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# The "Educational Laboratory": American Educators Visit Soviet Schools, 1925–1929

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ABSTRACT
Progressive educators who travelled to the Soviet Union in the 1920s were often enthusiastic about the schools they visited, despite the fact that early Soviet educational reform had been chaotic and largely unsuccessful. The accounts of five such visitors, John Dewey, Scott Nearing, Lucy L.W. Wilson, Carleton Washburne, and George S. Counts are examined here. They show that this discrepancy between perception and reality was not the result of naivety or even self-censorship. Rather, I argue that the progressive education movement's utopian outlook was a key factor in these educators' reception of Soviet schools, enabling them to recognize serious shortcomings, while maintaining they were among the most important schools in the world. In their orientation to the future, they viewed Soviet schools as a laboratory, whose findings could advance the cause of the broader progressive education movement.

RÉSUMÉ
Les éducateurs progressistes qui se sont rendus en Union soviétique dans les années 1920 étaient souvent enthousiasmés par leurs visites dans les écoles, malgré le fait que les premières réformes éducatives soviétiques aient été largement chaotiques et infructueuses. Les récits de cinq de ces visiteurs, John Dewey, Scott Nearing, Lucy L. W. Wilson, Carleton Washburne et George S. Counts sont étudiés ici. Ces derniers démontrent que le décalage entre les perceptions et la réalité ne découlait pas de la naïveté ni même de l'auto-censure. La vision utopique du mouvement éducatif progressiste était plutôt le facteur-clé de cette façon qu'avaient les éducateurs de percevoir les écoles soviétiques, leur permettant d'en reconnaître les grandes imperfections tout en maintenant le fait qu'elles comptaient parmi les plus importantes écoles du monde. Dans leur perspective du futur, ces éducateurs concevaient les écoles soviétiques comme un laboratoire dont les découvertes pouvaient faire avancer la cause plus large du mouvement éducatif progressiste.

Soviet schools were frequently objects of fascination (or horror) to the thousands of foreigners who visited the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s. Though staple stops on all Soviet tours, creches, kindergartens, schools, and other children's institutions were the focus of tours offered to visitors with educational expertise. For American

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progressive educators, whose own work had been extensively utilized in the development of the Commissariat of Enlightenment's (Narkompros) first school programs, these institutions held particular interest. Their accounts contain no small amount of enthusiasm — and seeming contradiction. Prominent individuals like John Dewey and George S. Counts, as well as many lesser-known progressives, formed positive impressions of Soviet schools. They insisted on the global importance of these schools and advocated their study, all while acknowledging the Soviet Union was far from an educational paradise.

Scholars have advanced numerous explanations for the often-jarring discrepancies between visitors' accounts and the Soviet reality, identifying factors that led visitors to miss the most repressive elements of Soviet society or to engage in self-censorship in its promotion.[1] But progressive educators were neither blind nor silent. They plainly observed the severe shortcomings of Soviet education, and these shortcomings feature prominently in their travelogues. But nonetheless, their enthusiasm prevailed. To understand how these individuals formed such positive assessments of Soviet education, it is necessary to consider both their experience of the Soviet Union and the utopian nature of the progressive education movement. In this paper, I argue that their belief in a future that could be dramatically improved from the present impacted how they interpreted Soviet schools. It led them to value experimental education for its implications rather than its actualities and to separate means from ends. Thus they were able to acknowledge the detrimental aspects of Soviet education while conveying their enthusiasm for its quality as an "educational laboratory."

The literature surrounding Soviet tourism has developed greatly in the last decades. Utilizing archives newly opened in the 1990s, Ludmila Stern investigated how visitors were used and manipulated by the Soviet state.[2] She emphasizes how flattery (all expenses-paid visits, cultural events held in visitors' honour, seemingly genuine friendships with Soviet intellectuals) played a key role in winning and sustaining support. While Stern is convincing in the cases of the French intellectuals she examines,[3] her argument cannot be successfully extended to all visiting intellectuals.[4] In his new classic, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, Michael David-Fox has redeemed the complexity of Soviet tourism. Model institutions, he argues, served as proofs and promises of the socialist system for both domestic and international audiences, illustrating the intense transformationist impulse that characterized the early Soviet regime.[5] David-Fox also proves that not all visitors were taken in by Soviet hospitality strategies, and cautions against falsely unifying all visiting intellectuals or reducing fellow-travelling to a single cause.[6] Kirk Niergarth has also added nuance to this literature in his examinations of Canadian visitors to the Soviet Union. Niergarth argues that the Soviet Union functioned as a "distorting mirror reflecting back ideas in such a way that visitors did not always recognize them as those with which they had arrived" and demonstrates how travelogues preserve this reflection.[7] Exploring the travelogues of five Canadian women, for example, he found their impressions of the Soviet Union spoke more to the deep gender inequality of interwar Canada than to the real lives of Soviet women.[8]

Progressive educators who visited the Soviet Union have rarely received extended

treatment from historians.[9] In one of the only sustained treatments, their interest in Soviet education has been read entirely in the context of the Great Depression.[10] But, as Julia Mickenberg points out in her discussion of American collective fantasies of the new generation, modern childhood, and the Soviet Union, keen interest in Soviet educational practices existed even before the Depression made the Soviet Union more attractive to many.[11] Progressive educators' enthusiasm for Soviet education in the 1920s, then, remains to be explained.

To do so, I examine the accounts and attitudes of five progressive educators who travelled to the Soviet Union between 1925 and 1929. The educators selected represent both the leadership and the rank-and-file of the progressive movement: John Dewey, the leading figure of progressive education, a pragmatist philosopher, and a prominent public figure; George S. Counts, a professor at Teachers' College, Columbia, and a social reconstructionist often critical of the progressive movement to which he belonged; Scott Nearing, an economist and educator, briefly a Communist Party member and a life-long fellow traveller; Carleton Washburne, superintendent of schools in Winnetka, Illinois; and Lucy L. W. Wilson, the principal of a progressive Philadelphia high school. I rely primarily on their travelogues, supplemented by Dewey's correspondence. Though presenting certain challenges,[12] travelogues can provide valuable insight when carefully contextualized, as exemplified in the work of Niergarth. By considering the positive and negative aspects of Soviet education discussed in their travelogues against the utopian outlook of the progressive education movement, we can gain an understanding of how these educators arrived at their assessments, and why they chose to present their experiences as they did.

## Experiencing the "World's Largest and Most Important Educational Laboratory"

For a period of roughly fifteen years, the Soviet school system was the most experimental in the world.[13] This was the school system encountered by the five educators discussed here, before a serious retreat to traditional education began in the early 1930s. In October 1918, the State Commission on Education published the "Basic Principles of the Labor School." This document firmly repudiated the traditional or bourgeois schools, abolishing exams, grades, homework, formal discipline, formal subjects, and rote learning. In its place, a single system from kindergarten to university based on polytechnic labour was envisioned.[14] Though the polytechnic principle was derived from Marx, there was essentially no Marxist theory of education, and therefore, its elaboration in practice owed more to John Dewey than to Marx or Engels.[15]

Indeed, Soviet works on education from the late 1910s through the 1920s display similarities to American progressive pedagogy in values, the projected purposes of education, and even language.[16] John Dewey and Commissar of Enlightenment Anatolii Lunacharskii, for example, articulated remarkably similar understandings of true democracy's dependency on free mass education suited to modern life.[17] Key figures in Narkompros believed in following children's interests and development and

connecting schoolwork intimately with life,[18] in line with Dewey and other prominent American progressives, whose works were increasingly available in Russian translation after 1917.[19] These similarities, coupled with the equation of "American" and "modern" and the post-First World War devaluation of German pedagogy, facilitated the use of American progressive pedagogy in the Soviet Union.[20] Dewey's philosophy of education and the popular Project Method and Dalton Plan were utilized heavily in Narkompros' first school programs.

Instruction in the new school system was to be conducted according to the Complex Method. Under this program, instruction was organized according to themes or complexes relating to three broad rubrics — nature, labour, and society — rather than traditional subjects. This organization aimed to prevent division of knowledge into artificial academic categories. Following the child's progress through the school, themes expanded in scope, beginning with the familiar and progressing to the more abstract.[21] Schools marched in step with the broader effort to transform Soviet society, and school work involved participation in socially useful work, especially the campaigns against illiteracy and poor hygiene.[22]

Visiting educators commented frequently on the Complex Method and how it adapted the Project Method it closely resembled. Lucy Wilson, who had studied progressive education in more than a dozen countries, found the Complex Method to be an improvement on the Project Method in that its content was drawn more directly from children's lives.[23] Dewey agreed, appreciating the overarching thematic coherence of the Complex Method he considered sorely missing from the Project Method.[24] George S. Counts also appreciated this coherence, and criticized American progressives for lacking a similar unifying social theory or cause.[25]

Soviet student government also received wide approval. All children's institutions were required to organize student bodies and allow for student representation on administrative bodies, through which children were to take part in the running of their schools and to conduct discipline.[26] Scott Nearing devoted a full chapter to student government in his travelogue. He noted that under the control of students, discipline relied on social pressure rather than physical punishment and appeared to be "wonderfully effective."[27] He was also impressed by the social education that self-government offered.[28] While noting that in the period following the revolution, student control had "run riot," Dewey considered that such excesses had been eliminated, and he looked favourably on student government. Indeed, he wrote:

> In view of the prevailing idea of the total lack of freedom and total disregard of democratic methods in Bolshevist Russia, it is disconcerting, to say the least, to anyone who has shared in that belief, to find Russian school children much more democratically organized than are our own.[29]

Carleton Washburne, creator of the Winnetka Plan, which promoted individual progress and initiative, was similarly disposed to approve of Soviet student government. He was particularly delighted by one five-year-old chairman of a garden committee who took him by the hand and led him through the rows of the school garden,

explaining the work of his little comrades.[30]

The educators were indeed well-pleased with the children they met. Wilson wrote that nowhere, except in the very best German experimental schools, had "[she] ever seen as large a proportion of capable, happy, and eager children" as in Soviet public schools.[31] Nearing agreed wholeheartedly. In the more than sixty schools he visited, he found the children were all "eager, glad, [and] optimistic."[32] For Dewey, the students he met "had a vitality and a kind of confidence in life… that afforded one of the most stimulating experiences of [his] life."[33] At an orphan asylum in the former Peterhof Palace, Dewey found the children's manner and attitude towards carrying out their work so striking he lacked the necessary literary skill to express it.[34] Such a feeling, if not of the same strength, "was renewed in every institution of children and youth which [he] visited."[35]

More impressive still was the scale of experimentation in progressive methods taking place. As Wilson pointed out, little in Soviet schools had not had its basic counterpart in some progressive school elsewhere;[36] it was the synthesis and scale of progressive experimentation that was novel. "Soviet Russia," she wrote, "is actually giving to the masses in its state supported public schools the kind of education that progressive private schools in [the United States] and in Europe have been striving earnestly to give to the relatively few who come to them."[37] Washburne also emphasized scale. Almost every country had schools more progressive than the Soviet Union's, but "no other large country [could] show an entire state school system which [embodied] as many progressive elements."[38] Nearing neatly expressed the attraction:

> To the scientific student of education the Soviet schools present a rare opportunity. There his pet theories and programs are being tried out on an immense scale. The Soviet Union, is, at the moment, the world's largest and most important educational laboratory, and the educational organizations, institutions and departments of the leading countries should have their experts in the Soviet Union now, collecting information and making suggestions.[39]

The importance afforded to education in the Soviet state also generated excitement. Counts reported that the educational system was equally central to the construction of a new social order as was state economic planning and industrial development.[40] In its schools, as Washburne eloquently stated, the Soviet Union saw its future. The very success or failure of Communism depended on the educational system. With a note of envy, or perhaps desperation, Washburne wondered when "the other nations of the world will realize equally profoundly the fact that in the world's state schools the world's future is being determined."[41]

Dewey and Counts went further than the other educators to offer observations extending beyond the Soviet school system. Their willingness to discuss their impressions of the Soviet Union as a whole likely stems from their broader involvement in public life and politics in the United States.[42] Dewey's general impression of the Soviet Union was one of movement, vitality, and energy, and he found it "impossible to believe that the communicated sense of a new life was an illusion."[43] Written with

immediacy and without the polish of his published works, Dewey's correspondence reveals just how exhilarating and emotional his experience of the Soviet Union was. He wrote to fellow pragmatist and then-Marxist Sidney Hook from Moscow days before his departure:

> It has been infinitely interesting here — a tremendous vitality — Something big is really happening — of that I am sure, tho [*sic*] I don't understand things at all fundamentally, & am perplexed… but the perplexity is of a stimulating & not a depressing kind — It is immensely stimulating intellectually.[44]

To family friend Louise Carey Rosett, he wrote, "The experience was wonderful — it is a new world & impressions piled up much faster than one could digest them.… [I acquired] a maximum of emotional impressions which haven't settled into ideas & probably never will."[45] In letters to Mrs. Rosett and George Herbert Mead, another prominent figure in the school of pragmatism, as well as in his articles recounting his trip, Dewey wrote that the atmosphere of the Soviet Union, and the ardour with which a new civilization was being pursued, might only have comparison to the early days of Christianity.[46]

Counts's experience of the Soviet Union seems to have left a similarly deep emotional impression. He wrote:

> One of the most striking results of the revolution has been an extraordinary release of energy. No one, I think, can visit Soviet Russia without being amazed at the amount and the quality of creative work which has been done… nothing [has] been overlooked from fashioning an alphabet for some primitive tribe to the formulation of the Five-Year Plan.[47]

Counts was fascinated by the massive mobilization undertaken in pursuit of the first Five-Year Plan. Economic forces, and therefore the societal development, were being controlled and directed, rather than merely predicted and responded to, as was the case in the United States.[48] In the Soviet Union, Counts encountered an "idealism and a driving passion for human benefit" that was deeply exhilarating, especially in contrast to the widespread cynicism he encountered at home.[49]

## The "Depressingly Ugly" in Soviet Schools

It should be noted that during the period of these educators' visits, the Soviet school system was in a state of considerable flux and disarray. The implementation of the Complex Method had been fraught with difficulties and failures. The majority of teachers, without knowledge of American progressive education, were bewildered. They were given neither thorough training nor clear instruction in the new methods, while acute material shortages made even basic instruction difficult.[50] The quality of instruction and commitment to the new methods varied enormously.[51] Academic standards plummeted, and by the mid-1920s, half of school-aged children were

illiterate.[52] Faced with mounting criticism and challenges to its authority, key figures at Narkompros agreed that their programs needed to be made more practical.[53] Between 1925 and 1927, significant concessions were made: tests, homework, and instruction outside of Complex Method themes were reintroduced in elementary grades, while the secondary grades all but returned to subject-based instruction, and mandatory curricula and syllabi were introduced for the first time.[54]

Thus by the time of the first visits — Nearing in 1925, Wilson in 1925 and 1927, and Washburne and Counts in 1927 — Narkompros had already made significant retreats. However, Nearing and Washburne displayed no awareness of these changes; Washburne even thought the Complex Method was still being applied too widely, too quickly.[55] Changes may have been rather difficult to discern, given the paucity of Western publications on Soviet education prior to Nearing's *Education in Soviet Russia*, which had motivated his trip.[56] Comparing her experiences in 1925 and 1927, Wilson did note that the elementary program "had become intensely practical, making it possible for the garden varieties of teachers really to educate" the children under their care, but insisted it had not lost its ideal character.[57] She was clearly not concerned by certain concessions to traditional instruction, instead emphasizing the improvements that had taken place over two years.[58]

By the time Dewey visited in 1928 and Counts again in 1929, the Soviet school system had once again undergone a great change. The Cultural Revolution and beginning of the first Five-Year Plan marked a re-radicalization of school policy and a new, brief period of experimentation in method and organization.[59] The Complex Method was reinvigorated, and the themes became explicitly connected to the first Five-Year Plan.[60] The mobilization of education in the first Five-Year Plan became the focus of much of Counts's writing on Soviet education after his 1929 trip, but he did not present it as a major departure from what he had found in 1927. The purpose of Soviet education had always been the building of a new society; in Counts's view, the plan had simply given definite content and meaning to this purpose.[61] Dewey perceived that the Soviet Union was in a constant state of flux, but he did not explicitly discuss the changes taking place in education.[62]

If the educators wrote little on the massive shifts in Soviet educational policy occurring between 1925 and 1929, the same cannot be said of the failures and shortcomings of Soviet education. Discussion of deficiencies runs throughout their travelogues, with material deficiencies being the most apparent. Counts wrote that the first impression conveyed by Soviet schools was one of poverty: school buildings were inadequate and shabby; teachers and children were very poorly dressed. The material contrast between the United States and the Soviet Union was enormous and obvious.[63] Washburne described overcrowded classrooms, inadequate provision of textbooks and equipment, poorly trained teachers, and school buildings with "depressingly ugly" interiors in desperate need of improvement.[64] He also noted that the period of schooling was meagre and that scholastic standards were very low, partly due to poverty and partly due to the too hasty introduction of the Complex Method.[65] Nearing minced no words in his foreword to *Education in Soviet Russia*:

> It would be hard to find poorer equipment than that in many of the Soviet institutions. Buildings are old. Benches are worn out. Black-boards and books are lacking. Teachers and other educational workers are badly paid — sometimes, for months, unpaid. Only about half of the children of school age in the Soviet Union can be accommodated in the schools.… Probably there is no large country in Europe where educational conditions are physically worse than they are in the Soviet Union.[66]

Educators also commented widely on the presence of blatant propaganda in Soviet schools and the use of these institutions for indoctrinating children into Communism. Dewey wrote that "propaganda [was] education and education [was] propaganda"[67] — the elements of which he personally found "obnoxious."[68] Washburne reported that Soviet schools were deliberately and thoroughly indoctrinating children in Communism and atheism, promoting the correctness of these ideologies and the desirability of retaining the present government.[69] No attempt was being made to present children with multiple viewpoints.[70] Counts wrote extensively on indoctrination in Soviet schools, and about how schools were dedicated to propagating and promoting the first Five-Year Plan.[71]

Though they asserted that they moved about the Soviet Union freely, visiting authentic sites rather than Potemkin villages, the educators demonstrated a keen awareness that between the best and worst of what they saw, the best could hardly be considered representative.[72] Nearing made no pretension of arriving at anything like the whole truth of Soviet education from the schools he visited, and Washburne similarly acknowledged the limitations of his study.[73] Wilson found teaching methods uniformly good in the schools of the First Experimental Station, while in many others she visited, methods were mechanically followed and utterly lifeless. Thousands of schools in the Soviet Union, she surmised quite correctly, more closely resembled the latter than the former.[74] For his part, Dewey freely acknowledged the marked disproportion between the breadth of his conclusions and the narrowness of his experience in the Soviet Union.[75] Indeed, he had seen enough mediocrity there to perceive that the educational institutions that so excited him were not the norm. But he hoped they were "representative of what the new regime [was] trying to do."[76]

## Schools of Tomorrow: The Progressive Prioritization of the Future

Thus, there are many contradictions in these educators' reports. How did the positives come to outweigh the negatives, leaving the impression that the Soviet Union had the most important education system in the world? The very presence of these negatives prevents us from resting the explanation on the educators' naivety, blindness (conscious or otherwise), or self-censorship. As some historians have suggested, the positive reception of Dewey's work in the Soviet Union may have helped to favourably dispose him to the Soviet Union,[77] and Stern's flattery argument must be considered. Dewey was certainly the highest-status visitor of the five educators considered here, and he likely received the most deferential treatment. His delegation

was indeed met with fanfare and a personal welcome from Lunacharskii.[78] Dewey wrote to Mrs. Rosett: "The Russians chose to regard us as scientists for whom they have an unholy regard, & quite turned themselves inside out for us."[79] However, it seems that aspects of Soviet hospitality failed entirely to impress him, for he also reported that "the Bolsheviks need to import a few Paris cooks & hotel keepers."[80] More significantly, Dewey and the other educators wrote only sparingly of interviews with prominent Soviet educational figures, like Nadezhda Krupskaia and Stanislav Shatskii, in contrast with other visitors for whom interviews and personal attentions from high-ranking individuals clearly made deep impressions.[81] Dewey also seems to have rebuffed attempts at establishing friendships.[82] While personal attentions could hardly have been detrimental in forming positive assessments of the Soviet Union, it does not appear to have been a major factor in the case of progressive educators.

Rather, we must turn to the progressive education movement itself and consider its strong utopian outlook. American progressive educators were often criticized as "utopian" in the conventional sense — they were naive, starry-eyed intellectuals, out of touch with reality, who let children run amok in the name of lofty principles. But re-evaluating our understanding of utopianism can greatly aid our understanding of this movement. Mark Steinberg has advanced a definition of utopianism to better understand the revolutionary policies of the early Bolsheviks that is wonderfully appropriate for progressive educators too. Steinberg defines utopianism as a "way of thinking and feeling about the possibility of living differently than given in the present."[83] Such a conception of utopia has wide currency in the growing field of utopian studies. Ruth Levitas, for example, has stressed how utopianism looks beyond immediate crisis management to larger systemic change.[84] Progressive educators were indeed utopian, but they were far from out of touch with reality. Indeed, it was their knowledge of harsh social, economic, and educational inequities that urged them to their wide-reaching programs of reform.

The utopianism of progressive education was not only rooted in its position to reform — and, indeed, the diverse movement was united by its opposition to traditional education and its desire to change and improve it[85] — but in its focus on children. The child has long been a marker of hope or fear as a symbol of the future.[86] From the late nineteenth century onwards, child populations have been increasingly framed as the embodiment of a society's future.[87] Thus childhood became increasingly politicized as a matter of national interest and investment, as well as state protection and control.[88] States sought to reproduce themselves through the education of their children. Progressive educators felt keenly how children could be agents for the creation of a better future. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey lamented that the United States was "far from realizing the potential efficacy of education as a constructive agency of improving society, from realizing that it represents not only a development of children and youth but also the future society of which they will be the constituents."[89] Truly progressive societies, Dewey argued, "endeavour to shape the experiences of the young so that instead of reproducing current habits, better habits shall be formed, and thus the future adult society be an improvement on their own."[90] Progressive educators seemed to have found such a society in their experience

of the Soviet Union, where childhood functioned as a means of imagining revolutionary transformation and the rising generation was represented as the vanguard of cultural change.[91]

The progressive movement was also characterized by a high degree of experimentalism.[92] The significance of any experiment is not the outcome of the experiment in itself but what can be learned from the outcome. Dewey said of his own Laboratory School at the University of Chicago: "We do not expect to have other schools literally imitate what we do. A working model is not something to be copied."[93] Rather, its purpose was to demonstrate the feasibility of Dewey's principles and to discern the methods that would make them feasible. This experimentalism lay at the core of the utopianism of progressive education. It reinforced progressive educators' orientation to the future by leading them to value a progressive school or method for what it could mean, what it could teach, what new development it could prompt, rather than for what it presently was and achieved.

Considering progressive educators' reactions to other foreign experimental schools reinforces that their tendency to stress the future over the present impacted their interpretation of Soviet schools. In 1926, for example, Dewey toured the new state school system of Mexico, established after the decade-long Mexican revolution and modeled on many of Dewey's principles.[94] Though he acknowledged that practice frequently fell short of ideals and that the quality of instruction was uneven, he believed that Mexico's new schools were "one of the most important social experiments undertaken anywhere in the world."[95] Why faulty schools were not dismissed or judged harshly but held to have great significance is particularly well expressed in Carleton Washburne's *New Schools in the Old World*, an account of twelve progressive private and experimental public schools across Europe that he visited in 1926. Consider, for example, Washburne's account of experimental schools in Hamburg that sought to give children total freedom. After giving a description of several classrooms that can only be described as chaotic,[96] Washburne considered that the Hamburg educators had gone too far from orthodoxy.[97] And yet, he wrote that

> the Hamburg experiment is inspiring, [and] any open-minded educator will find food for much reflection in it. While he may not, on the whole, approve of what the Hamburg schools are doing, the results that he sees will very likely cause him to disapprove in turn of much that he finds in his own schools."[98]

The real value of such an experiment would be in the future endeavours it would inspire, not necessarily in its image, but in some way that would improve on existing conditions.[99]

The utopianism and experimentalism of progressive education, then, made progressive educators in many respects an ideal audience for Soviet tourism. Guides aimed to present the Soviet Union simultaneously in the light of yesterday and tomorrow, highlighting the bright socialist future against the dark tsarist past, downplaying importance of the present.[100] Dewey, Counts, Nearing, Wilson, and Washburne were well-disposed to look to the future. Their experience of Soviet schools seemed

to confirm that American and Soviet educators shared a similar goal.[101] They found a school system that was clearly aiming to revolutionize rather than reproduce a flawed society. This is not to say, of course, that progressive educators were Marxist-Leninists or even revolutionaries — indeed, Dewey and his colleagues were always reform-minded, opposing revolution and even ridiculing the idea of a "Bolshevik America."[102] The Soviet education system, like Dewey's Laboratory School, was not a model to be copied but an educational laboratory from which much could be learned. The belief that such lessons could be applied in the United States was buoyed by strengthening currents of universalism in the 1920s, as well as arguments that modernization would eliminate national particularism.[103]

These attitudes explain why the severe shortcomings and most negative aspects of Soviet schooling did not prevent progressive educators' enthusiasm for the system as a whole. Even the most serious charges against Soviet schools could be excused in the name of what might be. Speaking of American intellectuals more broadly, David Engerman has convincingly shown that enthusiasm for the Soviet system was not rooted in ignorance of its costs. Rather, many were willing to accept the sacrifice of Soviet citizens for the great lessons in modernization they believed could be gleaned (and applied in the United States without similar costs).[104] Dewey expressed this attitude in what is perhaps the most infamous statement from his *Impressions of Soviet Russia*:

> [It is] instructive to regard [the Soviet Union] as an experiment whose outcome is quite undetermined, but that is, just as an experiment, by all means the most interesting one going on upon our globe — though I am quite frank to say that for selfish reasons I prefer seeing it tried in Russia rather than in my own country.[105]

In their enthusiasm for what could be learned from the Soviet educational laboratory, progressive educators demonstrated a willingness to separate means and ends, content and methods of education. Indeed, an issue of *The New Era*, the journal of the Progressive Education Association, even advocated this stance:

> While deploring many of the methods employed to attain certain political ends, we should be able to disentangle our personal prejudices and review the good and the bad impartially.… Russia is one vast experiment and educational laboratory. It behooves us as students of education to keep in touch with what is happening and not shut ourselves away from this extraordinary and fertile field of experiment because we disapprove of this or that political policy."[106]

This willingness to separate means and ends can be mostly clearly seen in the educators' discussions of propaganda and indoctrination. Though all recognized these aspects of Soviet education, none made a complete denunciation of them. Though he could not approve of the indoctrination he saw in Soviet schools, Dewey argued that if the excellent educational work being conducted there was continued,

> it seems fairly safe to predict that in the end this indoctrination will be subordinate to the awakening of initiative and power of independent judgment, while cooperative mentality will be evolved. It seems impossible that an education intellectually free will not militate against a servile acceptance of dogma as dogma.[107]

If not his most perceptive moment, it clearly indicates the utopian bent of Dewey's interpretation of Soviet schools, as well as his faith in the power of education.

Washburne alone appreciated a certain hypocrisy in the discomfort of foreign educators over these issues and the politicization of the school. He pointed out that the concern of many over indoctrination in Soviet schools was less about freedom of thought than it was dislike of the specific system of thought being imposed:

> [Soviet] thrusting of communism and materialism down the throats of her children seems to some of us criminal. It is true, of course, that all countries have to a greater or lesser degree been similarly culpable. American schools try to give children reverence for the Constitution and our form of government. English children must all sing "God Save the King," and attend prayers in school. Children in all capitalistic countries are taught to respect private property. Yes, we indoctrinate our children with our kind of civilization as truly, even if not as ardently and efficiently, as does Russia.[108]

Washburne maintained, though, that it must be the goal of progressive education to oppose such propaganda. Truly progressive schools should teach children to think clearly and come to their own conclusions freely. He admitted that this ideal was extremely difficult to achieve in practice, and in all likelihood, it would never be achieved in full. But he maintained that it must remain the goal. For Washburne, commitment to freedom of thought was an essential component of progressive education.[109]

Counts, by contrast, was not opposed to the idea of deliberately shaping social consciousness and reforming society through the school. In *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?,* which implicitly invoked the Soviet system of education, Counts argued that the real question was not whether children would be imposed upon, but rather where this imposition would come from, and if it would be organized.[110] He criticized progressive educators for wishing to build a new world, but in their insistence on being "impartial," refusing to be held accountable for what kind of world they built.[111] Soviet education was fascinating and significant to Counts not necessarily in the society it was aiming to create, but for the fact that it was consciously attempting to shape society at all. Thus the Soviet system necessitated a response, if again, not exact emulation. The following passage from Counts deserves to be quoted in full:

> The school, the press, the theater, the cinema, and life generally in Russia are full of excesses and of imbecilities and of sound conceptions poorly executed.

> But back of it all, even the excesses and the imbecilities, there stands a great and challenging ideal which the rest of the world cannot continue to ignore and which may in time serve to bring art, science, and philosophy into essential harmony. In the meantime, the leaders in American industry, politics, and thought, instead of dissipating their energies in the futile attempt to erect barriers against the spread of Communist doctrines, would do well to fashion an alternative program of equal boldness and honesty to discipline the energies and humanize the spirit of industrial civilization.[112]

This was the Soviet challenge to America.

* * *

American progressive educators' interest in the Soviet Union was intense but brief. During the Great Depression, the progressive education movement became more deeply entrenched in demands for socio-economic reform and the appeal of the Soviet experiment increased.[113] But the fortunes of progressive education in the Soviet Union were already changing. In 1931, the Central Committee's Resolution on Education repudiated project-style methods and mandated systematic programs of instruction in basic subjects. The progressive school of the 1920s and the cultural revolution was rejected in favour of a much more traditional school.[114] This rejection was partly due to the poor results achieved by progressive schools over the past decade, but was also part of a broader shift away from revolutionary politics and values termed the "Great Retreat" by Nicholas Timasheff.[115] Progressive schools no longer suited the Stalinist state, which sought its own security above all; its schools became geared to reproduction rather than revolution.

It was increasing knowledge of the great purges, though, that caused many progressive educators and other intellectuals to distance themselves from their earlier enthusiasm. Both Dewey and Counts had become fierce and vocal critics of the Soviet Union by the late 1930s.[116] After chairing a commission of inquiry into the charges made against Leon Trotsky in the Moscow trials, Dewey came to firmly oppose the separation of means and ends, and urged Americans desirous of reform to stop looking to the Soviet Union as a model.[117] He had no doubt that the Stalinist reign of terror had affected the entire educational system, which he acknowledged was a bitter personal disillusionment.[118]

Thus ended a remarkable chapter in Soviet-American intellectual history. Though their visions were not identical, for the space of a decade, Soviet and American progressive educators shared key ideological ground, believing that society could be transformed for the better, and that the school could be the primary means of social progress. It was this utopian outlook, combined with the experience of Soviet schools that reflected many of their own ideas back to them, that enabled progressive educators to form such positive impressions of Soviet education. They were primarily interested in Soviet education for its experimental value, what it could mean for the future of progressive education, and as such, the severe shortcomings of Soviet

schools were not significant impediments to their enthusiasm. The same attitude explains why they did not obscure these shortcomings in their travelogues. The most negative aspects of Soviet schools — material deficiencies, greatly uneven and frequently very poor academic standards, and blatant indoctrination — were pieces of data to be collected, along with their most positive qualities. Like the experimental schools of Hamburg or Mexico, which had their own deep flaws, Soviet schools were not models to be emulated but prompts for further developments in the pursuit of a progressive school truly suited to modern life, one that would make society "worthy, lovely, and harmonious."[119]

We cannot shy away from the fact that endorsements of the Soviet system made with knowledge and implicit acceptance of its great human costs were reprehensible. Progressive educators promoted a school system they recognized was not paradise but a "battleground,"[120] tacitly accepting that it was failing to provide millions of children with an adequate education. But we should be equally careful of dismissing the utopian impulse that drove this objectionable acceptance: a deep faith that society could be remade in a way that would benefit all. Progressive educators pursued a utopian school which would enable all to understand the world they lived in, and act in this world in an open, enlightened, critical, cooperative, and democratic manner. True utopia is achieved only in fiction, and, indeed, progressive educators failed to achieve their visions in both the Soviet Union and the United States.[121] But as Lyman Tower Sargent notes, to hope, fail, and hope again is the basic pattern of social change: "We can live with repeated failure and still improve the societies we build."[122] Understanding the utopian impulses of the past and their grave limitations could be instructive for the future.[123] Living in a world dramatically altered by COVID-19, in which we have all had to trust our individual safety more and less successfully to collective action, it may well be time to once again critically evaluate the values we promote through popular education, and revisit some of the progressive movement's ideals, while remaining cognizant of its failures.

## Notes

1 A discussion of the historiography follows below. For an excellent short summary of these arguments, and the inadequacy of any one of these explanations applied to intellectuals as a whole, see Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 244–46.

2 Ludmilla Stern, *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union, 1920–1940* (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007), 4.

3 See especially Stern, *Western Intellectuals,* 16, 20, on Jean-Richard and Marguerite Bloch, and 236–39 on Albert Marquet.

4 David Engerman has argued that informed American discourse on the Soviet Union differed from that of Western Europe (due to stronger strains of universalism, the professionalization of social sciences with a greater pretense to scientific objectivity, and the lack of a significant American labour party), demonstrating one of the limitations of Stern's argument, resting on French intellectuals, when considering American visitors.

David C. Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 7.

5 David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*.

6 David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment,* 109, 139–40, 245–46.

7 Kirk Niergarth, "'No Sense of Reality': George A. Drew's Anti-Communist Tour of the USSR and the Campaign for Coalition Government in Ontario, 1937," *Ontario History* 107, no. 2 (Autumn 2015): 239.

8 Kirk Niergarth, "Gender and the Great Experiment: 'Feminine and Canadian Eyes' See Soviet Women, 1926–1936," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 26, no. 2 (2015): 142, 162; see also Niergarth, "'No Sense of Reality'," for a consideration of how negative accounts of the Soviet Union could also be used in support of domestic agendas.

9 David Engerman has written on John Dewey and the Soviet Union, but does so considering Dewey primarily as a public figure and pragmatist philosopher rather than as a progressive educator. See David C. Engerman, "John Dewey and the Soviet Union: Pragmatism Meets Revolution," *Modern Intellectual History* 3, no. 1 (2006): 33–63; and Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore*.

10 E. Thomas Ewing, "The 'Virtues of Planning': American Educators Look at Soviet Schools," in *Education and The Great Depression: Lessons from a Global History*, ed. E. Thomas Ewing and David Hicks (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 41–61.

11 Julia Mickenberg, "The New Generation and the New Russia: Modern Childhood as Collective Fantasy," *American Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (March 2010): 110–11.

12 A key challenge in the study of Soviet tourism and tourists is the fact that the range of primary sources available are all highly subjective, containing biases and motivations that can be difficult to discern and navigate. Many first-hand accounts of Soviet travel are available, as most visitors published books or articles on their experiences. It can be difficult to determine when travelogues record genuine impressions and when they have been (consciously or unconsciously) motivated by other factors. Diaries and correspondence can help to decode travelogues, particularly in identifying where an author may have engaged in self-censorship. But these sources are not always as "private" as they seem and can present the same challenges as travelogues; Jean-Richard and Marguerite Bloch's daily letters to their children from the Soviet Union, for example, were "written in order to be circulated" (Stern, *Western Intellectuals*, 16–17). Often, they are simply unavailable. I was unable to locate travel diaries or similar documents belonging to Dewey, Washburne, Wilson, or Nearing; Southern Illinois University Archives holds Counts's 1929 travel diary, which I was unfortunately unable to access. Soviet sources can also provide insights, particularly the archives of VOKS (the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries), which contain detailed reports of individual visitors' tours. But these reports, too, are far from objective, as guides endeavoured to suit the expectations of their management. They often provide more information on the role of VOKS in conducting tours and the expectations and pressures of Soviet tourism than they do about the visitors' experiences (see Stern, *Western Intellectuals*, 113).

13 Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890–1991* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 70.

14 State Commission on Education, "Basic Principles of the United Labor School," in *Bolshevik Visions: First Phases of the Cultural Revolution*, ed. William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis Publishers, 1984), 300–314.

15 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 7.

16 See Hannah Lindsay Rudderham, "The Soviet-American Educational Conjuncture: Progressive Education East and West, 1890s–1930s" (MA thesis, Central European University, 2020), 41–51.

17 John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 115; A. V. Lunacharsky, "Speech at the First All-Russia Congress on Education," in *Anatoli Lunacharsky on Education: Selected Articles and Speeches*, ed. E. Dneprov, trans. Ruth English (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 10.

18 See, for example, Nadezhda Konstantinova Krupskaia, *Narodnoe Obrazovanie i Demokratiia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izd-vo RSFSR, 1921); and Stanislav Shatsky, "Which Comes First: The Children or the School?," in *A Teacher's Experience: A Collection*, ed. D. J. Latishina, trans. N. P. Kuzin (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 202–30.

19 Irina Mchitarjan, "John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia before 1930—Report on a Forgotten Reception," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 19, no. 1 (2000): 117. For an extensive (though not exhaustive) list of progressive education works in Russian translation, see Mchitarjan's bibliography.

20 Jeffrey Brooks, "The Press and Its Message: Images of America in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Richard Stites, and Alexander Rabinowitch (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 235–39; Thomas Fallace, "Reading Democracy and Education in the Context of World War I," *Democracy and Education* 25, no. 1 (2017): 3.

21 Larry E. Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse: Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917–1931* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 32; Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*, 19–20; Larry E. Holmes, "Soviet Schools: Policy Pursues Practice, 1921–1928," *Slavic Review* 48, no. 2 (1989): 236.

22 Kelly, *Children's World*, 67; William Partlett, "Breaching Cultural Worlds with the Village School: Educational Visions, Local Initiative, and Rural Experience at S. T. Shatskii's Kaluga School System, 1919–1932," *Slavonic and East European Review* 82, no. 4 (October 2004): 861, 864.

23 Lucy L. W. Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1928), 17. For background on Wilson, see William Gould Vinal, "Mrs. Lucy Langdon Williams Wilson," *Science Education* 42, no. 5 (1958): 456–59; and Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, vi.

24 John Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World* (New York: New Republic, 1929), 100–101. Chapters 1 through 6 of *Impressions of Soviet Russia* discussing the Soviet Union were originally published in the magazine *New Republic*, November-December 1928.

25 George S. Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America* (New York: John Day, 1931), 314–16. For Counts's criticism of American progressives, see George S. Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (New York: John Day, 1932).

26 Kelly, *Children's World*, 64. When student government was phased out in the 1930s, the Young Pioneers Organization became more firmly located within the educational system and took over the supervisory and disciplinary function. See Kelly, 95.

27 Scott Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia* (New York: International Publishers, 1926), 112.

28 Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia,* 109, 119.

29 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 105–6.

30 Carleton Washburne, "The Good and Bad in Russian Education," *The New Era* 9, no. 33 (January 1928): 9.

31 Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 39.

32 Scott Nearing, "The Child in Soviet Russia," in *The New Generation: The Intimate Problems of Modern Parents and Children*, ed. Victor F. Calverton, Samuel Daniel Schmalhausen, and Bertrand Russell (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930), 232.

33 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World*, 93.

34 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia* 28.

35 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia,* 29.
36 Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, xiv.
37 Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 2.
38 Washburne, "The Good and Bad in Russian Education," 12.
39 Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 15.
40 George S. Counts, "Education and the Five-Year Plan of Soviet Russia," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 4, no. 1 (September 1930): 22.
41 Washburne, "The Good and Bad in Russian Education," 12.
42 Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957* (New York: Vintage, 1961), 120. See also Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995); Gerald Lee Gutek, *George S. Counts and American Civilization: The Educator as Social Theorist* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 10, 18–21.
43 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 4.
44 John Dewey, "1928.07.25 (05717): John Dewey to Sidney Hook," in *The Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871–2007 (I–V). Electronic Edition.* Vol. 2. *1919–1939* (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex, 2007).
45 John Dewey, "1928.08.08 (05219): John Dewey to Louise Carey Rosett," in *Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871–2007 (I–V).* Vol. 2. *1919–1939.*
46 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 119–20; Dewey, "1928.08.08 (05219): John Dewey to Louise Carey Rosett"; John Dewey, "1928.09.06 (05439): John Dewey to George Herbert Mead," in *Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871–2007 (I–V).* Vol. 2. *1919–1939.*
47 George S. Counts, *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia* (Boston: Stratford, 1930), 185–86.
48 Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America*, 12–13.
49 Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America,* 329–30.
50 Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*, 14–17.
51 Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse,* 42.
52 Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse,* 97.
53 Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*, 35–36; Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*, 19–23, 77.
54 Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*, 75–82.
55 Carleton Washburne, "The Common Schools of the RSFSR," in *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade: A Joint Survey by the Technical Staff of the First American Trade Union Delegation* (New York: John Day, 1928), 319.
56 Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 11–12.
57 Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 160.
58 Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia,* 160–62.
59 Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*, 136.
60 Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union,* 140–42, 150–51.
61 Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America*, 305.
62 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 22.
63 George S. Counts, "Education in Soviet Russia," in *Soviet Russia in the Second Decade: A Joint Survey by the Technical Staff of the First American Trade Union Delegation* (New York: John Day, 1928), 295.
64 Washburne, "The Common Schools of the RSFSR," 317–18.
65 Washburne, "The Common Schools of the RSFSR," 319.
66 Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 13.
67 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 54.
68 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia,* 81.
69 Washburne, "The Common Schools of the RSFSR," 319–20.
70 Washburne, "The Common Schools of the RSFSR," 320.
71 Counts, "Education and the Five-Year Plan of Soviet Russia," 25–29; Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America*, 322–30.

72 That most model sites shown to foreign tourists were genuine but unrepresentative working institutions has been confirmed by David-Fox. See David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 99, 103.
73 Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 12; Washburne, "The Common Schools of the RSFSR," 304–305.
74 Lucy L. W. Wilson, "Rural Schools in the Soviet Union," *The New Era* 9, no. 33 (January 1928): 30–33.
75 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 29.
76 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia,* 26.
77 Mickenberg, "The New Generation and the New Russia," 121; Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore*, 176–77.
78 Dewey travelled with a delegation of twenty-five other American educators. The delegation was invited to the Soviet Union but traveled on its own expense. "Delegation of American Professors in USSR," *Soviet Union Review* 6, no. 9 (September 1928): 134. See also Francis Ralston Welsh, "1928.05.16 (06318): Francis Ralston Welsh to US State Dept.," in *Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871–2007 (I–V).* Vol. 2. *1919–1939*.
79 Dewey, "1928.08.08 (05219): John Dewey to Louise Carey Rosett," *Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871–2007 (I–V).* Vol. 2. *1919–1939*.
80 Dewey; "1928.08.08 (05219): John Dewey to Louise Carey Rosett," *Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871–2007 (I–V).* Vol. 2. *1919–1939*. The envelope of the letter Dewey wrote to Hook in July 1928 from Moscow shows it was the Moscow Grand Hotel whose hotel keepers had so failed to impress Dewey. See Dewey, "1928.07.25 (05717): John Dewey to Sidney Hook," *Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871–2007 (I–V).* Vol. 2. *1919–1939*.
81 For meetings with Krupskaia, see Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 111–12, and Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia*, 22. Dewey mentioned Shatskii by name in connection with the First Experimental Station, but recorded nothing about meeting or conversing with him. An article by Shatskii, in which he recalls that Dewey expressed sympathy with his work, shows that they did in fact meet. See Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore*, 177 and note 86. On the significance of meeting prominent Soviet individuals to other visitors, see Stern, *Western Intellectuals*, 19, 160–62.
82 Dewey received a friendly letter expressing the wish to continue correspondence from pedagogue A. G. Kalashnikov while in the Soviet Union, as well as a telegram on his birthday in 1929 from a group of pedagogues, including Kalashnikov and Shatskii as well as George S. Counts, who was then in the Soviet Union. However, Dewey's collected correspondence indicates that this correspondence did not continue any further. A. G. Kalashnikov, "1928.07.20 (05904): A. G. Kalashnikov to John Dewey," *Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871–2007 (I–V).* Vol. 2. *1919–1939*; Bernstein, Kalashnikof, Pinkevitch, Shatzky, Steinhaus, Zelenko, and Counts, "1929.10.19 (06282): Bernstein et al. to John Dewey," in *Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871–2007 (I–V).* Vol. 2. *1919–1939*.
83 Mark D. Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution, 1905–1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 291. For Steinberg's full discussion of utopianism, see chapter 8, "Utopians," 289–349.
84 Ruth Levitas, "Looking for the Blue: The Necessity of Utopia," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 12, no. 3 (October 1, 2007): 300. For more on utopianism, see Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Oxford and New York: Peter Lang, 2011); Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccolini, *Utopia Method Vision: The Use Value of Social Dreaming* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); and Lyman Tower Sargent, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
85 David F. Labaree, "Progressivism, Schools and Schools of Education: An American Romance," *Paedagogica Historica* 41, nos. 1–2 (February 2005): 283.

86 Mickenberg, "The New Generation and the New Russia," 124.
87 Andy Byford, *Science of the Child in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 8.
88 Byford, *Science of the Child,* 3.
89 Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 92.
90 Dewey, *Democracy and Education,* 92.
91 Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades: Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917–32* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2001), 1–2.
92 Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 153.
93 John Dewey, *The School and Society, Being Three Lectures, Supplemented by a Statement of the University Elementary School* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1907), 110.
94 See Victor J. Rodriguez, "Radical Dewey: Deweyan Pedagogy in Mexico, 1915–1923," *Education and Culture* 29, no. 2 (2013): 71–97, https://doi.org/10.1353/eac.2013.0017.
95 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 158, quote 153–54.
96 Carleton Wolsey Washburne and Myron Morris Stearns, *New Schools in the Old World* (New York: John Day, 1926), 117–20, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001735409.
97 Washburne and Stearns, *New Schools,* 124–25.
98 Washburne and Stearns, *New Schools,* 125.
99 Washburne and Stearns, *New Schools,* 125.
100 David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment*, 54–55.
101 Engerman, "John Dewey and the Soviet Union," 39.
102 Dewey denied the universal applicability of Communism and believed revolution in the United States could only lead to bloodshed and failure to achieve social and economic transformation. A member of the League for Independent Political Action from 1928, he instead advocated for the formation of a third party along the lines of the British Labour Party. Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, 287–89; Engerman, "John Dewey and the Soviet Union," 53, 62. For more on Dewey's political activism, see also Mordecai Lee, *The Philosopher-Lobbyist: John Dewey and the People's Lobby, 1928–1940* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015).
103 Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore*, 4.
104 Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore,* 157–58.
105 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 114.
106 Beatrice Ensor, "The Outlook Tower," *The New Era* 9, no. 33 (January 1928): 4–5.
107 Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia*, 128–29.
108 Washburne, "The Good and Bad in Russian Education," 12.
109 Washburne, "The Common Schools of the RSFSR," 319–20.
110 Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*, 27.
111 Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?*, 25.
112 Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America*, 338–39.
113 Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 228.
114 Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union*, 221–24.
115 See Nicholas S. Timasheff, *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1946).
116 Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, 208; Engerman, *Modernization from the Other Shore*, 185–86.
117 Agnes E. Meyer, "Significance of the Trotsky Trial: Interview with John Dewey," *International Conciliation* 19 (February 1938): 57.
118 Meyer, "Significance of the Trotsky Trial," 59–60.
119 Dewey, *The School and Society*, 44.
120 Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, 13.

121 Criticism of the progressive movement intensified in the 1930s and particularly after the Second World War amid the general swing towards conservatism in politics and social thought. By the 1950s, the movement had essentially collapsed. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 347–51. Though the progressive movement transformed discourse on education, it had little impact on American school practice. See Sol Cohen, "The Influence of Progressive Education on School Reform in the USA," in *Progressive Education Across the Continents: A Handbook,* ed. Hermann Röhrs and Volker Lenhart (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 321–31.
122 Sargent, *Utopianism,* 127.
123 Mickenberg, "The New Generation and the New Russia," 129.