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The Big Red School House: The Russian School System, 1959.

THE BIG RED SCHOOLHOUSE

The Russian school system -- where it is and
where it is not an improvement on our own

THE TEMPLE

February 15, 1959

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

Courses in life adjustment, the educational philosophies of John Dewey, and secondary school curriculum in general have become targets during the last decade of mounting public criticism in our country. The colleges complained; as they were forced to inaugurate programs of remedial English for their freshman classes, a surprising number of whom were unequipped to express themselves on paper in their native tongue. The high schools complained that an increasing number of able, capable students were choosing after their junior high school years programs which did not demand the utmost of effort on their part, that these bright students were preferring to undertake courses in business English and general science and basic mathematics rather than attempt a purely academic program in the foreign languages and English and in the basic sciences and in advanced mathematics. The libraries complained that an increasing number of young people were shunning their doors and fewer and fewer books were being charged out by elementary and junior high school young people. Many librarians wondered whether the spate of rather insipid reading primers which had been developed for our current public schools -- primers of the "John goes to school. Mary goes to school. John sees Mary at school" variety had perhaps not completely destroyed the adventure of reading and made reading a burdensome and a tedious chore. The Temple complained. We complained as we watched the reading capacity of our junior high school students drop perceptibly in the first

decade after the Second World War. We complained that it was increasingly difficult to teach our young people Jewish history because they knew no overall framework of world history against which to put and to place the climactic events of our own tradition. We complained as it became increasingly difficult to teach our young people the grammar and the syntax of Hebrew, for they had not, many of them, the faintest inkling of the grammar and syntax of their own tongue. This tide of criticism began to develop in the decade after the Second World War. It flamed into national prominence when, in October of 1957, the Russians launched their first Sputnik. And this Sputnik, although it was launched from a firing pad six thousand miles from the nearest school administrator's office, singed with the heat of its backfire every one of the people in America responsible for our public school education. America's pride was hurt and was humbled by the Russian success in the art of missile rocketry, and as is quite normal we sought for some scapegoat, somebody on whom to heap the burden for our collective weakness and ineptness and inability. We could no longer blame it on spies, on foreign espionage as we had blamed previous failures of the last decade, because even the most talented spy can not steal away secrets which the scientist has not yet developed. The American people turned their eye at first against the various governmental research agencies who were charged with the responsibility of prosecuting these programs of advanced scientific research, and the agencies to free themselves of the burden of guilt countered by claiming that Congress had not allocated them sufficient funds to carry out their programs. Congress, to free itself of that responsibility, retorted that the agencies had been allocated funds which they had not even been able to use -- that there was a residue of money which had not as yet been tapped. And then the agencies found the perfect scapegoat in the schools, for they said that even had we been given the money that we were given, and double and triple that sum, we could not have carried out the mandate of the people to prosecute with the utmost speed programs of basic scientific and missile research because the American public school system had not developed a sufficient number of trained eyes and trained minds and trained hands to work in the

laboratories to develop the new weapons and the new sciences.

Admiral H. G. Rikover, Chief of the Navy's Development program in the nuclear submarine field, was possibly the most articulate of all these agency spokesmen who sought to lay the burden of America's scientific weakness at the door of our public school education. Speaking shortly after October of 1957, Admiral Rikover said:

I have interviewed more than two thousand young men in the last twelve years. My naval-reactor engineering group presently numbers about one hundred and fifty. Since the men I have interviewed had already passed through a number of previous interviews which weeded out all but the best, it can be seen that those who could not meet the requirements of the nuclear-power project -- and hence inferentially of any new development project -- vastly outnumbered those who qualified.

This experience made a deep impression on me. It led me directly to a study of why our educational system produces so few men who are qualified to do the work which we must do if we are to progress. Our schools are the greatest "cultural lag" we have today. When I read official publications put out by the men who run our educational system -- booklets such as Life-Adjustment Education for Every Youth or Education for All Youth -- I have the strange feeling of reading about another world, a world long since departed if it ever existed at all. I ~~share~~ the kindly spirit, the desire to make every child happy, the earnest determination to give advice on every problem any young person might ever meet in life -- and withal so complete a misunderstanding of the needs of young people in today's world that it frightens me.

The public schools found it difficult to parry the charge that they had such a complete misunderstanding of the needs of the young people in today's world that it frightened the ablest and keenest observers. And whatever were the rationalizations or the explanations which the schools put forward -- regional racial tensions, political pressures, the need to pass school building levies which had diverted the attention of school administrators from the basic function of education, a lack of trained teachers, a lack of all types of staff, a lack of a sufficient school budget -- whatever were these excuses and these rationalizations, the school systems of America found it difficult to convince the American public that they had not become lackadaisical and haphazard in their standards and that they had not make basic education in America a rather haphazard wandering through the byways of human knowledge rather than a determined and forthright attack on the very core disciplines which establish our human culture.

Shortly after October of 1957, a Columbia Broadcasting System correspondent interviewed a young Moscow tenth-grader. In clipped, careful English this Russian youth told the radio correspondent of the courses which he took in his public school -- courses in Russian literature, courses in world history and algebra, in geometry, in advanced physics, in biochemistry, in art, and in physical education. And as one listened to this careful detailing of an ambitious school program, no one but could be impressed by the extent and the depth of the tenth grade education which this young Russian student was receiving. The Columbia Broadcasting System then taped this interview and played it back to a group of high school students in Tennessee. They asked these students what were their impressions of Ivan's education. The consensus seemed to be that Ivan was to be pitied. He was forced to work so hard. He was forced to take so many subjects. Certainly too much study would make Ivan a rather dull boy. What was then the purpose of education? These young people answered that the purpose of a high school education was to teach you to adjust to a variety of social situations, to teach you to acclimate yourselves to the family and the community in which you lived. Not a one of those interviewed said that the purpose of an education was to teach the child basic disciplines of language and of literature, of history, of the classics, and of the sciences. As one child put it, "There is no one sitting here who wouldn't rather be a drum-major or a member of the school band than to be the valedictorian of the class."

The American school system then seems to be convicted out of the mouths of its own pupils of having become indifferent to the essential discipline and purpose of all education -- the development for the young of the knowledge which a society possesses. Americans began to consider with more and more determination the Russian school system. They began to make comparisons and these comparisons were increasingly damning. We discovered for instance that in 1919 the Bolsheviks inherited a school system which was designed to educate only the small number who were in the upper classes of the Czarist political system. The Russian society was ninety per cent illiterate in 1919. In the same year we already had developed in America a

universal program of elementary and secondary school education, and a college system and a system of advanced degrees which was to be open through scholarship and grant in aid to the ablest and the best of all our students. Forty years later, in 1959, we find that there are today 2,700,000 American boys and girls carrying on programs of advanced learning at colleges and universities, but there are in Russia today 4,300,000 boys and girls working in similar programs of advanced training. This despite the fact that there are twenty-five per cent more young people enrolled in the American public school system than in the Russian public school system.

As we made comparisons between the Russian School system and our own, these comparisons became increasingly damning. We remembered that in 1919 the United States was the most technologically inventive and advanced nation on this globe. We remembered that although there were a few competent scientists in the Soviet Union, the vast majority of the Soviet citizens had no inkling of even the nature of our modern scientific age. Today, forty years later, every Russian high school student must take courses in advanced algebra and calculus and trigonometry and solid geometry and advanced biology and advanced chemistry and advanced physics. And today, forty years later, there are still 300,000 American boys and girls enrolled in school systems which cannot provide them even the facilities to take these subjects even if they desired to do so. Today, forty years later, there are in addition one million seven hundred thousand American boys and girls who graduate each year from our high schools who have elected not to take a single course in any of these subjects.

Perhaps the most damning of all comparisons is the one which we make in our own minds as we read any competent account of the Russian high school system. I should like to read to you a brief description of public schooling education in Russia, so you can make for yourself whatever comparisons you see fit.

The basic Russian school -- the equivalent of the twelve years of public schooling that is the normal education offered to American students -- is a ten year school.

The total course is subdivided into three phases, not too different from the organization of the American elementary, junior high, and high school. Grades one to four roughly resemble the grade school; grades five through seven introduce some of the more difficult elements of learning and thereby roughly resemble our junior high school; and grades eight to ten are college preparatory and lead to a school-leaving examination which can be roughly compared to the high school diploma.

When the Russian seven-year old begins school in the first grade, his opening weeks are not too different from the same stretch in the life of his slightly younger American counterpart.

The first few weeks might be summed up with the American phrase of "orientation". The teacher tells the youngster about the school, about the things they should and should not do, about the proper way of asking questions. Almost at once, the teaching of the alphabet begins. In contrast with the American method, which tries to get youngsters ready for reading and writing and which works "backwards", beginning with pictures and entire words, Russia has stuck to the traditional way. Individual letters are "learned" and practiced; words are formed, containing the familiar letters; "new" words are broken down through recognition of familiar letters, and the sounds of the letters lead to the discovery of new words.

At the end of first grade the Russian pupil is expected to be able to read and to write simple texts and to be ready to move on, in grade two, to extensive spelling practice and to the basic knowledge of the rules of grammar.

The Soviet pupils who finish elementary school -- that is, grades one through four -- are expected then to be able to read basic texts, many of them with a strongly scientific slant, written especially for this age group. They have been given simple compositions and letters to write and they are frequently tested on the clarity of their speech and expression.

American children in those early grades are generally offered reading matter especially prepared for them, ranging from Mother Goose and childish adventure to a certain new type of meaningless double talk "scientifically" designed by education specialists. Russian youngsters in these early grades get acquainted with Russian folk stories as well as with such authors as Pushkin, Tolstoi, Gorki, and Fadeev.

In the first four grades the Russian child is required to learn addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers, addition and subtraction of fractions, concepts of time, and the metric system.

The beginnings of science teaching in the Russian elementary school are not very different from those of the American counterpart. The original purpose is to awaken the child's interest in nature and to give them some inkling of the ways in which nature works: how one season follows the other; what the sun and water and fire do for the world and its people; what the process of eating and the growing of

food means to the life of animals and human beings. Not unlike the American grade school, the Russian classroom may have its pet goldfish and turtles. A not uncommon adjunct of classroom education is the garden plot, or at least a few window boxes for the city classroom children.

Russian children do, however, enter into a far more systematic study of natural science considerably earlier than do most American youngsters. In fourth grade they are introduced to the basic study of the composition of water, air, soil, the elements, minerals, and scientific problems of growth and of change.

Even taking into consideration the fact that the American first grader starts school when a year younger, the Russian child begins basic instruction in natural science two years earlier than his American counterpart. What is more significant, the natural science course in the fourth grade is merely the prelude to an organized three-year elementary science curriculum that starts in the fifth grade. It includes laboratory work, practical, semi-scientific gardening, and meaningful observation through a microscope.

The Russian fifth grade, if it is to be looked on as the beginning of junior high school, opens to the pupil a truly new world of learning. He is now prepared for a curriculum of study which includes weekly nine hours of Russian language and literature; six hours of mathematics; two hours of history; three hours of geography; two hours of biology; two hours of physical education; two hours of some form of practical work, either on the farm or in the workshop; and one hour each of art and of music. He is also introduced here to a foreign language and devotes four hours a week to its study.

In the sixth grade, the Russian school adds to its biology teaching two hours per week of a second science -- usually physics -- while reducing only the Russian language and literature instruction by one hour, from nine to eight hours a week.

In the seventh grade all the earlier subjects continue on the study plan, but with another reduction of Russian by two hours. On the other hand, biology and physics are both increased from two hours to three, with the addition of two hours of chemistry and one hour of technical drawing. Foreign language instruction is reduced from four to three hours and both art and singing are dropped from the curriculum entirely. By this time the Russian student is deep in the study of algebra and of geometry, but he has also by the end of the seventh grade covered the history of the world from the prehistoric period and the ancient Orient through Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, up to "The English Bourgeois Revolution of 1648."

The Russian student enters senior high school in his eighth year. He is now about fourteen years of age.

The Russian high school student switches from Russian entirely to a consideration of the literature of his people, an indication that, at least in theory, he is expected to have mastered the technique of writing, spelling and grammar by that time.

In his eighth grade the Russian student continues to devote about six hours a week to mathematics, a pace he will maintain through the ninth and the tenth grades. In addition he studies history for four hours, which he will do for the remainder of his high school, geography for about two to three hours a week, and a foreign language which he continues for three weekly lessons each school year.

His science requirements permit biology to taper off to two hours in the eighth grade and one hour in the ninth; physics, on the other hand, builds up from three hours in the eighth grade to four hours in the ninth and better than five hours a week in his "senior year". He keeps up his weekly hour of technical drawing and the two weekly hours of physical education and adds, in his final year, one hour each of astronomy, psychology and -- by way of a last-minute reminder of the powers of the Russian state -- a course in the Constitution of the Soviet Union. Even in his practical work, stepped up to two hours a week during the entire three-year period, he has now advanced to such intricate areas as machine construction and electro-technology.

One cannot but be impressed by this curriculum. One cannot but realize that a youngster who has passed the very difficult baccalaureate examinations at the end of a high school program is infinitely better prepared in academic programs than the overwhelming majority of those of our American boys and girls who win their high school diplomas. Increasingly determined American parents and civic leaders question whether or not the American public school has been entirely too complacent, too easy going, too unconcerned with presenting to the young people the vast curriculum of knowledge which will be required to live as citizens of a very complicated scientific age.

But before we undertake to ask our school boards to refashion and resculpt the American school system in the model of the Russian, we ought to know and to keep in mind the full picture. We ought to remember that the Russian school system attempts only to produce a trained technician, a cog in the wheel of the Russian economic system. The American school system aims to develop a productive person, yes, but also a competent and capable citizen. And so the Russian classroom tends to be a lecture hall, a place for the absorption and the ingestion of knowledge and nothing more, while the American classroom must of necessity play a dual role. It must be a lecture room, a place for the ingestion of knowledge, but it must also be a debating hall, a meeting place, a place where ideals and

values can be exchanged between the teacher and the students, between the students and their neighbors, so that in this exchange the young people can develop the techniques of social living and the concepts of community responsibility which are so important to an educated citizen. We ought to remember also that the Russian school system is one which is concerned only with academic competence. The child who is emotionally disturbed, the child who is a slow learner, the child who has physical handicaps, the child who matures slowly is given no second chance. Only fifty percent of those who enroll in the first grade graduate from the fourth grade. Only one half of those who pass into the junior high school of the Russian system graduate from that junior high school, and only some fifteen to twenty percent of those who enroll in the first grade are finally given the degree of completion at the end of the tenth grade. These have learned, yes, far more than many of our American high school graduates, but what a carnage of broken lives and broken hopes have been left behind strewn along this way. What of the child who is bright and who is able and who is sensitive and who cannot take the pressure of the difficult examinations -- the thirty-two state-wide examinations which the Russian school system demands of every youngster before he completes the ten years? In the first four grades these young people are simply siphoned off into what are called Labor Reserve Schools. Here they are trained in some semi-skilled vocation and assigned to a place on a production line which will be theirs until death takes them from this earth or until some Russian official determines that there must be a major reshuffling of the Russian labor force. If they fail in the junior high school years they are sent to a Technicum, or vocational school, a school in standards far below those of our vocational high schools, and here they are given some on-the-job training, again in a semi-skilled activity which the Russian economy requires at that time. There is never any attempt to reach these young people who fail the examinations and to train them up to the limits of their ability and of their talent, whatever these may be. If a child in Russia is not academically and in-

tellectually capable, he stands no chance within the Russian system.

And finally we ought to remember that the Russian system represents an essence -- a copy -- of the Continental educational system, and Americans a century and a half ago rejected this continental educational system for good and for sufficient reasons. We rejected it because it was callous to the needs of those boys and girls who were not, as we have said, intellectually capable. We rejected it because it made a fetish of the earning of degrees, because it created a "degreed" class who felt themselves superior to and patronizing toward the undegreed mass, a class which in times of prosperity demanded the Mowtow and in times of economic depression were ripe for Fascist influence. We rejected this system for good and sufficient reason, and we ought not now, under the pressure of international fear, to demand that our educators develop on the American scene a system which we avoided then and should avoid and shun now. We ought not to forget that the American system, having broken with its European parents, was the first to pioneer in the field of aptitude testing and to demand that the classroom assignments given to a child be up to the limits of a child's ability and no more, that a limited child not be forced to beat his head unavailingly against a standard which he will never be able to attain, and that the brightest of children be set the highest of standards and not be allowed to slide by with work which they can do, as the children themselves say, "with one hand tied behind their backs".

We in America have pioneered -- impressively so -- in the training of the handicapped child and the exceptional child, the slow-learning child, the retarded child, the child who is gifted in areas which are not purely academic. And our schools have done wonderful work in this respect. And we in America are the one country on the face of the globe which has graduated generation after generation of high school and college people and has not had develop a self-contained intellectual elite, a group who felt their rank and their privilege. We in America judge a man not by the degrees he has earned, the cape which he is able to wear on graduation day, but by the accomplishments which he manifests in his daily

life. And this is to the good. The European system reflects the aristocratic political world in which it was born. The American system was designed to reflect the democratic political system in which it was born, a system which said we will invest twelve years of training in each child and that we will develop for each child whatever talents he may have, whatever capacities may be his, because we need this child whatever his capacity as a citizen, as a member of our community, and as a productive member of our economy.

But having said all this, the Russian educational accomplishment still gives us pause. There are still areas of major fault which we can without equivocation lay at the feet of our school administrators and of our school boards, of our teachers, and of our parent-teachers groups. Our American school system has been lazy. It has been sloppy. It has been unconcerned with the standards of excellence. It has allowed itself to follow the easy way of convenience and social acceptance. When Dr. Conant, sometime President of Harvard College, was commissioned to undertake a year-long study of the American high school system for the Carnegie Institute many wondered what his findings would be about our American school system. His findings tended to center in one area: that our school systems were no longer challenging the brightest and the ablest of its students. They were no longer offering enough academically, intellectually, culturally, artistically to these young people; that they had overloaded the program of extra-curricular, and that they had not spent enough time and attention on the curriculum itself. As he wrote:

If the fifty-five schools I have visited, all of which have a good reputation, are at all representative of American public high schools, I think one general criticism would be in order: the academically talented student, as a rule, is not being sufficiently challenged, does not work hard enough, and his program of academic subjects is not of sufficient range. The able boys too often specialize in mathematics and science to the exclusion of foreign languages and to the neglect of English and social studies. The able girls, on the other hand, too often avoid mathematics and science as well as all foreign languages.

Our American school system has tended to reflect the general air of smugness and self-complacency which has afflicted the American people since the end of the Second World War. And not only have we failed to stimulate the ablest of our students, but we have even failed at times to challenge the vast middle group of talented students. We have allowed them to slip through school, handing in compositions which in terms of the basic English disciplines are abominably sketchy and ill-devised, allowing them to appear before school teachers and to claim that homework is really an unfair labor practice, allowing them to become so overly involved in after-school programs and leisure time activities and extracurricular affairs that they have no time for the major school work, the learning of the basic disciplines without which you cannot prosecute an able and an adult life.

It is frightening -- frightening indeed -- when American high school students feel that the tenth grade education of a Russian young student will only tend to make him a dull boy, when these same students tend to feel that the purpose of education is to gain in popularity, to learn the arts of social living rather than the techniques of logical and clear thinking and the disciplines of academic learning. This is the challenge that faces the American school system. We need a system which will demand of its students the finest level of work of which that student is capable. To achieve this we will need better teachers and we will need more teachers. Perhaps as a nation we will have to cease worrying about building the most magnificent school classrooms and begin to pass school levies and bond issues designed to raise the standard of living of the teacher class so that we can attract to the classrooms the finest of the young college graduates. Russia makes no boast of the beauty or the architectural and esthetic values of its school plant and she has remembered that the teacher is more important than the classroom. And though today America can boast of the most beautifully designed and built school system ever known by man, there is today one teacher to every seventeen students in the Russian classroom and there is one teacher to every thirty school children in our own. The Russians have kept foremost a basic,

universal maxim of education -- that it is not the quality of the class room but the quality of the classroom teacher that determines the quality of the study.

We need to demand more of our teachers -- more preparation and more training in their discipline. All too often a bright student in high school is frustrated in his attempt to carry out some program of individual research because he is quickly asking questions which are beyond the competence of his high school teacher. In Russia, before a teacher can enter a high school science classroom, he must have three hundred and forty hours of the science which he will teach. In most American school systems he needs to have only thirty-two hours of the science which will be his field to teach for life. We must demand of our high school faculties greater and greater effort on their own parts to stimulate, to learn, to learn the facts which they must teach.

We must demand leadership of our school administration. Not the kind of leadership which passes bond issues by saying that the school will be open at all hours for badminton leagues and for swimming parties, but the kind of leadership which says that our schools will apply themselves unflaggingly to the business of teaching, that we will test each young person -- we will try to motivate him along the areas of his talent, that we will try to acquaint him with the world in which he lives, that we will try to equip him with the knowledge without which he cannot make intelligent decisions later in his life.

History plays strange tricks. The United States was built by men and women who had their roots deeply set down in the European soil. To create so much of that which made for the American genius they cut these roots, and they began programs of invention and organizational remodeling, to create institutions which expressed their democratic way of life. Now there comes to us again a European challenge. The answer to this challenge does not lie in hastily, overly hastily, copying ourselves after a Russian image and perhaps accepting in the process social and political values which are abhorrent to us; but it lies in remembering

that the genius of the European system, whatever its faults, lay in its emphasis on intellectual excellence, and that the genius of the American school system can only be vindicated if we can equally achieve this same quality of educational excellence.

No longer can our schools be second-rate. They must be the finest schools which the world can devise and which man can develop. And if they are, and I feel confident that they will become so, then surely our future is secure. For the young people who are the fodder that we feed into these schools are of high potential. They have so much. If we equip them with life, with the intelligence and the discipline of knowledge which they will require, then surely they will lead us into a world of peace, the world which is our fondest dream.

Amen.



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The public schools found it difficult to parry the charge that they had such a complete misunderstanding of the needs of the young people in today's world that it frightened the ablest and keenest observers. And whatever were the rationalizations or the explanations which the schools put forward - ~~local~~ regional racial tensions, political pressures, the need to pass school building levies which had diverted the attention of school administrators from the basic function of education, a lack of trained teachers, a lack of all types of staff, a lack of a sufficient school budget - whatever were these excuses and these rationalizations, the school systems of America found it difficult to convince the American public that they had not become lackadaisical and haphazard in their ^{STANDARDS} ~~education~~ and that they had not made ~~the seeking of~~ basic education in America a rather haphazard wandering through the

byways of human knowledge rather than a determined and forthright attack on the very core disciplines which ^{constitute} ~~make~~ our human culture.

Shortly after October of 1957, a Columbia Broadcasting System correspondent interviewed a young Moscow tenth-grader. In clipped, careful English this Russian youth told the radio correspondent of the courses which he took in his public school -- courses in Russian literature, courses in world history and algebra, in geometry, in advanced physics, in biochemistry, in art, and in physical education. And as one listened to this careful detailing of an ambitious school program, no one but could be impressed by the extent and the depth of the tenth grade education which this young Russian student was receiving. The Columbia Broadcasting System then taped this interview and played it back to a group of high school students in Tennessee. They asked these students what were their impressions of Ivan's education. The consensus seemed to be that Ivan was to be pitied, ~~that he~~ ^{that} he was forced to work so hard, ~~that he~~ ^{that} he was forced to take so many subjects, ~~for~~ ^{for} Certainly too much study would make Ivan a dull boy. What was then the purpose of education? ~~And as~~ ^{And as} ~~A group~~ ^{A group} These young people answered that the purpose of a high school education was to teach you to adjust to a variety of social situations, to teach you to acclimate yourselves to the family and the community in which you lived. ~~And~~ ^{And} Not a one of those interviewed said that the purpose of an education was to teach the child basic disciplines of language and of literature, of history, of the classics, and of the sciences. As one child put it, "There is no one sitting here/^{who} wouldn't rather be a drum-majorette or a member of the school band than to be the valedictorian of the class."

The American school system then seems to be convicted out of the mouths of its own pupils of having become indifferent to ~~after~~ ^{after} the essential discipline and purpose of all education -- the development for the young of the knowledge which a society possesses. ~~And as~~ ^{And as} Americans began to consider with more and more determination the Russian school system, ~~and~~ ^{and} They began to make comparisons, ^{and} these comparisons were increasingly damning. We discovered for instance that in 1919

the Bolsheviks inherited a school system which was designed to educate only the small number who were in the upper classes of the ^{CZARIST} ~~Russian~~ political system. The Russian society was ninety per cent illiterate in 1919. In the same year we already had developed in America a universal program of elementary and secondary school education, and ~~we had already developed~~ ^a the college system and ^a the system of advanced degrees which was to ^{be} open through scholarship and grant in aid to the ablest and the best of all of our students. Forty years later, in 1959, we find that there are today 2, 700,000 American boys and girls carrying on ~~advanced~~ programs of advanced learning at colleges and universities, but there are in Russia today 4, 300,000 boys and girls working in similar programs of advanced training. This despite the fact that there are twenty-five per cent more young people enrolled in the American public school system than in the Russian public school system.

As we made comparisons between the Russian school system and our own, these comparisons became increasingly damning. We remembered that in 1919 the United States was the most ~~technologically~~ ^{technologically} inventive and advanced nation on the face of this globe. We remembered that although there were a few competent scientists in the Soviet Union, the vast majority of the Soviet citizens had no inkling of even the nature of our modern scientific age. Today, forty years later, every Russian high school student ~~to graduate~~ must take courses in advanced algebra and calculus and trigonometry and solid geometry and advanced biology and advanced chemistry and advanced physics. And today, forty years later, there are still 300,000 American boys and girls enrolled in school systems which cannot provide them ^{even} the facilities to take these ~~very~~ subjects even if they desire to do so. ^{today forty years later} ~~And now in addition,~~ ^{even an} one million seven hundred thousand American boys and girls who graduate each year from our high schools who have elected not to take ^{a single course in} any of these subjects.

Perhaps the most damning of all comparisons is the one which we make in our own minds as we read any competent account of the Russian high school system, and I should like to read to you a brief description of public schooling education in Russia, ^{so} ~~and~~ you can make ^{for yourself} ~~it your own mind's eye~~ whatever comparison you see fit.

The basic Russian school -- the equivalent of the twelve years of public schooling that is the normal education offered to American students -- is a ten-year school.

The total course is subdivided into three phases, not too different from the organization of the American elementary, junior high, and high school. Grades one to four roughly resemble the grade school; grades five through seven introduce some of the more difficult elements of learning and thereby roughly resemble our junior high school; and grades eight to ten are college preparatory and lead to a school-leaving examination which can be roughly compared to the high school diploma.

When the Russian seven-year old begins school in the first grade, his opening weeks are not too different from the same stretch in the life of his slightly younger American counterpart.

The first few weeks might be summed up with the American phrase of "orientation". The teacher tells the youngster about the school, about the things they should and should not do, about the proper way of asking questions. Almost at once, the teaching of the alphabet begins. In contrast with the American method, which tries to get youngsters ready for reading and writing and which works "backwards", beginning with pictures and entire words, Russia has stuck to the traditional way. Individual letters are "learned" and practiced; words are formed, containing the familiar letters; "new" words are broken down through recognition of familiar letters, and the sounds of the letters lead to the discovery of new words.

At the end of first grade the Russian pupil is expected to be able to read and to write simple texts and to be ready to move on, in grade two, to extensive spelling practice and to the basic knowledge of the rules of grammar.

The Soviet pupils who finish elementary school - that is, grades one through four - are expected then to be able to read basic texts, many of them with a strongly scientific slant, written especially for this age group. They have been given simple compositions and letters to write and they are frequently tested on the clarity of their speech and expression.

American children in those early grades are generally offered reading matter especially prepared for them, ranging from Mother Goose and childish adventure to a certain new type of meaningless double talk "scientifically" designed by education specialists. Russian youngsters in these early grades get acquainted with Russian folk stories as well as with such authors as Pushkin, Tolstoi, Gorki, and Fadeev.

In the first four grades the Russian child is required to learn addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers, addition and subtraction of fractions, concepts of time, and the metric system.

The beginnings of science teaching in the Russian elementary school are not very different from those of the American counterpart. The original purpose is to awaken the child's interest in nature and to give them some inkling of the ways in which nature works: how one season follows

the other; what the sun and water and fire do for the world and its people; what the process of eating and the growing of food means to the life of animals and human beings. Not unlike the American grade school, the Russian classroom may have its pet goldfish and turtles. A not uncommon adjunct of classroom education is the garden plot, or at least a few window boxes for the city classroom children.

Russian children do, however, enter into a far more systematic study of natural science considerably earlier than do most American youngsters. In fourth grade they are introduced to the basic study of the composition of water, air, soil, the elements, minerals, and scientific problems of growth and of change.

Even taking into consideration the fact that the American first grader starts school when a year younger, the Russian child begins basic instruction in natural science two years earlier than his American counterpart. What is more significant, the natural science course in the fourth grade is merely the prelude to an organized three-year elementary science curriculum that starts in the fifth grade. It includes laboratory work, practical, semi-scientific gardening, and meaningful observation through a microscope.

The Russian fifth grade, if it is to be looked on as the beginning of junior high school, opens to the pupil a truly new world of learning. He is now prepared for a curriculum of study which includes weekly nine hours of Russian language and literature; six hours of mathematics; two hours of history; three hours of geography; two hours of biology; two hours of physical education; two hours of some form of practical work, either on the farm or in the workshop; and one hour each of art and of music. He is also introduced here to a foreign language and devotes four hours a week to its study.

In the sixth grade, the Russian school adds to its biology teaching two hours per week of a second science - usually physics - while reducing the Russian language and literature instruction by one hour, from nine to eight hours a week.

In the seventh grade all the earlier subjects continue on the study plan, but with another reduction of Russian by two hours. On the other hand, biology and physics are both increased from two hours to three, with the addition of two hours of chemistry and one hour of technical drawing. Foreign language instruction is reduced from four to three hours and both art and singing are dropped from the curriculum entirely. By this time the Russian student is deep in the study of algebra and of geometry, but he has also by the end of the seventh grade covered the history of the world from the prehistoric period and the ancient Orient through Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, up to "The English Bourgeois Revolution of 1648".

The Russian student enters senior high school in his eighth grade. He is now about fourteen years of age.

The Russian high school student switches from Russian entirely to a consideration of the literature of his people, an indication that, at least in theory, he is expected to have mastered the technique of writing, spelling and grammar by that time.

In his eighth grade the Russian student continues to devote about six hours a week to mathematics, a pace he will maintain through the ninth and the

tenth grades. In addition he studies history for four hours, which he will do for the remainder of his high school, geography for about two to three hours a week, and a foreign language which he continues for three weekly lessons each school year.

His science requirements permit biology to taper off to two hours in the eighth grade and one hour in the ninth; physics, on the other hand, builds up from three hours in the eighth grade to four hours in the ninth and better than five hours a week in his "senior year". He keeps up his weekly hour of technical drawing and the two weekly hours of physical education and adds, in his final year, one hour each of astronomy, psychology and - by way of a last-minute reminder of the powers of the Russian state - a course in the Constitution of the Soviet Union. Even in his practical work, stepped up to two hours a week during the entire three-year period, he has now advanced to such intricate areas as machine construction and electro-technology.

One cannot but be impressed by this curriculum. One cannot but realize that a youngster who has passed the very difficult baccalaureate examinations at the end of a high school program is infinitely better prepared in academic programs than the overwhelming majority of those of our American boys and girls who win their high school diplomas. ~~And~~ Increasingly determined American parents and civic leaders question whether or not the American public school has been entirely too complacent, too easy going, too unconcerned with presenting to the young people the vast curriculum of knowledge which will be required to live as citizens of a very complicated scientific age.

But before we undertake to ask our school boards to refashion and resculpt the American school system in the model of the Russian ~~school system~~, we ought to know and to keep in mind the full picture. We ought to remember that the Russian school system attempts only to produce a trained technician, a cog in the wheel of the Russian economic system. ~~Now~~ The American school system aims to develop a productive person, yes, but also a competent and capable citizen. And so the Russian classroom tends to be a lecture hall, a place for the absorption and the ingestion of knowledge and nothing more, while the American classroom must of necessity play a dual role. It must be a lecture room, a place for the ingestion of knowledge, but it must also be a debating hall, a meeting place, a place where ideals and values can be exchanged between the teacher and the students, between the students and their neighbors, so that in this exchange the young people can

develop the techniques of social living and the concepts of community responsibility which are so important to an educated citizen. We ought to remember also that the Russian school system is one which is concerned only with academic competence. The child who is emotionally disturbed, the child who is a slow learner, the child who has physical handicaps, the child who matures slowly is given no second chance. Only fifty percent of those who enroll in the first grade graduate from the fourth grade. Only one half of those who pass into the junior high school of the Russian system graduate from that junior high school, and only some fifteen to twenty percent of those who enroll in the first grade are finally given the degree of completion at the end of the tenth grade. These have learned, yes, far more than many of our American high school graduates, but what a carnage of broken lives and broken hopes have been left behind strewn along this way. What of the child who is bright and who is able and who is sensitive and who cannot take the pressure of the difficult examinations -- the thirty-two state-wide examinations which the Russian school system demands of every youngster before he completes the ten years? In the first four grades these young people are simply siphoned off into what are called Labor Reserve Schools. Here they are trained in some semi-skilled vocation and assigned to a place on a production line which will be theirs until death takes them from this earth or until some Russian ^{official} ~~can~~ determines that there must be a major reshuffling of the Russian labor force. If they fail in the junior high school years they are sent to a Technicum, or vocational school, a school in standards far below those of our vocational high schools, and here they are given some on-the-job training, again in ^a semi-skilled activity which the Russian economy requires at that time. There is never any attempt to reach these young people who fail the examinations and to train them up to the limits of their ability and of their talent, whatever these may be. If a child in Russia is not academically and intellectually capable, he stands no chance within the Russian system.

And finally we ought to remember that the Russian system represents an

essence - a copy - of the Continental educational system, and Americans a century and a half ago rejected this continental educational system for good and for sufficient reasons. We rejected it because it was callous to the needs of those boys and girls who were not, as we have said, intellectually capable. We rejected it because it made a fetish of the earning of degrees, because it created a "degreed" class who felt themselves superior to and patronizing toward the undegreed mass, a class which in times of prosperity demanded the kowtow and in times of economic depression were ripe for Fascist influence. We rejected this system for good and sufficient reason, and we ought not now, under the pressure of international fear, to demand that our educators develop on the American scene a system which we avoided then and should avoid and shun now. We ought not to forget that the American system, having broken with its European parents, was the first to pioneer in the field of aptitude testing and to demand that the classroom assignments given to a child be up to the limits of a child's ability and no more, that ^{limited} ~~an~~ ^{unable} child ~~Not~~ ^{Not} be ~~not~~ forced to beat his head unavailingly against a standard which he will never be able to attain, and that the brightest of children be set the highest of standards and not be allowed to slide by with work which they can do, as the children themselves say, "with one hand tied behind their backs".

We in America have pioneered - impressively so - in the training of the handicapped child and the exceptional child, the slow-learning child, the retarded child, the child who is gifted in areas which are not purely academic. And our schools have done wonderful work in this respect. And we in America are the one country on the face of the globe ^{which has} ~~who have~~ graduated generation after generation of high school and college people and ^{has} ~~have~~ not had develop a self-contained intellectual elite, a group who felt their rank and their privilege. We in America judge a man not by the degrees he ^{has} ~~has~~ earned, the cape which he is able to wear on graduation day, but by the accomplishments which he manifests in his daily life. And this is to the good. ^{The} ~~The~~ European system reflects the aristocratic political

world in which it was born. The American system was designed to reflect the democratic political system in which it was born, a system which said we will invest twelve years of training in each child and that we will develop for each child whatever talents he may have, whatever capacities may be his, because we need this child whatever his capacity as a citizen, as a member of our community, and as a productive member of our economy. ~~But having said all this.~~

But having said all this, the Russian educational accomplishment still gives us pause. There are still areas of major fault which we can without equivocation lay at the feet of our school administrators and of our school boards, of our teachers, and of our parent-teachers groups. Our American school system has been lazy. It has been sloppy. It has been unconcerned with the standards of excellence. It has allowed itself to follow the easy way of convenience and social acceptance. ^{When} ~~and~~ Dr. Conant, sometime President of Harvard College, was commissioned to undertake a year-long study of the American high school system for the Carnegie Institute many wondered ~~at~~ what his findings would be about our American school system. His findings tended to center in one area: that our school systems were no longer challenging the brightest and the ablest of its students. They were no longer offering enough academically, intellectually, culturally, artistically to these young people; that they had overloaded the program of extracurricular, and that they had not spent enough time and attention on the curriculum itself. As he wrote:

If the fifty-five schools I have visited, all of which have a good reputation, are at all representative of American public high schools, I think one general criticism would be in order: The academically talented student, as a rule, is not being sufficiently challenged, does not work hard enough, and his program of academic subjects is not of sufficient range. The able boys too often specialize in mathematics and science to the exclusion of foreign languages and to the neglect of English and social studies. The able girls, on the other hand, too often avoid mathematics and science as well as all foreign languages.

Our American school system has tended to reflect the general air of smugness and self-complacency which has afflicted the American people since the end of the

Second World War. And not only have we failed to stimulate the ablest of our students, but we have even failed at times to challenge the vast middle group of talented students. We have allowed them to slip through school, handing in compositions which in terms of the basic English disciplines are abominably sketchy and ill-devised, allowing them to appear before school teachers and to claim that homework is really an unfair labor practice, allowing them to become so overly involved in after-school programs and leisure time activities and extracurricular affairs that they have no time for the major school work, the learning of the basic disciplines without which you cannot prosecute an able and an adult life.

It is frightening - frightening indeed - when American high school students feel that the tenth grade education of a Russian young student will only tend to make him a dull boy, when these same students tend to feel that the purpose of education is to gain in popularity, to learn the arts of social living rather than the techniques of logical and clear thinking and the disciplines of academic learning. This is the challenge that faces the American school system. We need a system which will demand of its students the finest level of work of which that student is capable. To achieve this we will need better teachers and we will need more teachers. Perhaps as a nation we will have to cease worrying about building the more magnificent school classrooms ^{before} and to pass school levies and bond issues designed to raise the standard of living of the teacher class so that we can attract to the classrooms the finest of the young college graduates. Russia makes no boast of the beauty or the architectural and esthetic values of its school plant ^{she} and has remembered that the teacher is more important than the classroom. And though today America can boast of the most beautifully designed and built school system ever ~~known~~ ^{to day} known by man, there is one teacher to every seventeen students in the Russian ~~school system~~ ^{classroom} and there is one teacher to every thirty school ~~people~~ ^{children} in our own. ~~For~~ ^{Not for most} the Russians have remembered a basic, universal maxim of education - that it is not the quality of the class room but the quality of the classroom teacher that determines the quality of the study.

~~We need to demand more of our teachers. We need to allow them less to siphon~~
~~discipline~~
~~their energies off into programs of teacher training.~~ All too often a bright student in high school is frustrated in his attempt to carry out some program of individual research because he is quickly asking questions which are beyond the competence of his high school teacher. In Russia, before a teacher can enter a high school science classroom, he must have three hundred and forty hours of the science which he will teach. In most American school systems he needs to have only thirty-two hours of the science which will be his field to teach for life. We must demand of our high school faculties greater and greater effort on their own parts to stimulate, to learn, to learn the facts which they must teach.

We must demand leadership of our school administration. Not the kind of leadership which passes bond issues by saying that the school will be open at all hours for badminton leagues and for swimming parties, but the kind of leadership which says that our school in ~~this community~~ ^{and} will ~~teach the finest type of learning~~ ^{apply the same principles} ~~to the business of learning~~ that is possible to ~~communicate~~ ^{communicate} to the young people, that we will test each young person, we will try to motivate him along the areas of his talent, which will try to acquaint him with the world in which he lives, ^{and} ~~which~~ will try to equip him with the knowledge without which he cannot make intelligent decisions later in his life.

History plays strange tricks. The United States was built by men and women who had their roots deeply set down in the European soil. To create so much of that which made for the American genius they cut these roots, and they began programs of invention, ^{and} organizational remodeling, to create ~~the~~ institutions which ^{and} ~~they wanted to~~ express their democratic way of life. Now there comes to us again a European challenge. The answer to this challenge does not lie in hastily, overly hastily copying ourselves after a Russian image and perhaps accepting in the process social and political values which are abhorrent to us; but it lies in remembering that the genius of the European system, whatever its faults, lay in its emphasis on intellectual excellence, and that the genius of the American school system can only be vindicated if we ^{can equally} ~~will in the future determinedly work to~~ achieve

this same quality of educational excellence.

No longer can our schools be second-rate. They must be the finest schools which the world can devise ~~and devise~~ and which man can develop. And if they are, and I feel confident that they will become so, then surely our future is secure. For the young people who are the fodder that we feed into these schools are ^{of} ~~the~~ ~~finest caliber~~ potential? They have so much. ^{If} /We equip them with life, with the intelligence and the discipline of knowledge which they will require, then surely they will lead us into a world of peace, the world which is our fondest dream. Amen.



Fred M. Hechinger

The basic Russian school -- the equivalent of the twelve years of public schooling that is the normal education offered to American students -- is ~~the~~ ^a ten-year school.

The total course is subdivided into three phases, not too different from the organization of the American elementary, junior high, and high school. Grades one to four roughly resemble the grade school; grades five through seven (~~introduce some of the more difficult elements of learning~~ ^{introduce some of the more difficult elements of learning} ~~in a~~ ^{in a} ~~complete secondary school~~ ^{complete secondary school}) ~~were originally thought to be a college preparatory and~~ ^{and thereby roughly resemble our High School} ~~lead to a maturity or school-leaving examination which could~~ ^{lead} be roughly compared to the high school diploma.

When the Russian seven-year old begins school in the first grade, his opening weeks are not too different from the same stretch in the life of his slightly younger (~~about six years old~~) American counterpart. Like the American youngster, he may or may not have gone to kindergarten -- in fact the likelihood that he has not attended kindergarten is slightly greater. There is a considerable shortage of kindergartens in Russia and attendance is not free.

The first few weeks might be summed up with the American catchall phrase of "orientation". The teacher tells the youngsters about the school, about the things they should and should not do, about the proper way of asking questions. Almost at once, the teaching of the alphabet begins. In contrast with the ~~new~~ American method, which tries to get youngsters ready for reading and writing and which works "backwards", beginning with pictures and entire words, Russia has stuck to the traditional way. Individual letters are "learned" and practiced; words are formed, containing the familiar letters; "new" words are broken down through recognition of ~~the~~ familiar letters, and the sounds of the letters lead to the discovery of new words.

At the end of first grade the Russian pupil is expected to be able to read ^{1.} and write simple texts and to be ready to move on, in grade two, to extensive spelling practice and to the basic knowledge of the rules of grammar.

The Soviet pupils who finish elementary school, ^{that is grades one} through ~~grade~~ four, are ^{then} expected to ^{be able to} read ~~easy~~ ^{basic} texts, many of them with a strongly scientific slant, written especially for this age group. They ^{have been} ~~are~~ given simple compositions and letters to write and they are frequently tested on the clarity of their speech and expression.

American children in those early grades are generally offered reading matter especially prepared for them, ranging from Mother Goose and childish adventure to a certain new type of meaningless double talk "scientifically" designed by education specialists (~~"Mary sees John. John sees Mary. Where is John? He is here."~~) Russian youngsters in the ^{early} grades get acquainted with Russian folk stories as well as with such authors as Pushkin, Tolstoi, Gorki, and Fadeev.

~~Nor are the beginnings of the Russian child's mathematical learning peculiarly Russian.~~ In the first four grades the Russian child is required to learn addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers, addition and subtraction of fractions, concepts of time, and the metric system.

The beginnings of science teaching in the Russian elementary school are not very different from those of the American counterpart. The original purpose is to awaken ^{the} children's interest in nature and ^{to} give them some inkling of the ways in which nature works: how one season follows the other; what the sun and water and fire do for the world and its people; what the process of eating and the growing of food mean to the life of animals and human beings. Not unlike the American grade school, the Russian classroom may have its pet goldfish and turtles. A not uncommon adjunct ^{of} ^{education} ~~to~~ classroom ^{learning} is the garden plot, or at least a few window boxes for the ~~less fortunate~~ ^{classroom} city children.

Russian children do, however, enter into a far more systematic study of natural science considerably earlier than do most American youngsters. In fourth grade they are introduced to the basic study of ^{the composition of elements} water, air, soil, minerals, and ^{growth and of} the scientific problems of change.

Even taking into consideration ^{the fact} that the American first grader starts school ~~at about~~ ^{was} ~~one~~ year younger, the Russian child begins basic instruction in natural science two years earlier than his American counterpart. What is more significant, the natural science course in ^{the} fourth grade is merely the prelude to an organized three-year elementary science curriculum that starts in ^{the} fifth grade. It includes laboratory work, practical, semi-scientific gardening, and meaningful observation through a microscope.

The Russian fifth grade, if it is to be looked ^{at} as the beginning of junior high school, opens to the pupil (~~who is about eleven years old~~) ~~compared with the thirteen-year-old American seventh grader~~ a truly new world of learning. ~~He has been given a slight taste of what was to come when in the last year of elementary school (fourth grade). This consists of two hours each of history, geography, and biology added to the regular grade school fare of Russian, arithmetic, art, singing, and physical education. Whereas in the earlier grades, history and geography have been part of the general reading and writing curriculum, just as they are in any good elementary school in the United States, in Russian fourth grade they assume the status of a subject.~~

~~At any rate, when the Russian youngster enters fifth grade -- call it junior high school -- he is~~ ^{now prepared} ~~ready~~ for a curriculum of study which includes (weekly) nine hours of Russian language and literature; six hours of mathematics; two hours of history; three hours of geography; two hours of biology; two hours of physical education; two hours of some form of practical work, either on the farm or in ~~a~~ ^{the} workshop; and one hour each of art and music. ~~But -- and this may be among the most important hints to the substance and premise of the Russian junior high school --~~ ~~He is also introduced~~ ^{here} to a foreign language and devotes four hours a week to its study.

~~In contrast to the American student, who often selects one language (usually~~ ~~not before seventh or eighth grade) and, for various reasons, may switch to another~~

~~language two years later without continuing the study of the first one, the average Russian student is likely to end up with a good working knowledge of either French, German, English or Spanish. If he is bright, he will have real fluency.~~

~~The result is that some 40 per cent of Russia's high school graduates finish with a pretty thorough knowledge of English, 40 per cent know German, and the remainder have studied either French, Spanish, or, in a few instances, Latin.~~

^{The} In sixth grade, the Russian school adds to its biology teaching two hours per week of a second science -- ^{usually} physics -- while reducing only the Russian language and literature instruction by one hour, from nine to eight hours a week.

^{The} In seventh grade all the earlier subjects continue on the study plan, but with another reduction of Russian by two hours. On the other hand, biology and physics are both increased from two hours to three, with the addition of two hours of chemistry and one hour of technical drawing. Foreign language instruction is reduced from four to three hours and both art and singing are dropped from the curriculum ^{entirely} ~~altogether~~, apparently as the last holdover from the elementary school curriculum. By this time the Russian student is deep in the study of algebra and geometry, but he has also by the end of the seventh grade covered the history of ^{the world} ~~man~~kind from the prehistoric period and the ancient Orient through Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, ~~and~~ up to "The English Bourgeois Revolution of 1648".

~~The goal is an accumulation of knowledge.~~

The Russian student enters senior high school in his eighth grade. He is now about fourteen years ^{hardly} ~~old~~, as compared with the American ~~fifteen-year-old~~ who ~~begins senior high school in tenth grade if his community subscribes to the modern plan of six years of elementary, three years of junior high, and three years of high school. If he is part of an old-fashioned eight-four school district, he would enter high school at about the age of fourteen at the ninth grade level. But his previous education would have been entirely in the elementary school, which means that few, if any, of his teachers were highly trained specialists in their subject matter.~~

The Russian high school student switches from Russian ~~language~~ entirely ^{a consideration of the} to literature, an indication that, at least in theory, he is expected to have mastered the technique of ^{of his people} ~~grammar~~ ^{writing, spelling and} by that time.

In his eighth grade the Russian student continues to devote about six hours a week to mathematics, a pace he will maintain through ^{the} ninth and ^{the} tenth grades. In addition he studies history for four hours, which he will do for the remainder of high school, geography for about two to three hours ^{a week,} ~~during eighth and ninth~~ ^{which he continues} ~~grades,~~ and ^a ~~his~~ foreign language for three weekly lessons each school year.

His science requirements permit biology to taper off to two hours in eighth grade and one hour in ^{the} ninth; physics, on the other hand, builds up from three hours in eighth grade to four hours in ^{the} ninth and better than five hours a week in ~~the~~ ^{his} "senior year". He keeps up his weekly hour of technical drawing and ^{two weekly} ~~two~~ hours of physical education and adds, in his final year, one hour each in astronomy, psychology and -- by way of a last-minute reminder of the power ~~and requirements~~ of the ^{Russian} State -- ^{a course in} the Constitution of the Soviet Union. Even in his practical work, stepped up to two hours a week during the entire three-year period, he has now advanced to such intricate areas as machine construction and electro-technology, ~~at least if he is a city boy.~~

Educators, who should have been the spokesmen for excellence, often took the easy road: they listened to public demand. They consulted the public-opinion polls. Recently, when a school superintendent was asked whether Russian would be offered in the future as one of the school system's foreign languages, he replied: "If there is enough public demand for it, we will teach it."

There is no doubt at all that for each inexcusable folly that has crept into the curriculum of some American schools, from co-educational cooking to "Personality development and grooming," there has been some public demand. The administrators had their ears to the ground and responded. The term itself—"administrator just keeps the mechanism running smoothly; an educational leader deals with ideas and knowledge. The deputy superintendent of education in Florida was recently quoted: "The training of our youth in sound practices in the operation of motor vehicles, for instance, is as important as learning to read." This is the ultimate victory of the administrator over the educator in a society grown so comfortable that a smooth ride is more important than a good book. It is this placid, comfortable security that permits smiling, self-satisfied teen agers to proclaim their education superior to that of their Russian contemporaries because it teaches them to get along with others. It is from this repose of comfort that an American High School girl could turn down Ivan, the Moscow teen-ager, as a dull date because he has spent so much of his time on serious study. It is this comfortable pursuit of happiness and leisure that made a group of teachers in a fashionable suburb warn an enthusiastic new colleague not to assign weekly compositions in order not to spoil the pleasant pace for them. It is in this utopia that homework is often considered an unfair labor practice.

History plays strange tricks. The United States was built by men and women whose traditions were deeply rooted in the European

past of scholarship and learning . In America they proclaimed the unheard-of ideal: equal educational opportunity for all children. It was a revolution intended to open the doors of intellectual excellence to all who cared to enter.

Through the years "excellence" became the forgotten word, while the "open door" was made the permanent symbol. In time, despite the the "open door", many children were no longer offered true quality of opportunity, because behind the "open doors" the shelves were often bare. Some of the spokesmen for education began to hint that "excellence" was undemocratic discrimination. It is the irony of history that it took the Russians to remind us, not only that excellence is an indispensable ingredient for survival, but that lazy democracy is dying democracy.

The question that remains, and cannot be answered by any book, is whether the Soviet threat will turn the United States, its people, and their leaders back toward their own strength, aims, and purposes so that they may rebuild, on their own terms and with their own brains, sweat, and genius, the edifice they have allowed to crumble.

James B. Conant

CONCLUSION

I can sum up my conclusions in a few sentences. The number of small high schools must be drastically reduced through district reorganization. Aside from this important change, I believe no radical alteration in the basic pattern of American education is necessary in order to improve our public high schools. If all the high schools were functioning as well as some I have visited, the education of all American youth would be satisfactory, except for the study of foreign languages and the guidance of the more able girls. Most of the schools which I found unsatisfactory in one or more respects could become satisfactory by relatively minor changes, though I have no doubt that there are schools even of sufficient size where major improvements in organization and instruction would be in order. If the fifty-five schools I have visited, all of which have a good reputation, are at all representative of American public high schools, I think one general criticism would be in order: The academically talented student, as a rule, is not being sufficiently challenged, does not work hard enough, and his program of academic subjects is not of sufficient range. The able boys too often specialize in mathematics and science to the exclusion of foreign languages and to the neglect of English and social studies. The able girls, on the other hand, too often avoid mathematics and science as well as ^{all} the foreign languages. As I have indicated in the preceding paragraph, a correction of this situation in many instances will depend upon an altered attitude of the community quite as much as upon action by a school board or the school administration.

Course is left adjustment, the ed. theories of John Dewey and
secondary school curriculum generally were the ^{subject} ~~topic~~ of a masterful
work of disintegration during the past decade.

colleges complained as they established courses in remedial English but freshmen were no longer even familiar with such term, competent in no basic discipline of English writing.

Up & soon complained that an unusually large number of ^{business and, general} ~~basic~~ students entered military training program of ~~10~~ 10 weeks and mathematics and sciences, staff academic program in the foreign language, and more advanced scientific mathematics disciplines.

Librarians complained that fewer books were being checked out and they wondered whether the prospects of modern reading power of the "John goes to school" may go to school - John ^{sees} ~~and~~ ~~going~~ at school" series had not made readers appreciate a tedious slow reader in a story adventure.

We were at the Temple complained when we really lived of
our junior high school started ^{approximately during} ~~around~~ 1948-1958
decade and we were found it increasingly difficult to trace
history because our J. High School knew no records history or to trace
between grammar because our ~~school~~ ^{elementary} J. High School knew as
less of which ^{the foundation of} English grammar ~~was not~~ ^{was not} it.
and interested by as much as

Such criticism of the American should be anticipated by a man in
10 years the Sunday night of 1957 of the first Russian outbreak, ^{the}
Sputnik was launched from a point 6,000 miles from the nearest school
administration office - yet by a strange sense of event it focused popular
attention on the American school -

The Russian Revolution in minds so deeply troubled and hurt our national pride. American began to ask questions and those who answered these questions began to feel a universal scapegoat. No one could no longer blame espionage and plots for Russian success - for even the Soviet spy in the West could not be held responsible.

American agents are members of the government out of course in
charge of our special projects in military research. The government
compared last Congress had not made sufficient money for ^{these}
research. Congress retorted that mil. agencies had never used all
the appropriations, which had been so noted. The agencies defended
themselves on the ground that not enough was needed but had been turned by an
oversight to staff the military program. The American people suddenly
found themselves ~~absolutely~~ with the responsibility for German space
explorations - ~~unpleasant~~ - and now as Vice Admiral H.G. Richardson -
Chief of our nuclear submarine development program shows the
paid home base and repairs.



of the number of some of its even started of "being completely out of
land until the real needs of to-day youth".

Further ^{and so} ~~important~~ ^{important} study of the Russian system should be made to compare
now & then.

In 1919 80% of American men & women had a functioning
universal public school system. In 1919 15% of the Russian people
were literate and the only really school system was limited to the
sons & daughters of the upper classes. 40 years later in 1959 7,300,000
Russians are enrolled in school almost the U.S. level 40 years later
in 1959 2,700,000 Americans are enrolled in school almost the U.S.
level - this is the rate for the U.S. ~~but we have 25% more students~~
in our elementary & secondary school.

In 1919 Russia had poor school facilities. In 1959 they are
~~adequate~~ but far from equal to our facilities. In 1919 America
had many excellent school facilities and by 40 years later
we have the first school buildings which have ever been built -
but where there is one teacher for every 30 pupils in the average
American classroom - there is one teacher for every 17 pupils in the
average Russian classroom - for the Russians have built
a sound universal educational system but it is not
the superiority of the school level the field of the teacher but the ~~attitude~~
the ^{quality} of the studies offered.

In 1919 Russia knew little about technology & science. Yet to-day
all of the high school graduates are ~~thoroughly~~ ^{thoroughly} grounded in mathematics,
physics, trigonometry, calculus, biology, chemistry & physics. In 1919
America was the most technologically uninitiated nation on the
face of the earth - yet still by 300,000 open U.S. schools we in
school system which offer neither fluently nor physics nor
any mathematics beyond simple algebra and arithmetic 1,200,000

stated graduate from our school and are you without being sent
to the of our school.

For purpose of comparison set in with you a complete description
of Russian educational program!

Kaddish

Friday FEB. 6

Sunday

Those who passed away this week

DR. DAVID B. STEUER

Yahrzeits

NATHAN M. KAPLAN
STEF PROPPER
RACHEL BLOCH MOSS
EDWARD ALEXANDER WEISKOPF
ISADORE SANDS
MINNIE H. MARKOWITZ
EDWIN M. GLAUBER
SARAH LYNN
RALPH H. ROSENFELD
BESSIE BRAHAM DAVEY
DAVID HART
MORRIS G. SCHAFFNER
HARRY SILVERMAN

MELVILLE LIEBENTHAL
NANNIE SCHEUER LEHMAN
CHARLES JOSEPH
GEORGE MARGULIS
FREDRICK SUSS
BERTHA FRIEDMAN
MAX GESCHWIND
HERMAN G. DEVAY
ROSE SCHWARTZ
NATHAN KLAUSNER
BESSIE ELLEN ZWEIG
SAM WEINGART

Kaddish

Friday FEB. 13

Sunday " 15

Those who passed away this week

Sol Steinberg

Fannie Lieber

Yahrzeits

AARON HENRY
JULIUS FALLON
HARRY YETRA
ADOLPH E. KOBLITZ
MAMIE A. SALEN
HENRY R. FISHEL
ARTHUR C. HOFFMAN
JULIUS FRYER
GOLDIE MARKS
MARGARET LESLIE DOLIN
HARRY LOEB
ALFRED M. BONHARD
CARRIE HEITLER FREEDHEIM
KATIE MANDELKORN

MEYER WEIL
BERNAT A. HUEBSCHMAN
ROSE BUBIS ROSKOPH

Reviewing the curriculum, it is not surprising that many mistakes
have been made in the curriculum by the American along with
and serious questions about the quality of our education. There is
no doubt that the curriculum is a ~~disaster~~ in many
ways and a serious problem for the ~~educational~~ majority
of American H.S. graduates.

But before we ask our schools to remodel the curriculum
after the Russian model let us be sure that we understand the full
picture.

Let us start by reminding ourselves that the Russian system is
discipline of knowledge but ^{by Russian standards} it is not applied
to the freedom of discussion & debate.

Let us also keep in mind that the education of the Russian system is
delivered only at a high price ^{required} in terms of human effort.
In Russia as in our country all children are enrolled in the 1st
grade - but when the first school year is completed only 50%
of our students manage to pass the examination and qualify
as students for the 2nd year & so on.

The child must be ready for school, The child who is slow to grow
up naturally, the child who is psychologically frightened by
the pressure of examinations - the child who never gives a
second chance. It is said immediately to the Latin American School
where he is given a minimum of instruction in some
minimally skilled occupation in which he still needs more to
set out to some avowed line in industry occupation which will
be his inter-appeal phase in the Russian system the goal is
some more redistribution of wealth from one industry to
another.

of 100 student who are in 5th grade under 50%. Just the few
enriched examinations for H.S. of these students have occurred. I will
argue not to particular Tech ^{connections of school} Education rather than skill in an explicit
if they have no particular talent they are not to be in Technical Trade
School or to Technical where graduates are in particular demand
and are placed in good well known & specific skills but most of
the long world and again the skill is under stress & broken heart
must be fulfilled.

Finally, some 20% graduates from the H.S. with a completed and
mastering no should have embarked but after the year of stress
and struggle which entering in have much to be done for
being young.

Exclusively to human system and ought to be in mind that
it represents much in ^{and concerned} European proportion of education - which
are undisciplined for general supplied reason & career & more & so.
The European system is based almost entirely to academic
achievement. It makes human school degrees & measures of
intellectual power & desires and degrees to know what we can
gifted & low able.

The drawbacks of the European system are its concern for
the non academic and its tendency to create a intellectual
hierarchy based on degrees - an educated class reduced just because
to and putting toward the non degree. The European edu.
system is essentially non democratic and, mean, reflects the
political view or view of the world.

American rejected the concept of an educated elite. It is
American view to be long remained - everyone must
be trained to the limit of his capacity - a degree even to be
a much of effort and interest as well as of achievement.

Americans have provided in programs designed to motivate
to the slow learner, the physically handicapped child, the
emotionally disturbed child,

Americans have provided in the field of applied behavior analysis
have had the nation's best comprehensive measures on a standard
against American expectations - when the system was implemented
now.

Americans have educated successive generations without a
self-conscious educational effort having been made - left behind a
much lower plateau. This position is on a scale now entirely independent
of degrees and related issues.

We cannot move in the face of institutionalized damage to the
accomplished or the unimpaired of the historical & philosophical
reason that the educational system has developed in to-day's pattern.
There is, however, one change which I believe can honestly be put
at the doorstep of to-day's school administrators, school boards,
teachers, & parents.

Our concern for the child has led us to be unconcerned for the
adult. We have done miracles for the slow learner but have in
many areas failed to change & stimulate the quality of our years
minds. We have placed our school program to a low common
denominator - so that all might pass; we have failed to make
such a system sufficiently flexible to deal with the child legend the
average child develop as rapidly as the child genius. In fact
cannot condone product of the mind which has within its power
could produce the conclusion of a yearling being of an American
type & level. In his conclusion he emphasizes the very point:

The American school system has by in large followed the standard of
mediocrity rather than the standard of excellence. We have done much
to slow down but have by in large failed to challenge or demand
the highest of our young students. Dr. Jones' book which is very complete
in your day study of the one. H. S. should

The American school system has by in large reflected the prevailing
American mood of easy on playing. ~~It is not the~~
~~substantial basis of the school system for excellence~~ Mr. Fred H. Jones
is a recently published study of the Russian school system ~~conducted~~
his observations.



The American & Soviet must determine again to undertake a program of offering to each other the most stimulating and exciting educational facts which the world can digest

To the end we will need - more better trained teachers, teachers who understand not only the technique of classroom management but something more than the elementary fundamentals of the subject that is to be taught. In the area of least we might borrow a leaf from the Russian. A Russian H.S. teacher for the needs 340 hours ^{college} in his specialty. In most American schools district a future one's H.S. teacher needs only 32. Many of our ablest student teachers not been allowed to progress into a year research project because they pursued selected areas probably beyond the teacher's competence. To attract the teachers we could rather to try help to all but the most necessary school instruction and to pass them through to post graduate work, which would permit a living away to those who would decide that they to be children

To the end we will need the multiplicity of school administration, teacher, pupil, & parent to ~~become~~ ^{become} part of the school year or a period of ^{serious} ~~intelligent~~ challenge & not a period of rather casual academic dabbling. →

~~Mr. Fred the change in the inst new story of the Russian school system from individualism to collectivism as well as the other changes that need will change and~~

I have interviewed more than two thousand young men in the last twelve years. My naval-reactor engineering group presently numbers about one hundred ^{fifty}. Since the men I ^{have} interviewed had already passed through a number of previous interviews which weeded out all but the best, it can be seen that those who could not meet the requirements of the nuclear-power project - and hence inferentially of ANY new development project - vastly outnumbered those who qualified.

This experience made a deep impression on me. It led me directly to a study of why our educational system produces so few men who are qualified to do the work which we must do if we are to progress. Our schools are the greatest "cultural lag" we have today. When I read official publications put out by the men who run our educational system - booklets such as LIFE-ADJUSTMENT EDUCATION FOR EVERY YOUTH or EDUCATION FOR ALL YOUTH - I have the strange feeling of reading about another world, a world long since departed if it ever existed at all. I sense the kindly spirit, the desire to make every child happy, the earnest determination to give advice on every problem any young person might ever meet in life - and withal so complete a misunderstanding of the needs of young people in today's world that it frightens me. ~~If I speak out against this mistaken concept of what twentieth-century American education must be, I do so out of no desire to find fault with those who misread the demands of the times but from anxiety for the future of our children. I am worried about the chances which young people, so poorly equipped to deal with modern life, will have when things become more complex and difficult, as they surely will before very long.~~