author didn’t mention any controversial issues of Soviet politics; teachers usually use these kinds of articles if they don’t have appropriate reference books or if reference books don’t have such information. The fact that the author avoided mentioning cruelties of the Stalinist regime and didn’t put much emphasis on communism and its derivatives proves that some educators in that brief pre-cold war period wanted to create a positive image of the country and people whose heroic struggle in the war they admired so much.

The hope for the best in American-Soviet relations and the anticipation of the better world order was the main theme of the second article written by a high school teacher from California.<sup>33</sup> It is easy now in the twenty-first century to smile ironically when one reads the naïve statements that “...given reasonable security within her own boundaries, the USSR is not likely to threaten world peace for several decades to come;” or strong belief in the words of Stalin and Molotov who “have made repeated announcements... that the independence of...Hungary, Romania, and other Balkan States is to be desired.”<sup>34</sup> However, the author distinctly expressed wishes, hopes, and aspirations of some educators in the pre-cold war period:

Perhaps we would do well not to put too much emphasis upon the differences in our political ideologies and economic systems, but emphasize rather the important points of common interests... [because] we must make our choice between friendship and understanding with the USSR, full cooperation in winning the war and collaboration in the postwar era or the brutal reality of another war conflict.<sup>35</sup>

The teaching materials that were published in the next two to three years were primarily based on the same principles: more neutral or positive information about Soviet Russia, fewer accents on differences between the United States and the Soviet Union, and more emphasis on similarities.<sup>36</sup> Thus, it wasn’t naiveté or misunderstanding that motivated teachers to choose positive information about the Soviet Union but a calculated approach to create the atmosphere of friendship and cooperation.

### Hostility

Gradually, the public euphoria and enthusiasm of the first postwar months faded. Discharging thousands of troops and canceling war contracts resulted in an oversupply of labor and decrease in production, with rising prices, inflation, and labor unrest as inevitable consequences of the latter. Stalin’s government began pursuing its own objectives in Europe and Asia. The situation in the United States changed drastically. One could hardly find any sphere of public life that remained untouched by the cold war. Not only did the iron curtain divide the world into “good” and “evil,” it also was supposed to keep an iron grip on all types of creative activities in the nation, education being one of them.

The rapid change in the political situation didn’t, however, change the map of the world. The Soviet Union as well as the United States didn’t cease to exist, despite the wishes of the other side. Did the new political situation influence educators’ motivation to teach about the USSR? It is fairly easy to answer affirmatively; however, it becomes more difficult if one tries to examine the changes triggered by the cold war.

Although the primary motive for teaching about the Soviet Union in 1945 and 1946 was raising students’ awareness of the former ally in the hope that the awareness would someday turn into genuine interest and ultimately make both societies more tolerant of each other, there always were forces that promoted more conservative, reactionary, and nationalistic approaches to most shifts in the American domestic and foreign policy. For such groups as the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies, American Council of Christian Laymen, Anti-communist League of America, and the like education became the

main battlefield.<sup>37</sup> The increasing instability, constant attacks on progressive education from the right and the left, and old fears became main factors that determined changes in the social studies curriculum. In 1947 *The Social Studies* published an article by Frederick Mayer from the University of Redlands, titled “Realism Versus Marxism,” where the author pointed out the basic ideological differences between Russia and Russians (“USSR” was not mentioned at all) on the one hand and the rest of the world on the other.<sup>38</sup> Although it was not distinctly articulated, the underlying assumption was that Americans and Russians were different and this difference was hardly surmountable. Mayer’s article with its gentle hints and implications was preceded by a more convincing and straightforward work by British historian Edward Crankshaw who a year earlier, in 1946, wrote about “a fundamental opposition which is nothing less than the conflict between two distinct attitudes towards life and society: the Russian and the Western European.”<sup>39</sup>

One of the presenters at the 1948 National Council for the Social Studies Conference in St. Louis was William Johnson, a professor of psychology and education from Pittsburgh. The title of Professor Johnson’s speech, “What Shall We Teach About Russia?” could easily be phrased in a different grammatical mood—something like “This Is What We Shall Teach About Russia.”<sup>40</sup> Having lamented over the ignorance of average Americans about the leading role the United States played in world affairs, Professor Johnson was exasperated by the fact that this leadership was denied in some parts of the world. The biggest and most powerful challenge to the United States was Soviet Russia. “Therefore,” concluded the speaker, “regardless of our diplomatic relations with Russia, it will be to our profit to study her intently... [because] the young people in our schools today will be called on *either* to fight the war in the next two decades, *or* to prevent such a war from occurring.”<sup>41</sup> However, by the end of the speech, the author changed his tone from bellicose to more educational and concluded:

[The study of the USSR] can provide us with many clues to Soviet policies and practices, so that the youth of our nation need not grow up to face world problems armed only with the outworn concept that Russia is ‘a riddle wrapped in an enigma and shrouded in mystery.’<sup>42</sup>

Even a stronger tendency toward confrontation in the teaching of the USSR was expressed by Kenneth Weaver, a social studies teacher from Elmira, New York.<sup>43</sup> The educator addressed those few in America who “may still suffer occasionally from a hang-over from the strange era of our enforced partnership with Russia during the last war.”<sup>44</sup> Although Weaver wrote about the representation of Russia in American history, he constantly stressed which stance teachers should take in presenting Russia in class. We are different, argued the author, Russia, either Tsarist or Soviet, can never be measured by Western standards. All similarities are fake and superficial. Russia must be studied at school but as a rival, with most emphasis placed upon the differences. Forget the time of a “honeymoon when the strumming of the balalaika was heard everywhere on the airwaves,” concludes the teacher from Elmira.<sup>45</sup> He goes on to cite from Walter Duranty and George Kennan in support of his thesis. The evidence is so strong that one of them is worth mentioning here: “The Russian language has no word to express our ‘businessman,’” Weaver quotes Kennan, “this is not remarkable when one considers that both under the Czars and under the Soviets the way has not been open for an individual to succeed in our sense of the word.”<sup>46</sup> Hence, if I follow this logic, I should assume that I won’t find any alcoholic in the United States or any other English-speaking country as long as the English language doesn’t have its own word for “vodka.”

The constant pressure from outside made a social studies teacher a tragic figure. Educators found themselves between two fires. How possible was it to teach about the Soviet Union without mentioning communism? How possible was it to speak about communism without trying to understand the nature of the phenomenon? How possible was it to understand the nature of communism without reading supporters and opponents? How safe was it to read communist or liberal authors at the height of the anti-communist hysteria spreading all over the nation? Among 197 groups on the 1950 Attorney General’s list of totalitarian, fascist, communist, and subversive organizations there were a dozen schools, several American Russian Institutes, Friends of the Soviet Union and others.<sup>47</sup> Cases in Pasadena, California; Englewood, New Jersey; Denver, Colorado; and Port Washington, New York—“a cancer of community

menace”—helped to create an atmosphere of suspicion around schools and teachers.<sup>48</sup> Literature didn’t openly blame communism automatically became “red propaganda” which some libraries were forced to purge.<sup>49</sup> State educational authorities prohibited teaching the Russian language in high schools and opposed Russian classes in colleges. As a defense measure, the National Education Association, an organization with a ninety-five year history, had to issue a special statement addressing its patriotic, noncommunist nature. What about an individual teacher? “The growing pessimism that has seized the American people and is reflected in the attitudes of the student body of our secondary school,” “atmosphere of fear hanging over the school system,” “increasing pressures placed upon [teachers] to conform to extra-school dictates,” are all excerpts taken from teachers’ letters that best describe the atmosphere of moral oppression and humiliation in high school.<sup>50</sup> What sort of motivation could teachers have at that time to look for new materials about the Soviet Union or develop new units if a mere mentioning of similarities in soil, topography, and crops between some parts of the United States and the Soviet Union in a geography text was declared subversive?<sup>51</sup> Such accusations rarely remained without consequences. As a result, many teachers left the profession.

### Interest

One late October evening in 1957 an eleven-year old boy was on his way home after a football game. The evening was rather cool, which wasn’t unusual for that time of year in the Chicago suburbs, the sky was clear, and the boy was gazing at the stars, scrutinizing every one of them. He wasn’t thinking about the finished game or warm dinner at home; his thoughts were occupied with images of the small cannonball-like object that the Russians had launched a couple of weeks before. Even many years afterwards, when the little boy became a scholar and university professor, he couldn’t get rid of the feeling of fear mixed with curiosity he had first experienced more than four decades before. Sputnik, no doubt, became one of the most significant landmarks of the 1950s that in a most dramatic way influenced many areas within American society, particularly education. The “silvery sphere with cat whiskers antennae and tiny circumference” managed to do what usually took years to accomplish: to realize the importance of quality education and find money for it. Researchers, following the patterns of President Eisenhower’s speech in Oklahoma City on November 13, 1957, outline the areas in education that received the most powerful impulse in the post-Sputnik era—math, physics, and science. Another topic that suddenly drew major attention was the study of the Soviet Union and everything related to it. “Indiana schools may be legally entitled to teach Russian despite the state Board of Education’s refusal to approve the study,” declared the executive secretary of the Indiana School Boards Association and suggested that the principal of Bloomington University High School have the school’s attorney determine whether “state law permits schools to teach Russian without state approval.”<sup>52</sup>

The catalyst to even greater power being granted to new initiatives in anticommunist education soon followed. *The Indianapolis Star* published a photo of Governor Harold W. Handley signing a proclamation declaring September 27 through October 4 “Indiana’s Anti-Communism Week.”<sup>53</sup> New programs and units on learning about communism were being developed in New Bedford, Boston, Culver Military Academy, San Francisco University, and Northwestern University.<sup>54</sup>

Then the unexpected happened—American delegations headed to the Soviet Union to observe and study certain pedagogical practices. On June 27, 1958 a delegation of ten university presidents arrived in Moscow. During their stay in the Soviet Union they visited schools and colleges in Moscow, Leningrad, Tbilisi, Tashkent, and Alma-Ata. According to *The Indianapolis News*, Dr. Herman B. Wells, president of Indiana University, was fascinated by the attitudes of Russians to scholars and education in general. Dr. Edward H. Litchfield, chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh, said, “This is a society which obviously devotes a tremendous amount of money and effort to education.”<sup>55</sup> I don’t know how long Dr. Litchfield would have remained the Chancellor of the University of Pittsburg, had he said this phrase a couple of years earlier.

A new time period had arrived, and educators needed more balanced and truthful information about the Soviet Union. It was important to answer one question: How? How did the country that was much

poorer than the United States and suffered more losses during the war manage to assume the lead in the progress of science? How did the Soviet Union create and sustain its system of education? Was there anything that would be valuable for the United States? In April 1958, at the height of the period of ambiguity when old fears and prejudices were little by little blended with sincere interest, *Social Education* published a special issue whose materials were entirely about the Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup> The very fact that the publisher had to add an extra thirty-two pages to the regular journal format so that all materials could be published speaks for itself. Editors were able to invite prominent scholars and practitioners in Russian/Soviet Studies and have them write original articles for the issue.<sup>57</sup> Among twelve articles, seven were about different aspects of the Soviet Union (history, industry, agriculture, education) and five were on teaching about communism. Even in this combination, which was dictated by the existing demand, ideological stance and political situation, there was notably less anti-Soviet and anti-communist rhetoric and more thoughtful scholarly analysis.<sup>58</sup>

Teachers' motivation is one of the critical aspects of education. "What lies beneath" is usually a moving force for the choice of content materials, preferences in teaching methods, and changes in the curriculum. Concurrently, motivation is a result of multiple influences experienced by an educator simultaneously. Hence, motivation proves to be a mechanism that correlates and regulates two worlds—the larger world of society and the smaller world of school. For the years since the end of World War II to the late 1950s the ideas that motivated educators to teach about the Soviet Union underwent certain modifications, though they were aligned with the mainstream politics and ideology in the United States. This broad generalization doesn't mean that there were no "rebellious" teachers, whose vision of the Soviet Union and approach to this topic were either far ahead or far behind the general tendency. Such educators and their experiences usually become invaluable during periods of transition from one educational idea or approach to another. The general tendencies in educators' motivations to study and teach about the Soviet Union in the first postwar years and the following cold-war period seem to be best characterized by the following models:

1945-1946: "I want to teach my students about the USSR because our countries though not friends yet, are becoming closer, and we have to know each other better to become friends."

1947-1957: "I want to teach my students about the USSR because our countries are enemies, and we have to know more about our enemy in order to predict and reveal his hostile intentions."

After 1957: "I want to teach my students about the USSR because we are still rivals, but there is something in their system or way of life that can be interesting and valuable for us. Let's learn more about it."

### Conclusion

An ancient proverb states that to study an ocean one should scrutinize a drop of water. The development of educational practices in teaching about the Soviet Union in the 1940s through early 1960s reflected tendencies in American education during the cold war. The "big policy" dictated the patterns of behavior for almost all spheres of life in the United States. Education followed those patterns reflecting, with an understandable time lag, on every turn in the policy towards the Soviet Union. However, the development of teachers' motivations showed that a democratic school system enabled educators to use various means to provide students with truthful, critical, and balanced information and to convey ideas that didn't always coincide with the political dominants of the time.

The analysis of teachers' motivations in this controversial period of the cold war points out a general attitude toward the Soviet Union among many educators. This attitude can be expressed by the following triad: hopeful curiosity; confrontational hostility; and confrontation and interest. This triad suggests a curve that follows closely the "political curve" of official American policy toward the Soviet Union. Alexander Dallin once noted that American attitudes and views about the Soviet Union often revealed more about the United States than about the Soviet Union.<sup>58</sup> The genuine interest in the USSR in the first postwar years revealed the enormous hope of the American general public for the best after the horrors of World War II. The ambiguity and ambivalence in the attitudes to the USSR in the 1950s, so distinctly



sensed in the secondary school classroom, proved a signal of American's indisposition to the Soviet Union during this time period.

## NOTES

1. J. S. Walker, "The Origins of the Cold War in United States History Textbooks," *The Journal of American History* 81, no. 4 (1995).

2. G. Cashman, A. N. Gilbert, "Some Analytical Approaches to the Cold War Debate," *The History Teacher* 10 no. 2 (1977): 264.

3. C. E. Osgood, "Suggestions for Winning the Real War With Communism," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3, no. 4 (1959): 296.

4. R. K. White, "The New Resistance to International Propaganda," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 16 no. 4 (1952-1953) 539-51. The author selectively uses inverted commas with the word "propaganda". This might be a result of the primarily negative connotation of the word as "imposing views," although the author calls for the increase of propagandistic efforts.

5. S. J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

6. *Ibid.*, 234-35. The author also points out some positive or mixed impact of the cold war ideological campaign in some areas, in particular the Civil Rights movement.

7. Whitfield, 4.

8. *Ibid.*, 5

9. For example in "The Menace of Communism" (1962), as well as in his previous book "Democracy vs. Communism," Colegrove asserts that "...pupils receive special instructions to spy on their parents and expose any deviation on their part. If a child's parents express ideas contrary to the Party line, it is the child's duty to report his parents to the police, with the result that they may be arrested and imprisoned in a slave labor camp", 96.

10. *Know Your Communist Enemy* (Washington D.C., Department of Defense, 1955).

11. L. K. Adler and T. G. Paterson, "Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930s-1950s," *American Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (1970): 1046.

12. K. W. Colegrove, *The Menace of Communism* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1962).

13. Dallin, 1973; Mueller, 1979; Smith, 1983.

14. T. W. Smith, "The Polls: American Attitudes Toward the Soviet Union and Communism," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (1983): 280. The article also analyzes the dynamics of changes in attitudes toward the Soviet Union, and different aspects of these attitudes.

15. T. W. Smith, "The Polls: American Attitudes Toward the Soviet Union and Communism," *Public Opinion Review* 47, no. 2 (1983): 277-92.

16. J. E. Mueller, "Public Expectations of War During the Cold War," *American Journal of Political Science* 23 no. 2 (1979): 319-22.

17. D. Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1983). A. E. Bestor, *Educational Wasteland: The Retreat From Learning in Our Public Schools* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953). A. Zilversmit. *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice, 1930-1960* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993); E. Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History With Documents*. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002); R. W. Evans, "Communism vs. Democracy: Anticommunism as Citizenship Education in the Postwar Era, 1947-1975," *The International Journal of Social Education* 17 no. 4 (2002): 107-37.

18. The author writes about small, dilapidated American schools that were hardly ready to meet challenges of increasing number of students. Rapidly developing industry caused a massive exodus of women from school. Fear of the postwar delinquency, low pay, and lack of prestige only exacerbated the problem. Schools, suffocating from the shortage of professionals, recruited everybody who agreed to enter a classroom. The professional level was so low that one state commissioner complained, "We no longer ask if an applicant can read or write. If she looks as though she is able to stand up we take her" (93). Those progressive educators who believed that misunderstanding played an important role in promoting international conflict and helped their students find balanced truthful information about other countries could no longer do so. The author writes that it became increasingly difficult to discuss the Soviet Union without incurring suspicion.

19. Ravitch, 79.

20. Evans, 108.

21. Lamont believes it was Mrs. Roosevelt C. Lamont. "The Schools and American-Soviet Understanding," *Social Education* 9 no. 2 (1945): 63.

22. *The New York Times*, October 22, 1944, 34.

23. *The Washington Post*, October 22, 1944, 8M.
24. Dallin, 561.
25. *Life*, March 29, 1943, 1-116.
26. R. W. Burkhardt, "Neglected Areas in Social Studies." *Educational Leadership* 8 no. 3 (1950): 185-87.
27. *Newsweek* (July 27, 1935), p.39. It sounds *Newsweek* took the explanation for the face value. Very few in 1935 knew that the term "commandeered" could have another, much more ominous meaning
28. L. J. Alilunas. "How Can Secondary School Teachers Prepare Instruction About Soviet Russia?" *The Social Studies* 37, no. 3 (1946): 106-109. Also on the Cornell course: *School and Society*, 57 (1943): 665.
29. *Ibid.*, 106.
30. H. T. Schuelke, "Soviet Russia: A Curriculum Unit," *Social Education* 9, no. 3 (1945): 113.
31. *Ibid.*, 113.
32. J. R. Craft, "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," *The Social Studies* 36, no. 3 (1945): 101-107.
33. F. N. Ahl, "The U.S.S.R. and the Postwar World," *The Social Studies* 36, no. 4 (1945): 168-70
34. *Ibid.*, 169.
35. *Ibid.*
36. E. G. T. Wodt, "National Cultures and the Soviet Union," *The Social Studies* 37, no. 2 (1946): 65-73; W. E. Catrell, "What Should Be Taught About Other Governments," *Social Education* 10, no 8 (1946): 351-54; G. D. Bailey, "Six-Graders Study the Peoples of the Soviet Union," *Social Education* 12, no. 1 (1948): 21-22.
37. J. Spring, *The Sorting Machine Revisited: National Education Policy Since 1945* (New York & London: Longman, 1989), 2-24; also M. A. Raywid, *The Ax-Grinders* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962).
38. F. Mayer, "Realism Versus Marxism," *The Social Studies* 38, no. 3 (1947): 98-100.
39. E. Crankshaw, "Russia in Europe: The Conflict of Values." *International Affairs* 22, no. 4 (1946): 501-510.
40. W. H. E. Johnson, "What Shall We Teach About Russia?" *Social Education* 12, no. 3 (1948): 105-110.
41. *Ibid.*, 105-106.
42. *Ibid.*, 110.
43. K. S. Weaver, "Russia in American History." *Social Education* 16, no. 3 (1952): 111-14.
44. *Ibid.*, 111.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*, 112.
47. Schrecker, 190-96.
48. Materials on these and other cases of community pressure on schools can be found in the *Saturday Review of Literature* (8 September 1951): 6-13; Raywid, 1-84. A. Morse, "Who Is Trying to Ruin Our Schools?" *The Indiana Teacher* 95-96 (1952): 146-51.
49. "Soviet Books Stir Schools," *The Indianapolis Star* (10 December 1949), p. 1 c. 2; "Red Propaganda Trash Seized Here," *The Indianapolis News* (4 April 1953), p. 1 c. 5; "Customs Collector Clamps Down on Red Propaganda Material," *The Indianapolis Star* (23 August 1953), sec. 1, p. 1, c. 5; "Mrs. Thomas (Ada) White Asks Ban on Robin Hood and on Books on Quakers," *The Indianapolis News* (13 November 1953), p. 1 c. 4; On February 11, 1952 Charles Hartman, education board president for Sapulpa, Oklahoma, said that "four or five" books in the high school library were burned because they contained writings about "socialism and sex." Richard Fried also mentions this episode in *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press 1990), 161.
50. See *The Social Studies* 11, no.7: 292; *The Social Studies* 16, no. 7: 319; letters to the editor in Volume 17.
51. *The Social Studies* 16, no. 7 (1952): 320.
52. *The Indianapolis News* (18 June 1958), p. 23 c. 6. Another article on this topic in *The Indianapolis Times* (16 March 1959), 10 c. 1 adduces convincing facts why America needs good specialists in Russian, pointing out that all Russian students are required to learn English, which the Soviet government isn't afraid of. Also see *The Indianapolis News* (13 March 1959), p. 1 c. 7.
53. *The Indianapolis Star* (13 September 1959), sec. 1 p. 5 c. 3.
54. C. P. Oakes, ed., *Education and Freedom in a World of Conflict: Guidelines for Teaching About Communism* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1963). A lot of interesting factual material about anticommunist education in post-Sputnik era can be found in J. M. Fisher and C.P. Oakes, *State-by State Survey of Education About Communism in Secondary School* (Chicago, Ill.: Institute for American Strategy, 1964).
55. *The Indianapolis News* (11 July 1958), p. 24 c. 1.
56. *Social Education* 22 (April 1958).

57. Dr. Perry from Colgate University wrote a historical analysis of the impact of tsarist rule on Soviet Russia. George Counts presented an article on Soviet education, also among authors were George Barr Carson from the University of Chicago, Joseph Berliner from Syracuse University and others.

58. This is not the case for one article of J. B. Matthews, who served in the 1930s and 1940s for HUAC.

59. A. Dallin, "Bias and Blunders in American Studies of the USSR," *Slavic Review* 32, no. 3 (1973): 560.