

A STUDY ON  
WHAT IS BEING TAUGHT ABOUT THE SOVIET UNION  
IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE HONORS COUNCIL  
IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

for

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by

PAMELA JO PICKEL

ADVISER - DR. JACQUES R. GOUTOR

BALL STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

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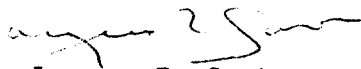
Department of Social Science

March 21, 1963

Telephone: 285-

TO: Director, Ball State Teachers College Honors Program.

I would like to recommend that this thesis be accepted in fulfillment of the requirement for graduation with Honors, and that it be given a grade of "A".

  
Dr. Jacques R. Goutor  
Asst. Prof. Social Science



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P. P.

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## INTRODUCTION

"What is the Soviet Union really like?" This is a question that many Americans have often pondered and never satisfactorily answered. The East and West have long pursued divergent paths, and communication between them has left something to be desired. But world events have presently altered these paths so that the quest for knowledge and understanding is losing its casual air and assuming a crucial one. If mutual understanding is an advantage in the world community today, it will be a necessity tomorrow; and tomorrow's citizens are the children of today. Thus, these future citizens must be equipped for their new roles. A great part of this preparation can only be done by the schools. Attitudes toward the Soviet Union--as well as the rest of the world--depend greatly upon what is taught in the classroom.

For a future elementary teacher, this problem has especial significance. Early years are impressionable ones, and what the child assimilates in his first six grades forms the framework for all subsequent learning. Ideas are shaped and opinions molded which are retained throughout life. Therefore, not what is taught in all classrooms, but what is taught in the elementary classroom becomes the salient point.

In order to examine the problem--what elementary school children are being taught about the Soviet Union--a number of approaches seems obvious. Education involves teachers, methods, materials, and activities; any one of these could logically serve as an index to what is being taught.

But practically all teaching involves the use of textbooks to some extent. Since such texts are readily available and can be examined more or less impartially, they would seem to comprise a fairly objective criterion for such a study.

An examination of a few elementary textbooks will reveal that the bulk of information on the Soviet Union is limited to world geography books. Furthermore, very few such books treat the topic in any depth prior to the sixth grade level. Therefore, a random sampling of some sixth grade world geography books should give a fairly typical picture of what the elementary student is taught about the Soviet Union. The present study is based on such a survey. The ultimate result is a summary of the content of eleven texts, which are widely used in Indiana. Representing eight publishing companies, they are listed as follows:

1. Beyond the Oceans (Rand McNally, 1956)
2. Eurasia (Ginn, 1961)
3. Exploring the Old World (Follett, 1958)
4. Geography of Europe and Its Borderlands (Rand McNally, 1961)
5. Geography of World Peoples (Rand McNally, 1952)
6. Homelands Beyond the Seas (Iroquois, 1958)
7. Living Together in the Old World (Macmillan, 1958)
8. Neighbors Across the Sea (Winston, 1954)
9. Old World Lands (Silver Burdett, 1959)
10. The Eastern Hemisphere (Allyn and Bacon, 1958)
11. Your World and Mine (Ginn, 1961)

In some cases, corresponding workbooks and teachers' manuals were also examined. Four of the texts are on the current state adopted list of

social studies for Indiana, and all are presently in wide use.

Such an examination, no matter how thorough, remains meaningless unless some method of evaluation can be devised. For any evaluation to be valid, further reading on a more sophisticated level is necessary. For this reason, a further investigation was made of a variety of materials, all of which contained data analogous to that elicited from the sixth grade texts. Findings from both areas have been organized and presented below.

## CHAPTER I

### BASIC TEXT DATA

In all of the sixth grade texts examined, the Soviet Union is treated as a self-contained unit of study. The number of pages devoted to the area ranges from fourteen to sixty-nine, with an overall average of twenty-nine. An attempt was made to secure the most recent editions; and although the publishing dates range from 1952 to 1962, eight of the eleven books were printed in the last five years and three since 1961.

Several different methods of presentation of the material on the Soviet Union are employed, but a typical pattern usually includes most of the following general topics:

1. Description of the Soviet Union
2. Agriculture and industrial regions
3. Northern forest and tundra
4. Steppes and deserts to the south
5. Southern border and Far East
6. Importance of the geography of the Soviet Union

Emphasis on particular topics is varied. In some cases, discussion of Russian history is extensive; in others it is merely mentioned. Treatment of physical aspects is seemingly favored by some authors while others prefer to dwell on social conditions. Finally, some texts discuss communism as an ideology, contrast it with other ideologies, mainly

democracy, and view the relationship of the Soviet Union to the rest of the world. Others do not include such a section.

In all of the texts examined, the name of the country is discussed. The authors explain that the correct name is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which is often shortened to USSR or Soviet Union. The name "Russia," which refers to only a part of the Soviet Union and is no longer technically correct, is also mentioned. In many instances, the latter term is used in subsequent references to the Soviet Union.

Every discussion of the various regions of the Soviet Union naturally includes Siberia--an area usually designated as "the Asian part of the Soviet Union," or "the icebox of the world."<sup>1</sup> The characteristics often mentioned are the short growing seasons, low temperatures (the lowest temperature ever recorded, ninety degrees below zero Fahrenheit, occurred there), barren stretches, and labor camps.

The Soviet Union is probably the greatest slave state in history. Millions of its people are sent to huge camps, especially in Siberia. They are forced to work long hours in mines and forests and factories, under strict guard. They are poorly fed and housed and receive little medical attention.<sup>2</sup>

Another account on the same subject reads:

In the Soviet Union there has been little freedom to exchange ideas, no freedom to choose leaders. Many people who wanted such freedom have been arrested and sent to prison camps in the tundra or the Siberian taiga. Since the days of the czars, there have been prison camps in this northern wilderness.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert M. Glendinning, Lands and Peoples of the World--Eurasia (Teachers' Edition; Chicago: Ginn and Co., 1961), p. 275.

<sup>2</sup>Ernest L. Thurston and Grace C. Hankins, Homelands Beyond the Seas (Syracuse, New York: Iroquois Publishing Co., Inc., 1958), p. 192.

<sup>3</sup>John R. Borchert and Jane McGuigan, Geography of Europe and Its Borderlands (Teachers' Edition; New York: Rand McNally and Co., 1961), p. 222.

In describing Novosibirsk, one of the largest cities in Siberia, still another author writes:

Away from the main street, the streets are mainly dirt roads, and the houses are made of logs or lumber. As in many Soviet cities, the downtown section is small for the size of the city. This is because the government has concentrated on building up heavy industry and power projects rather than on supplying goods for department stores.<sup>4</sup>

The steppe region is another common topic of discussion. A typical description might picture the steppe as a "grassy plain covering thousands of square miles," having "little rainfall," being "fit mainly for pastures," and containing people who are "mostly nomads."<sup>5</sup>

Turning to a discussion of food in the Soviet Union, most authors stress the bulk of starch in the average diet. Oftentimes a graph comparing food consumption in the Soviet Union with that in the United States brings out the fact that the Soviet people eat more bread and potatoes, while Americans consume more vegetables, fruits, milk, eggs, and meat.

The Russian people generally have less meat than we do. This is partly because little of their land is planted in corn and other food for animals. Also, many farmers killed their livestock before joining collective farms.<sup>6</sup>

In summing up the physical aspects of the entire area, one author suggests: "You found out that most of this region has few natural resources."<sup>7</sup>

Some accounts of early Russian history are briefer than others, but not one author fails to mention Peter the Great among the early rulers. Often he is pictured as a giant of a man, nearly seven feet tall and full of energy. Although one text simply dismisses him as "the Czar who visited

<sup>4</sup>Glendinning, Eurasia, p. 274.

<sup>5</sup>Thurston and Hankins, Homelands, p. 185.

<sup>6</sup>Glendinning, Eurasia, p. 271.

<sup>7</sup>Borchert and McGuigan, Europe and Its Borderlands, p. 231.

Rotterdam to learn shipbuilding,"<sup>8</sup> Peter is more often hailed as a kind of hero, the man who "Westernized Russia."

Peter started at once to force his people to adopt the ways of western Europe. . . . He ordered Russian nobles to clip their beards, and even placed policemen along the roads to cut the beards of noble-men who refused to adopt the new custom.<sup>9</sup>

Peter also built a city along European lines. "In ten years Peter had a fine capital. He called the new city St. Petersburg, after himself."<sup>10</sup>

In a similar fashion, the topic of the Russian Revolution is handled in various ways. Some books merely mention that there was a revolution, others give brief accounts such as referring to it as "the revolution which started in Russia in 1917 and led to the overthrow of the czars and the rise of the Communists to power."<sup>11</sup> Still others give somewhat more detailed descriptions. "While the Russian people were confused, the Communists used power to seize control of the country. They started the Soviet government under which the Russian people live today."<sup>12</sup> In a few instances, a distinction is made between the February Revolution and the October Revolution, and oftentimes Lenin and Stalin are identified as the men behind the upheaval. "The new government was overthrown and Nikolay Lenin became the head of still another Russian government."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Glendinning, Eurasia, p. 264.

<sup>9</sup>Oliver Stuart Hamer et al., Exploring the Old World (Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1958), pp. 288-289.

<sup>10</sup>Prudence Cutright et al., Living Together in the Old World (Teachers' Annotated Edition; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1958), p. 402.

<sup>11</sup>Glendinning, Eurasia, p. 265.

<sup>12</sup>Norman Carls and Frank E. Sorenson, Neighbors Across the Seas (Chicago: The John C. Winston Co., 1954), p. 122.

<sup>13</sup>Thurston and Hankins, Homelands, p. 188.

Reviewing present conditions in the Soviet Union, the Soviet citizen is often discussed. One author tells his readers that "in some instances you can probably find Russians who look very much like people in our own country."<sup>14</sup> One popular device, used in many of the books, is to make imaginary visits to parts of the Soviet Union. One such "trip" features a fictitious embassy official remarking to some "visitors":

I found it difficult to get acquainted with the Russian people. Most of the Russians seemed to be afraid to talk to me. I guess they weren't sure what their government would think about their talking to foreigners.<sup>15</sup>

All texts discuss the lives of these Soviet people. It is mentioned that much building and improvement is taking place, but this does not seem to touch the life of the ordinary citizen. Again, on an imaginary visit to the home of a family in a Moscow apartment house, the following account is given: "The house is very crowded. For all twenty families there are only two small kitchens and two bathrooms. The family has a little furniture--two beds, a crib, a table or two, and several stools."<sup>16</sup>

Automobiles and consumer goods, according to most authors, are very scarce in the Soviet Union and a prime concern to every Soviet citizen. "We are surprised to see so many bare feet. 'Soviet shoe factories will soon manufacture enough shoes for everybody,' Mr. Tamner tells us."<sup>17</sup> The progress in industrialization which has occurred is never neglected, but a typical remark on this point might be that "modern

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<sup>14</sup>Glendinning, Eurasia, p. 261.

<sup>15</sup>Hamer et al., Exploring, p. 295.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>17</sup>Carls and Sorensen, Neighbors, p. 136.

Soviet factories, machines, and knowledge are worth little if they do not help to make a better life for the Soviet people."<sup>18</sup>

In every instance, it is stressed that the Soviet people are not free to worship as they please. In one text, a cartoon drawing at the beginning of the unit features a group of people standing before the door of a church which is barred and marked "closed."<sup>19</sup> Another author relates that "the Soviet metropolis has few churches, for the leaders of the revolution tried to stamp out religious worship."<sup>20</sup>

Inviting his readers to pretend they are Soviet school children, one author remarks: "Your school might be new, but it is more likely to be old and crowded, with little or no playground."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, "Soviet schools are used to teach Communist ideas. Books are written under government direction, and teachers must favor the government's political policies. In this way young people are taught to support the Communist leaders."<sup>22</sup> Not only are public schools so controlled, but the universities are regulated as well. Making reference to the University of Moscow, one writer argues that "here again we see the effect of government controls. The Communist government not only decides what subjects should be taught but also determines who shall attend the state university."<sup>23</sup>

Government control is equally emphasized in connection with

<sup>18</sup>Borchert and McGuigan, Europe and Its Borderlands, p. 232.

<sup>19</sup>Hamer et al., Exploring, p. 282.

<sup>20</sup>Borchert and McGuigan, Europe and Its Borderlands, p. 187.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>22</sup>Hamer et al., Exploring, p. 293.

<sup>23</sup>Glendinning, Eurasia, p. 263.

agriculture. Only about half of the texts make any distinction between collective farms and state farms, and then, only by size. On an imaginary visit to a collective, a narrator says:

I rode out to the farm in an old truck which the farm used to deliver vegetables and eggs to a big market in Moscow. The truck was driven by a woman. Several miles out of the city we came to a village of about thirty small wooden houses built along both sides of a dirt road. In back of each house was a little garden plot. In some yards we could see chickens, pigs, and a cow.<sup>24</sup>

A common item mentioned is the lack of farm machinery on the collective farms. Instead, the government has provided Machine Tractor Stations at which the farmers rent the various pieces of equipment needed. The rent is usually paid in crops to the state. In summary, Soviet agriculture is often characterized in the following manner:

The Soviet leaders hoped that the collective farms would increase agricultural production, but this has not happened. When a farmer does not own the land he works, he has less interest and less pride in keeping it up.<sup>25</sup>

Looking at another facet of Soviet life, readers learn that the entire country is often described as being behind an "Iron Curtain," a term which apparently means that the Soviet government wants as little to do with the rest of the world as possible. One definition of the Iron Curtain states: "It means that the Soviet government has taken steps to prevent almost anyone from outside the Soviet group from traveling in Russia to see what goes on there."<sup>26</sup> Indeed, "the Russians . . . have soldiers stationed at their borders to keep out almost everyone. These

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<sup>24</sup>Hamer et al., Exploring, p. 292.

<sup>25</sup>Glendinning, Eurasia, p. 268.

<sup>26</sup>Thurston and Hankins, Homelands, p. 192.

soldiers also keep the Russians inside their own country. For this reason we say the Soviet Union is 'behind the Iron Curtain.'<sup>27</sup> But briefly mentioning the thousands of people who, in past years, have managed to leave the Soviet Union and come to the United States, one author remarks: "Many of these people are now good American citizens."<sup>28</sup>

It is often suggested that the Soviet citizens are not only not free to leave their country but are similarly restricted within. In fact, the lack of individual freedom is a major theme throughout all of the texts, and one teachers' manual contains instructions to "emphasize the lack of freedom in the Soviet Union" in connection with seven different topics in the unit.<sup>29</sup> Another unit begins with a story entitled "No Chance to Choose," and portrays a young boy and his sister at a trade school in the city. It relates their conversation lamenting the fact that they cannot choose the kind of work they will eventually do.<sup>30</sup> "No individual is allowed to go into business for himself, hire clerks, and sell products as the people in our country do."<sup>31</sup> Also, "the people of Russia are not free to travel about where they please or live where they like. . . ."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Hamer et al., Exploring, p. 283.

<sup>28</sup>Thurston and Hankins, Homelands, p. 203.

<sup>29</sup>Borchert and McGuigan, Europe and Its Borderlands, pp. 167-236.

<sup>30</sup>Grace S. Dawson, Your World and Mine (Teachers' Edition rev.; New York: Ginn and Co., 1961), pp. 286-287.

<sup>31</sup>DeForest Stull and Roy W. Hatch, The Eastern Hemisphere--Our World Today (New York: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1958), p. 225.

<sup>32</sup>Thurston and Hankins, Homelands, p. 184.

Government censorship is another recurrent topic. "The people of Russia are not even free to think, write, or speak as they please. The Communists try to control the peoples' thoughts."<sup>33</sup> Even theaters are subject to government control. Therefore, "the government carefully supervises the theaters to make sure that all artists and their works follow Communist policy or 'the party line.'"<sup>34</sup> In like manner, the government publishes all books, controls newspapers, magazines, and the radio. "The government also has secret police who spy on the people. If the people do anything against the government, they are punished."<sup>35</sup> In conclusion, one author suggests that "we can see that the Russians have little more freedom today than they did under Peter the Great and the other czars."<sup>36</sup>

In connection with the above point, imprisonment and terror are presented as common phenomena in the Soviet Union.

There is a huge force of secret police unknown to the people and often living among them. They spy on the people and even on the officials. The faintest hint of disloyalty is met by instant arrest and very severe punishment, usually without trial.

Apparently no one is immune to this constant scrutiny. "Those who do not do good work, or who are absent without proper cause, may be punished severely. This may mean months of imprisonment."<sup>37</sup> Several texts reinforce this last point by portraying the life of a fictitious family in

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<sup>33</sup>Hamer et al., Exploring, p. 298.

<sup>34</sup>Glendinning, Eurasia, p. 259.

<sup>35</sup>Carls and Sorenson, Neighbors, p. 118.

<sup>36</sup>Hamer et al., Exploring, p. 298.

<sup>37</sup>Thurston and Hankins, Homelands, p. 191.

which the father has displeased the government and been taken away to a prison camp. "In the Soviet Union there probably are twice as many such prisoners as there are members of the Communist party."<sup>38</sup> All in all, "if anyone criticizes or refuses to obey the orders of the party leaders he is put in prison or killed."<sup>39</sup>

Although the Communists run the government, it is acknowledged that the average Soviet citizen is not a party member. Statistics on this point are varied. Some texts quote the ratio as one out of twenty, others, one out of thirty-two, and still others, three out of one hundred. Many simply state that very few citizens are members of the Communist Party. Concerning elections, all candidates are selected by the party; and "there is no choice, yet the people are required to vote for this one person."<sup>40</sup>

In spite of the fact that each Soviet republic has its own government and laws, one writer warns: "Do not let the word 'republic' fool you. Although they call their states 'republics,' the Soviet people do not have a free government like ours."<sup>41</sup> It is established that a highly centralized government runs the country--the mines, factories, stores, schools, transportation--in fact, the very life of the people. The top body, the Supreme Soviet, is in charge, and "this supreme council is controlled by party leaders. These leaders are really dictators."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Carls and Sorenson, Neighbors, p. 119.

<sup>39</sup>Dawson, Your World and Mine, p. 297.

<sup>40</sup>Thurston and Hankins, Homelands, p. 191.

<sup>41</sup>Carls and Sorenson, Neighbors, p. 114.

<sup>42</sup>Dawson, Your World and Mine, p. 296.

In the final paragraphs, some of the units include a section pertaining to the role of the Soviet Union in the world community.

We know that many people are afraid of the Soviet Union. One reason is that this country has been growing for five hundred years and much of its land has been acquired by fighting. Another reason why people fear the Soviet Union is that the Communists, who control it, believe that their kind of government is the only right kind for everybody. In many countries, Communists keep on trying to take hold of the governments and change things to fit their ideas.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, suggestions of possible Soviet aggression are often made.

"Many persons see the Soviet Union as a threat to human freedom and as an encouragement to strife and war."<sup>44</sup>

In each of the texts examined, most of the above areas are explored. In addition to dealing with such specifics, these units all create generalized impressions about life in the Soviet Union. According to one author, "little is known about actual conditions among the people in the Soviet Union. . . . Most of the roads in the USSR are dirt roads, muddy in the spring, dusty in summer."<sup>45</sup> Once again, visiting an imaginary family lends itself well to learning more about general conditions. Two such fanciful situations are presented below. In the first, a typical Soviet family (the head of which is in a prison camp) is visited.

Tamara is twelve and lives with her mother in Moscow. Her mother works in a factory. When Tamara finishes school next spring, she, too, will work. She would like to go to a higher school, but knows that she will have to start earning money very soon because her mother cannot earn enough for them both.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Norman J. G. Pounds and Emlyn D. Jones, Beyond the Oceans-- Eurasia, Africa, Australia (New York: Rand McNally Co., 1956), p. 179.

<sup>44</sup>Cutright et al., Living Together, p. 420.

<sup>45</sup>Stull and Hatch, The Eastern Hemisphere, p. 225.

<sup>46</sup>Carls and Sorenson, Neighbors, p. 118.

The second encourages the reader himself to imagine that he is a school child in a northern Soviet city.

Your school day begins early on a dark winter morning. You have to help make the beds and tidy the crowded two- or three-room family apartment. The mother prepares the breakfast of soup and bread. Most Soviet homes are crowded and meals simple. You bundle up well before you go out into the cold morning air. Patches of ice fill holes in the sidewalk and street.<sup>47</sup>

Another imaginary situation involves leisure activities for various family members:

The father might go to his factory workers' club to play chess or dominoes. Afterward he might attend a meeting to hear a member of the Communist party tell about the Soviet armed forces or explain why everyone must work harder.<sup>48</sup>

In some instances illustrations convey the type of life some Soviet citizens lead. One picture of an industrial plant carries the caption: "The inside of a steel mill in the Soviet Union is a noisy and smoky place to work." Another picture shows four women working in the street. An explanation reads: "In Leningrad, women are continually engaged in sweeping the streets or, in winter, shoveling snow from the streets and sidewalks."<sup>49</sup>

Throughout the discussions on the Soviet Union, in practically every text, reference is constantly made to the United States; and conditions are often compared and contrasted. This takes several forms. A common device is to make analogies between locations in the Soviet Union and corresponding places in the United States. For example, "Gorki is sometimes called the 'Detroit of the USSR'"; or "the most

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<sup>47</sup>Borchert and McGuigan, Europe and Its Borderlands, p. 173.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>49</sup>Glendinning, Eurasia, p. 265.

important waterway in the Soviet Union is the Volga River. It has been called the 'Mississippi of the USSR.'<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Novosibirsk is a "city called the 'Chicago of Siberia.'<sup>51</sup>

Another approach to such comparison takes the form of competition between the Soviet Union and the United States. "This may surprise you: Many large Soviet cities are growing even faster than American cities have grown."<sup>52</sup> The following are two typical sub-headings in one discussion of the Soviet Union:

WHY HAVE WE MORE AND BETTER GOODS THAN THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE?

NEXT TO THE UNITED STATES,  
THE SOVIET UNION IS THE MOST POWERFUL NATION IN THE WORLD<sup>53</sup>

Finally, Soviet communism and American democracy are often compared, usually by way of exercises for children listed at the ends of the chapters. One such item, listed under "Things to Do," suggests: "Your class might enjoy planning a panel discussion on the topic: 'Why I would rather live in a democracy like ours than in a Communist country.'<sup>54</sup> Another exercise, found in the teachers' manual of related activities coordinated with the text, includes suggested acceptable answers for the teacher's use, written in red:

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<sup>50</sup>Carls and Sorenson, Neighbors, p. 146.

<sup>51</sup>Robert M. Glendinning, Workbook to Accompany Eurasia (Teachers' Edition; Chicago: Ginn and Co., 1959), p. 78.

<sup>52</sup>Carls and Sorenson, Neighbors, p. 140.

<sup>53</sup>Hamer et al., Exploring, p. 294.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 299.

We have many wonderful freedoms in our country that we cherish highly. In the Soviet Union the people do not have many freedoms. In the first column below, you will find some of our American freedoms. In the second column, explain how these freedoms are restricted in the Soviet Union.

| Freedoms in Our Country             | In the Soviet Union  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. To own land                      | Land belongs to the government.  |
| 2. To own a business                | Businesses are owned by the government.  |
| 3. To travel                        | Travelers must register with the police and cannot leave country very easily.          |
| 4. To worship                       | The Communists oppose religions and freedom of worship.                                |
| 5. To work                          | Workers cannot leave their job without permission.                                     |
| 6. To think, speak, and write       | People cannot think, speak, and write what they want to.                               |
| 7. To choose our government leaders | People have very little to say about their government and their leaders. <sup>55</sup> |

Thus, in judging from most comparisons, many readers might logically conclude that the American citizen has a great advantage over the Soviet citizen. "He [the American citizen] lives in a country where the welfare of the people comes first, for the people are the government and the government is all of the people." <sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Ben F. Ahlschwede, Directed Activities for Exploring the Old World (Teachers' Edition; Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1956), p. 88.

<sup>56</sup>W. R. McConnell, Geography of World Peoples (New York: Rand McNally Co., 1952), p. 243.

## CHAPTER II

### COMPARISON WITH GENERAL DATA

For the purpose of evaluating the textbook material examined, several other sources were consulted. These sources included higher level texts, books, articles, and reference material on the Soviet Union. In general, an attempt was made to find information corresponding to that found in the sixth grade texts. Also, the most recent data was sought. One source, Inside Russia Today by John Gunther, seemed particularly appropriate for such a comparison since it contained the same type of information presented in the texts, only on an adult level. Therefore, Gunther's work was used quite extensively in this study.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a federation consisting of fifteen Union Republics. Some of these Republics are further subdivided into such areas as Autonomous Socialist Republics, Autonomous Regions, and National Districts. "It is noteworthy that the word 'Russia' does not occur in the name of the Soviet Union, for its members supposedly are equals."<sup>1</sup> Soviet Russia proper is merely one of the Union Republics and is technically called the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic. However, the name, Russia, is still widely used to designate the entire country, although it is not absolutely correct.

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Ward Swain, The Harper History of Civilization, Vol. II (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1958), p. 609.

In looking at a few of the regions within the Soviet Union, some traditional stereotypes are exposed.

The concept 'Siberia' automatically suggests coldness, loneliness, immensity, and exile. . . . But Siberia is not what it used to be; what it symbolizes today is industrial development, change in the center of gravity of the Soviet Union, and a vast movement of population. . . . Siberia is booming--that is the long and short of it.<sup>2</sup>

Surprisingly, Siberia boasts a number of modern cities--Sverdlovsk, Barnaul, Tomsk, and Irkutsk--each of which has its own modern university. Nor is Siberia alone in being misunderstood. The same might be said of the steppe, "which for some reason connotes to most non-Russians the idea of dry, sterile soil. Actually steppe means any extensive grassland, or prairie, and steppe soil can be inordinately rich."<sup>3</sup>

As for natural resources, very few countries can compare with the Soviet Union in wealth and variety of deposits. The supply is very abundant and diversified, and many new sources are constantly being discovered. The USSR is very rich in oil, coal, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, and, but for a few minerals, comes very close to being completely self-sufficient.<sup>4</sup>

Food is another topic of some controversy, but it seems that the Soviet people eat food not too terribly different from what is consumed in the United States. Many salted and pickled vegetables are eaten, as are soups and fish. Tea is generally preferred to coffee, and there is a great variety of regional dishes. That meat is of poor quality or even

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<sup>2</sup>John Gunther, Inside Russia Today (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1958), pp. 179-180.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Michael T. Florinsky (ed.), Encyclopedia of Russia and the Soviet Union (1st edition; New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1961), p. 382.

unknown cannot be completely accepted. Referring to one of the typical state farms near Omsk, one author comments that "almost half of the land is used for growing crops which can be used for ensilage. This nourishing feed . . . can be used all winter long for feeding cattle."<sup>5</sup> And to infer that everyone in the Soviet Union exists on a diet of black bread and potatoes is a gross misrepresentation. Kotletki is the equivalent of the American hamburger; and

. . . no mention of Russian food, no matter how brief, could be complete without a word about ice cream. The Russians call it morezhenoye, and it is a national craze. . . . Moreover, it is very good.<sup>6</sup>

A great deal has been written about the history of the Russian people, and only a clear understanding of a country's past can foster a clear understanding of its present. A closer look at Peter the Great brings this "hero" into new perspective. One author holds that changes did occur which had a Western flavor, but Peter is given little credit.

. . . it has long since become obvious that the continuity of Russian history was unbroken by the reign of Peter. Irresistible forces, which owed little or nothing to the efforts of outstanding individuals, had before Peter's birth given form to . . . the steady permeation of Russian life by the manners and customs of the more civilized West.<sup>7</sup>

Another author contends that Peter's changes were either of little importance or more reminiscent of Byzantine than Western culture. "Peter the Great made changes in Russia and is often accredited with the 'Europeanization of Russia,' an idea wholly false. . . ." The most important of his reforms,

<sup>5</sup>McConnell, Geography of World Peoples, p. 249.

<sup>6</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Jesse D. Clarkson, A History of Russia (New York: Random House, Inc., 1961), p. 187.

these pertaining to serfdom, the church, and the state, were not of Western influence at all. "The tsar thus stood at the peak of everything governing Russia through his personal agents and giving his administration an Oriental or Byzantine character."<sup>8</sup>

In connection with serfdom, it could almost be said that Peter "Americanized" Russia:

In most ways Peter's serfdom resembled the Negro slavery of the United States rather than western European serfdom. It is interesting to note that each of these institutions appeared at about the same time, that both later aroused the same sort of idealistic opposition, and that finally Tsar Alexander II abolished Russian serfdom on March 3, 1861, just one day before Abraham Lincoln became President of the United States.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, Peter did, indeed build a great city modeled after those of Europe; and he called it St. Petersburg, not for himself, but for St. Peter.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the most significant single event in Russian history, in light of present-day conditions, was the revolution, or revolutions, of 1917. A distinction must be made between the first revolution--the one known universally as the February Revolution, although it actually occurred in March--and the subsequent revolution of October.

The Bolsheviks had little, if anything, to do with the February Revolution, which was almost completely unorganized, or with the fall of Czardom. The chief Bolshevik leaders were abroad or underground, and litanyists of the party today contemptuously dismiss the events of February as the "bourgeois-democratic revolution."<sup>11</sup>

The initial revolution was followed by general chaos. Legislative bodies were formed, then dissolved; leaders split into factions; and

<sup>8</sup>Swain, History of Civilization, p. 77.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>10</sup>Walter Duranty, Duranty Reports Russia (New York: The Viking Press, 1934), p. 231

<sup>11</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 163.

presently new revolutionary agitation flamed. In October (November by the Gregorian calendar) events took another turn. The October Manifesto was issued guaranteeing the fundamental civil liberties and invalidating autocracy; the czar thereafter governed along with the popularly elected legislature. By this time, Lenin had come to the fore.

Lenin's more conservative opponents declared that his long absence had left him out of touch with conditions in Russia, and denounced his program as "delirium," but his speeches attracted crowds of eager listeners, and when he promised "bread and peace" he spoke of things that every Russian understood and wanted.<sup>12</sup>

N. Lenin was the name adopted by Vladimir Ulyanov. "The 'N' does not represent 'Nikolai,' as is commonly thought; it was simply part of his pseudonym . . . and . . . stands for nothing."<sup>13</sup> Lenin had studied the writings of Karl Marx and dreamed of instituting Marxian principles in Russia. "All the Russian Socialists were really 'Westerners' and tried to impose Western ideas on Russia."<sup>14</sup>

One of the most remarkable aspects of this revolution is that it was almost completely bloodless. Not more than a few hundred lives were lost during the actual rebellion. But civil war followed the revolution, during which occurred much foreign intervention "to help suppress the horror of Bolshevism." Like several other nations,

. . . the United States put several thousand troops into Siberia. Intervention was bitterly resented by the Communists, and still is. No wonder. Imagine, if the United States were fighting for its life in a civil war, what the American attitude would be if Soviet Russia and other powers invaded and occupied large areas of our territory.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Swain, History of Civilization, p. 600.

<sup>13</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 159.

<sup>14</sup>Swain, History of Civilization, p. 419.

<sup>15</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 165.

One area of information on the Soviet Union in which there is absolutely no shortage is that pertaining to the Soviet people themselves. "For generations, it has been part of the American folklore to think that Russians are hardly capable of operating a tractor."<sup>16</sup> But according to all current studies, nothing could be farther from the truth. Not only are the people intelligent and energetic, but friendly as well. "Tourists generally have been surprised at the warmth of the reception accorded them by the Russian public and by the noninterference of the Soviet authorities in their activities."<sup>17</sup>

A tremendous building program is going on--in Moscow and throughout the Soviet Union. "New factories, tall office buildings, and comfortable modern apartment houses for factory workers have taken the places of most of the earlier buildings."<sup>18</sup> The new apartment houses provide homes for a great many people, but others prefer to live in private houses.

Thousands of Soviet citizens own their own homes. . . . Marx had no objection to the accumulation of private property, and the right of contemporary citizens to possess private property is specifically safeguarded in the Soviet constitution.<sup>19</sup>

As was mentioned earlier, the quest for consumer goods is a favorite topic with most writers on the Soviet Union. In May of 1961, Premier Khrushchev announced a shift of emphasis in industrial production to give equal priority to light industry. The results are obvious. "The people at the Embassy say that more and more goods are on the shelves of the

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<sup>16</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. xxii.

<sup>17</sup>Clarkson, A History of Russia, p. 751.

<sup>18</sup>McCConnell, Geography of World Peoples, p. 257.

<sup>19</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 374.

stores. People are better dressed, too."<sup>20</sup> In the cities, great activity becomes apparent. Streets are jammed with people, American-looking buses and street cars, and a multitude of autos. Russian industry has begun to mass produce automobiles on a large scale.<sup>21</sup> As to the matter of whether the Soviet people will ever enjoy the quantity or quality of consumer goods which Americans do:

The time could, indeed, be near when the United States, in order to keep up with the USSR in industrial power and military preparation, might have to sacrifice some of its well-known impulses toward fanciness and pleasure, consumption for the sake of consumption, and luxuries.<sup>22</sup>

It is no secret that the Soviet government is an atheist regime. This means that Soviet ideology is based on materialism, but Article 124 of the constitution guarantees freedom of religious worship, and citizens who desire to go to church may do so. Recounting a visit to the Soviet Union, one writer reports:

Most of us went to the Russian Orthodox Church, along with hundreds of Russians. There was scaffolding in the interiors and much dust, and most of the icons were covered with paper, but this did not detract from the worshippers' devotion. There must have been as many as one hundred young couples carrying babies to be baptised that day.<sup>23</sup>

Government policy on religion cannot be dismissed as being entirely belligerent. "In 1954 a decree of the Party's Central Committee acknowledged 'gross mistakes' in 'scientific atheistic propaganda' and condemned

<sup>20</sup>E. H. King, "Voice Visits: Personal Impressions of the Soviet Union and Poland," in Educational Research Bulletin, XXXVI (March, 1957), p.120.

<sup>21</sup>Norman Cousins, "To 'Have' and to Hold," in Saturday Review, September 8, 1962, p. 24.

<sup>22</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 369.

<sup>23</sup>W. Lytte, "Visit to the RSSR," in American Association of University Women Journal, LI (January, 1958), p. 109.

attacks on the Church."<sup>24</sup> Even Khrushchev himself, an official atheist, sometimes uses the word "God." For example, in one speech he said, "If you live among dogs, keep a stick handy. Rely on God, as the saying goes, but don't you yourself fail."<sup>25</sup>

In contrast to some of the imaginary visits made in some of the sixth grade textbooks examined, first-hand accounts of actual visits to various parts of the Soviet Union are available. The following is such an account of a visit to a public school in Moscow:

I thought first that this school must be one specially picked out for show. It seemed too good to be true. Its physical plant would put to shame nine out of ten public schools in New York City. Maybe the most impressive thing about it was that it was not picked out for show.<sup>26</sup>

✓ Schools are stanaradized--books, curricula, methods--not only for reasons of economy and efficiency, but to provide continuity of study for a child who might move from one school or city to another. Beginning at the fifth grade, every child must take a foreign language. ". . .The kids are more or less given the choice in school of English or German. . . . French is becoming rather minor. . . ." But English is the most popular.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to a second language, Soviet schools heavily stress science and mathematics. "The average Russian boy or girl, taking the normal course, gets more than five times the amount of science and math that is stipulated for entrance even into such a specialized American institution as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Clarkson, A History of Russia, p. 752.

<sup>25</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 229.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 253-254.

<sup>27</sup>King, Educational Research Bulletin, XXXVI, p. 122.

<sup>28</sup>Homer Bigart in the New York Times, November 11, 1957.

In terms of higher education, a student has two choices--college or vocational school. A person who elects the vocational or tekhnikum course is committed to work three years after graduation at practical application in his field. After the three years, he is free to do as he chooses. If a student prefers college, he is paid to attend, exempted from military duty, rewarded with bonuses for exceptional work, and assured of a job upon graduation. ". . .An intellectual in the Soviet Union is envied, not scorned, and has an honored place in the community from the moment he gets out of college."<sup>29</sup> Incidentally, neither the public schools nor the universities offer specific courses in Marxism-Leninism.

Agriculture is an important aspect in the economy of any country, and the Soviet Union is no different. As is commonly known, Soviet agriculture is characterized by collective and state farms. A collective is ". . . essentially a village. It is a community of farmers in a stated area, with shops, schools, a library, a hospital, theaters--even a church in some cases."<sup>30</sup> Every family owns about an acre of land, grows vegetables and keeps livestock. The crops grown on the farmer's private plot can be used for family consumption or sold on the free market. "That free markets for agricultural produce still exist in the Soviet Union is not generally known." A farmer can own a cow, calves, pigs, sheep or goats, and poultry. In fact, about half of all livestock in the Soviet Union is still privately owned.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 262.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 358.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 360.

Each worker is paid from the surplus of the collective after the state has taken its percentage. This payment is made both in cash and produce. Each farm has a director who is elected by the collective itself. Tractor Stations are no longer existent as such; in 1957 machinery and tractors were transferred to individual farms. Apparently in this area, the Soviet Union no longer adheres to strict Marxist doctrine.

Rigid adherence to Marxist blueprints for operating communes and collective farms is not enough to make them work. Hence the need to loosen them up and relate them to the potentialities and needs of the people who have to work them.<sup>32</sup>

Seemingly, the government has been able to make this form of agriculture work for the Soviet Union. Production has increased greatly under this system.

Contrary to the impression given by many of the sixth grade texts, the Iron Curtain may no longer be quite so "iron-clad." Since 1955, it has become relatively easy to tour the Soviet Union, as many of the earlier restrictions have been lifted. Soviet visa policy is even more liberal toward Americans than is American policy toward the Soviets. Inside the Soviet Union, restrictions are much more lenient than most Westerners imagine. Luggage is not checked, and photographs can be taken almost everywhere. Although about thirty per cent of the country is closed to tourists, "it should also be pointed out that, reciprocally, large areas in the United States are strictly closed to Russian visitors."<sup>33</sup>

Tourists are not only welcomed but invited to come to the Soviet Union. Americans, British, and other tourists by the thousands have been

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<sup>32</sup>Cousins, Saturday Review, p. 24.

<sup>33</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, pp. 22-23.

encouraged to visit exhibitions and cities inside the Soviet Union. A bid for mutual understanding with the West has likewise taken the form of cultural exchange. "Few Americans are informed concerning . . . cultural exchange between the two countries, those which involve graduate students and scholars."<sup>34</sup>

The question of freedom for the Soviet people is an important one. The idea that travel within the country is prohibited and people are chained to one place forever is absolutely false. A group of American university women, visiting the USSR in 1956, noted that there were many people traveling in the Soviet Union--foreigners and Russians alike.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Soviet citizens are allowed to marry foreigners, and workers need not obtain permission to change jobs. There is a noticeable pride in Soviet accomplishments and "the great mass of Soviet citizens feel that the Soviet Union, however good or bad it may be, belongs to them; peasants under the czars had no such feeling."<sup>36</sup> The extent of discontent is questionable.

There is scant evidence for the view that more than a very tiny part of the population would, except under circumstances of extreme crisis, take appreciable risks to sabotage the regime or aid western democracy.<sup>37</sup>

That government censorship exists is beyond question. That it is completely and relentlessly applied is another consideration. To say that censorship is much more liberal than it was under Stalin is a truism;

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<sup>34</sup>Robert F. Byrnes, "Academic Exchange with the Soviet Union," in Russian Review, XXI, No. 3 (July, 1962), pp. 213-214.

<sup>35</sup>Lytte, American Association of University Women Journal, LC, p. 108.

<sup>36</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 211.

<sup>37</sup>Harrison E. Salisbury in the New York Times, July 29, 1956.

to understand the nature of the liberalism, an examination must be made on several levels. The press can be very outspoken on all kinds of non-political topics. The papers are full of openly expressed complaints, and magazine editors are trusted to their own judgment, thus not censored at all. Likewise, censorship of the theater has been abandoned, and Soviet plays which have not been seen since the 1920's--satires criticizing the government--are being performed again. Indeed, Soviet citizens are permitted and even encouraged to express protests and complaints in the papers. "Those Americans who think that the Soviet press never contains criticism of wayward trends or activities in general are altogether wrong."<sup>38</sup>

It is quite obvious by now that some definite changes have taken place within the Soviet Union, and these innovations are commonly termed collectively as "de-Stalinization." Since the death of Stalin in 1953, a constant trend away from that dictator's policies has manifested itself. Not the least significant sign of this "new era," according to most sources, is the cessation of overt terror in the Soviet Union. There are very few political arrests, and no longer is anyone in any danger of being punished for "guilt by analogy." The labor camps have been nearly abolished for political prisoners. Of course, correctional institutions are still maintained for ordinary criminals, but people who were imprisoned for political reasons or without cause have generally been released. As they are set free, they are given jobs and helped to resume their normal lives.

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<sup>38</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 81.

One reliable estimate is that, in the years since Stalin's death, seventy per cent of all prisoners in confinement in 1953 have been released, and two-thirds of all labor camps abolished. Of those still confined, only about two per cent are classified as political prisoners; of these, most are convicted wartime traitors.<sup>39</sup>

Another fact that cannot be ignored is that the most recent major government upheaval, in which Khrushchev dissolved the plot to oust him, was completely devoid of force and terror. With the exception of one, the men involved were neither banished nor executed, but retained, although demoted, in the national framework.

Various percentages can be found in connection with Communist Party membership in the Soviet Union--not always in agreement but emphasizing the fact that relatively few Soviet citizens are Communists. However, these percentages do not always give a fair picture since they refer only to adult party members. If members of the Communist youth organizations are included, something more like twenty-five per cent of the population belongs to the party. Among the non-party members, scores of important names can be found.

Curiously enough, plenty of good Russian citizens who are sincere addicts of the regime are not party members, and moreover do not wish to be. . . . There is no professional stigma attached to not being a Communist; in most ranks of society, on a university faculty, a science laboratory, or even in the management of a big industry, party and non-party men work side by side.<sup>40</sup>

In Soviet elections, anyone over eighteen may vote, without regard to race, sex, nationality, job, social origin, or residential qualification. Approximately ninety-nine per cent of those so entitled

<sup>39</sup>Harold J. Berman in the New York Times, May 16, 1957.

<sup>40</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 198.

de vote. All candidates are presently nominated by the Communist Party, but the voter has the option of depositing the ballot unmarked in the receptacle, crossing out the name inscribed, or writing in another name.<sup>41</sup>

The Central Committee is the directive body of the Communist Party. Its members choose a secretariat as well as the Presidium. The Presidium is composed of twenty-three men--fifteen full members and eight alternates--who take account of popular opinion as conveyed through local party officials.

. . . Discussion is encouraged at meetings of the Presidium these days, dissent is permitted, and minority opinions duly registered. The members meet; they argue; they take counsel; they come to some sort of decision; they function as a multiple-headed whole.<sup>42</sup>

It must be emphasized that there is a form of law and order operating in the Soviet Union that is not the whim of whoever happens to be in power. Admittedly, the Soviet law is not like anything Americans know, but ". . . the fact that the Soviet Union has a legal system with definite principles behind it is something in common with other civilized countries."<sup>43</sup>

Before leaving the subject of government, one other item remains. It is undeniable that Khrushchev has made his presence felt and, here again, implemented "de-Stalinization." He is genuinely interested in decentralizing authority to a degree and giving recognition to the minority republics. Moreover, he has transformed the notion that parliamentary government is merely a mockery and disproved the theory that violence is

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<sup>41</sup>Florinsky, Encyclopedia of Russia, p. 155.

<sup>42</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 82.

<sup>43</sup>G. B. Carson, Jr., "Recent Materials and Viewpoints on the Soviet Union," in Social Education, XXII (April, 1958), p. 195.

necessary to remodel a society.<sup>44</sup>

A final consideration to be made concerns the Soviet Union's relationship to the world, both in terms of how the Soviet people themselves feel, as well as the policy of their government. On the first count, the question is easily answered. The Soviet people want peace as badly as Americans do, and anti-Americanism as such is negligible.

I never met a Soviet scientist or worker in the technical realms who did not ask eagerly for better relations with the United States, and who did not urge closer scientific cooperation and exchange of information. Most Soviet scientists feel that they are being snubbed by the United States. The Academy of Sciences . . . sent an invitation to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington suggesting that an American delegation come to Moscow and look things over. It never got an answer.<sup>45</sup>

As for the men running the government, they seemingly desire peace too. Not only do they want to prevent war, they no longer take the stand that war is fatalistically inevitable. ". . . The Twentieth Congress . . . endorsed Khrushchev's proposal to 'continue the Leninist policy of peaceful coexistence of various states without regard to their social structure. . . .'<sup>46</sup>

The question of Communism and the Cold War is an essential one. Quite obviously, the Soviet government actively seeks to weaken the reputation of the United States and establish Communist ties whenever possible. On the other hand, the United States does exactly the same thing, exerting pressure through containment, and constantly issuing anti-Communist propaganda.

<sup>44</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 103.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>46</sup>Clarkson, A History of Russia, p. 745.

One point of marked interest and importance, which is often neglected by Americans, is that a country may become friendly to Moscow not merely by reason of Communist subversion or blandishment, but because it likes aspects of Communism and Russian policy, admires socialism and national planning, and has reached a point in social evolution where the Soviet system appears to offer more than ours.<sup>47</sup>

Here, then, is a brief glimpse of life in the Soviet Union today. In the face of some current data, many old views can no longer be supported. One can hardly deny that the country has progressed since the overthrow of the czars. If the economy is taken as an index, it is noted that both heavy and light industry has accelerated at a tremendous rate. Unemployment is non-existent, and, in fact, there is a labor shortage. In the realm of science and technology, the Soviets are unequalled. Besides their development of missiles and satellites, they are very advanced in theoretical physics and mathematics. Oceanography is highly skilled; their abstracting service is unique, and they have been said to make the best and most accurate maps in the world. Men in the field of medicine have likewise made great strides. Many diseases have been wiped out or conquered, and the death rate has been cut by seventy-five per cent. There are about sixteen doctors for every hundred thousand people in the Soviet Union--the highest ratio in the world. In fact, the Soviet Union graduates about four times as many doctors each year as does the United States.

Cost of living is relatively low. Fees for services are nominal as is income tax--usually five per cent. Rent is usually less than four per cent of the income, utilities are inexpensive, and medical and dental care is free as is education. Today, every child goes to school, literacy

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<sup>47</sup>Gunther, Inside Russia Today, p. 481.

is universal, and the Soviet appetite for books is boundless. Good book shops are found everywhere, and the number of Soviet libraries exceeds that of the United States. Popular culture is encouraged and sports stimulated. There are hundreds of legitimate theaters and thousands of motion picture houses throughout the Soviet Union. The Soviets are very fond of jazz, and American jazz at that. Many jazz bands in the cities simulate their American counterparts.

Women are an important part of Soviet life. They are being encouraged to make themselves more attractive, and are accepted on equal footing with men. Admittedly, many Soviet women do "men's" jobs that American women would not have. On the other hand, many Soviet women held high and important positions which many American women could not have. "Every convenient opportunity is taken to salute women and their doughty prowess. One of the few nonpolitical holidays in Russia is March 8, Women's Day."<sup>48</sup>

The overall picture is not so dark, then, as some would imagine. In many ways, life in the Soviet Union of today is not so completely foreign to life in the United States. In the final analysis, one must surely agree with one writer who says, "What do you expect in a country of this size and power, that everyone is starving, miserable, in rags? They are not, not at all."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 334.

<sup>49</sup>King, Educational Research Bulletin, XXXVI, p. 121.

## CONCLUSION

The first and most obvious conclusion to be drawn from a comparison of the materials presented is that the sixth grade data, both specifically and generally, creates a somewhat different picture from that created by the other, more sophisticated sources. A closer scrutiny may reveal the causes for this inconsistency as well as some possible explanations for them.

In examining the material presented in the sixth grade texts, a number of discrepancies can be detected. In the first place, some information is completely omitted. This is the case, in some texts, on the matter of Russian contributions to the world. Many--at least five of the eleven--do not mention any of the great Russian artists, writers, or musicians, which are generally acknowledged to be among the great names in the realm of culture. None of the texts clarify the position of women in the Soviet Union. Although all are eager to show that women work at such menial tasks as street sweeping or factory work, none mention the fact that Russian women also have equal job opportunities with men and are not discriminated against as they are in some countries including the United States. Finally, very few of the texts bring out the concept of "de-Stalinization" which is presently taking place. Instead, most authors portray conditions just as they were under the dictatorship of Stalin.

A second difficulty occurs in the data which is not omitted; much of it is obsolete. In other words, many of the issues and conditions which are commonly included in the sixth grade texts are no longer current. The Machine Tractor Stations offer a case in point. The same applies to the continued mention of the lack of consumer goods, the political arrests, and the purported widespread terror in the Soviet Union. Even though the books are periodically revised, in many instances they merely present the same old material in a new way.

A third criticism which can be made is that much of the information presented is greatly oversimplified. For example, as previously noted, many authors merely mention that there was, in 1917, a revolution. The same error is made by others in connection with religion, education, and government in the Soviet Union. All of these areas are discussed but in such a brief manner as to be misleading.

Citing examples which are extremely negative or, at least, not typical is a fourth weakness to be noted. This is continuously done in connection with living conditions in the Soviet Union as well as with schools, roads, and agriculture.

A fifth complaint to be made concerns the misplaced emphasis given to certain topics as well as to the entire unit on the Soviet Union. Some authors have a minimum of pages devoted to the Soviet Union; and others, while including ample space for the country, deal too amply with unimportant topics and condense or omit other, more significant areas. For instance, some authors dwell on geography and climatic conditions while neglecting Soviet history, present-day conditions, and the role of the Soviet Union in world affairs.

Finally, a few items mentioned are completely false. This is the case in which one writer states that the city of St. Petersburg was named after Peter the Great; another speaks of "Nickolay" Lenin; and another infers that the Soviet Union is extremely low in natural resources.

Why are such errors made? There are several possible explanations. One cause lies with the texts themselves. That is, the books are not kept up to date or are too limited in length and space. "Publishers must produce volumes acceptable to the educational public. At present this means that a book must not be too long, or teachers cannot carry their students through it in a single year."<sup>1</sup> Another explanation can be found in the information available on the Soviet Union. In general, three sources are used: personal accounts; research projects, which include interviews with refugees, as well as Russian printed materials; and finally translations of texts and materials intended for Russian use.

The relative weaknesses of all these sources immediately become obvious. The personal accounts are limited in value because they are entirely subjective, depending on the competence and motive of the observer. Interviews with refugees are even more biased. Any refugee interviewed is naturally hostile to the Soviet Union and represents a very small minority of the population being studied. Such reporting naturally includes many "horror stories" which are greatly publicized. Although these interviews are all, no doubt, equally valid, they do not depict the average Soviet citizen. "The truth is that such things may

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<sup>1</sup>Cyril E. Black and John M. Thompson, American Teaching About Russia (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 170.

happen to anyone under the Soviet regime, but in cold fact de not happen to most."<sup>2</sup>

In addition, all printed material is quickly dated, and any material intended for Russian use is highly selective and slanted. Another consideration which must be made in the matter is the continuance of an atmosphere of "Cold War." Such an atmosphere cannot help but influence the type of information prepared on the Soviet Union for it places a great premium on learning certain types of data more than others--such as economic activity or loyalty of the people to the Soviet regime. Naturally these weaknesses are not restricted to textbook material but apply to all information presently available on the Soviet Union. However, whereas most of the higher level sources make an attempt to take these weaknesses into account and interpret their material accordingly, many texts rely exclusively on this slanted information and present it as gospel.

A third kind of weakness pertinent to the information presented on the Soviet Union has to do, not so much with text publishers or authors, or even with the information available, but rather with a generally prevailing spirit of the public at large. This spirit manifests itself at times in a kind of ethnocentrism, a viewing of anything different as strange and alien. This ethnocentrism has a long history. "While Dostoevski's books were read in the West in the early twentieth century, it was hard for Europeans to understand them, and they did much to create the widely held opinion that the Russians are a dark and incomprehensible

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<sup>2</sup>Carson, Social Education, XXII, p. 193.

people."<sup>3</sup> The fact is that the heritage of the Soviet Union is more "Western" than many care to acknowledge.

This is true even of Marxism which was born in the West, imported by Russia, and altered into its present Soviet manifestations. Conversely, it is useful to show the contributions that the great flowering of Russian culture in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries made to Western literature, music, and other arts.<sup>4</sup>

Instead, the traditional approach has always been to point up differences-- and show that "our way is better." A study of the Soviet Union becomes inescapably intertwined with a study of Communism, an ideology which we do not accept, ". . . preferring our own ideology, which we believe superior and incapable of improvement by borrowing, at least from Communism. The latter is alien to our thinking and we wish it to continue so."<sup>5</sup>

Another facet of such provincialism results in stereotyping. Beliefs and traditions have grown up about all manner of Russian customs and institutions--Russian temperment, their way of life, the way they dress. But instead of being exposed for the legends that they are, these stereotypes are constantly reinforced in connection with such concepts as Siberia, Peter the Great, and even the Soviet people themselves.

Finally, although the value of learning about the Soviet Union-- and about Communism--is now commonly accepted, such learning can be condoned only on one condition: it must take place against a background of passionate patriotism. The result has been that much teaching is done

<sup>3</sup>Swain, History of Civilization, p. 411.

<sup>4</sup>Black and Thompson, American Teaching About Russia, p. 183.

<sup>5</sup>G. B. Carson, Jr., "What Knowledge of Russia and the Soviet Orbit Should Be Made Available in American Secondary Schools?" National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, XLIII (March, 1959), p. 139.

about the Soviet Union and Communism but in such a way as to be, in fact, anti-Soviet Union or anti-Communism. Indeed, much more material is being produced now than was before, but much of it is so slanted that it sometimes strays from the path of truth.<sup>6</sup>

Undeniably, textbook writers have had good reason to promote this spirited patriotism. Until recently, anyone who even wrote about the Soviet Union was branded a Communist, and "memories of McCarthyism tended to make many people hesitant to engage in a study of the USSR."<sup>7</sup> But, more than this, authors have a responsibility to parents, teachers, and administrators; and these, too, seem to demand a patriotic air. One PTA Magazine reported: "One elementary school teacher . . . preferred to leave education about Communism to the secondary school. In the early grades she would teach only patriotism and democratic government."<sup>8</sup>

At this point, not much doubt can remain on the inadequacy of the textbook material being presented on the Soviet Union to elementary school children. The ultimate question is: What will be the consequences of such inadequacy? These consequences lie in two directions, depending upon one's point of view, but both equally disastrous. For, if on the one hand, belief prevails in the inherent "goodness" of the American system and its triumph over the Soviet system, then constant activity must be directed toward that goal. In that case, accurate knowledge

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<sup>6</sup>T. M. Stinnett, "Who's Fibbing Now?" Michigan Educational Journal, XXXIX (April, 1962), p. 525.

<sup>7</sup>H. B. Leavitt, "Interdisciplinary Study of Russia," Journal of Education, CXLV (October, 1962), p. 10.

<sup>8</sup>W. D. Boutwell, "What's Happening in Education?" PTA Magazine, LVI (September, 1961), p. 18.

about the "enemy" would be necessary and indispensable. Similarly, if one holds to the notion that two conflicting ideologies can exist peaceably in the same world and eventually realize more likenesses than differences, then an understanding of the Soviet Union is also a means to this end. Without such an understanding, it is virtually impossible. Above all,

. . . let us not promote the dangerous stereotype that the USSR is a nation of backward illiterate peasants. Let us not continue the related and silly notion that the richest nation in the world is necessarily first in every endeavor. Let us not be so preoccupied with the sins of Communism as to ignore other evils that may be undermining our democratic ways.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Samuel Steinberg, "Teaching About Communism," Social Education, XXII (April, 1958), p. 202.

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