



4-27-1962

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Notes for Speech
Federal Bar Association
Washington, D.C.
April 27, 1962
Lewis F. Powell, Jr.

HIGHER EDUCATION - SOVIET STYLE

I. Introductory Remarks

It was first suggested that I might talk on the subject of continuing legal education. But you have already had a good deal on this, and the idea evolved of taking a look at some aspects of Soviet higher education. If not an exciting subject, it is at least a timely one - especially to those of us who believe that if the Free World is to win the Cold War, we must know a great deal more about what the enemy is doing to win it.

The Soviet Union attaches the greatest importance to education. In the 45 years since the 1917 Revolution, a nation of illiterate workers and peasants has developed into the second strongest industrial and military power. This could not have happened without a massive effort to educate the Soviet people

It may be of interest to examine some of the characteristics of an educational system which has helped transform a third-rate nation so quickly into one which seriously threatens to dominate the world. As this is obviously a large and complicated subject, I will deal selectively and incompletely with certain aspects which are of the greatest concern.

II. Legal Education

First, let us take a brief look at legal education. In a land where "freedom under law" neither exists nor is understood, it is not surprising to find that law and lawyers have a low priority.

The Soviet higher educational system consists primarily of 40 universities and about 650 institutes. There is nothing comparable to the American liberal arts college or to our law schools. Nor can a general liberal arts education be obtained even in a university. Students at all higher educational institutions specialize in some particular field. In a sense, all Soviet higher education is vocational, as it is intended primarily to prepare the student to enter some specific vocation. A further purpose of Soviet education - almost as important - is political indoctrination.

The leading authority in this country on Soviet education, Nicholas DeWitt of Harvard, recently said:

"Communist education sets itself a much broader task than mere instruction. It not only aims at providing the youth of the country with those

kinds of knowledge and skills that will be most useful to the state, but also it seeks to remold the character of the individual and inculcate a uniform pattern of prescribed beliefs, attitudes, and values - all consonant with Communist ideology." *

Of the nearly 700 Soviet institutions of higher education, it is believed that only 21 train lawyers. Eighteen of the universities have "divisions" of jurisprudence, and three institutes specialize in this subject. The total number of students studying jurisprudence in 1959 was less than 10,000. During the same year in the United States, there were 42,540 students in American law schools.

The required prerequisites to the study of jurisprudence in the Soviet Union are interesting. Reflecting, no doubt, the generally low esteem accorded the legal profession, the only prerequisites are completion of (i) the eighth grade, and (ii) at least two years of gainful employment on a farm or in a factory. The requirement of two years of gainful employment is not limited to prospective lawyers. In 1958 Khrushchev

* DeWitt, Education and Professional Employment in the U.S.S.R., 1962.

concluded that the youth of the country was getting too "soft." He decreed that all students, except those in mathematics, physics, and other sciences, should spend at least two years learning the joys of hard labor before proceeding with their education.

Strict entrance examinations must be passed to enter a university or an institute, as higher education in the U.S.S.R. is highly selective. Thus, as a practical matter, ambitious young people must attend evening school or take correspondence courses during their years of labor. The state encourages this "continuing education" and evening and correspondence courses are readily available.

The normal course of study in jurisprudence is four years, with an additional year for those who specialize in international law. The four year curriculum includes 33 subjects (uniformly prescribed by the state). About 12% of the entire four year course is devoted to political indoctrination; 15% to academic subjects (such as history, logic and a foreign language); with the remaining time being spent on legal subjects. These include some courses familiar

to American lawyers (such as, labor law, criminal law and procedure). But most of the subjects deal with government and administrative law.

The emphasis on the last mentioned subjects is justified. The great majority of trained lawyers become a part of the governmental bureaucracy. In 1958 when the American Bar Association delegation visited the Soviet Union, there were only about 16,000 practicing lawyers in the entire Soviet Union. About 1,200 of these were in Moscow (a city of some five million) and 535 were in Leningrad (a city of more than two million).

The de-emphasis and down-grading of lawyers and legal education is to be contrasted sharply with the treatment accorded certain other vocations. Let us now ^{Consider} ~~take a look at~~ the opposite extreme - science and engineering.

III. Extraordinary Emphasis on Engineering and Science

1. "Secret Weapon"

The "secret weapon" of the Soviet Union is science. The Soviets rely upon many things to attain their objective of world domination. But they well understand that the ultimate source of power is industrial and military might. They know that the only sure road to victory is to surpass the United States as the strongest industrial and military power. And in this fantastic Age of Space, they also understand better than most that science and engineering are the key to this power. Indeed, if the Soviet Union could make a major scientific breakthrough (comparable, for example, to the atom bomb of 1945), the Free World would be at the mercy of the Communist rulers.

With these ends in mind, the Soviet Union is embarked upon the greatest concentration of effort on scientific education and research that the world has ever witnessed.

The headlines report Soviet maneuvers at the United Nations, at disarmament conferences, on

the Berlin issue, or in connection with other trouble spots. The press also reports the spectacular Soviet successes such as Sputnik or the placing of man in orbit. But while these events make the headlines and distract our people, something more dramatic and portentous is taking place within the Soviet Union. This is the rapid rate at which the Soviet Union is overtaking the western world in the vital fields of science and engineering - largely through an educational system which for decades has been geared for this purpose.

2. Study recently released by National Science Foundation*

The extent to which the Soviet Union is progressing in these fields has recently been thoroughly documented in a study released by the National Science Foundation. The results of 3 years of research and work under the direction of Nicholas DeWitt, of the Russian Research Center at Harvard,

* Education and Professional Employment in the U.S.S.R.,
Nicholas DeWitt (1962).

this study confirms in a startling way that Soviet education is out-producing the western world in trained scientists and engineers.

3. The quantitative situation

In commenting on Dr. DeWitt's study, the National Science Foundation made the following points: *

"The extent of the orientation in Soviet higher education towards science and technology is measured by the fact that about 57% of all 1959 graduates at the bachelor degree level were in engineering, science and selected applied science fields - compared with 24% in the United States." **

"While we produce about 90,000 engineering, science, and applied science professionals each year, the Soviet Union's production is currently 190,000 annually. Projections indicate that during the decade of the 1960's the Soviet rate will reach 250,000 annually - more than twice the anticipated rate for the United States."

* Release of National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C., January 15, 1962.

** Preparation for this concentration on science and engineering at the university and institute level commences in the secondary schools where nearly 50% of the total curriculum is devoted to science and mathematics.

4. The qualitative comparison

After Sputnik shocked the Free World in 1957, and we were forced to acknowledge that the Soviets were from 2 to 5 years ahead of America in rocket thrust, it was fashionable to attribute Soviet success to captured German scientists.

There was never any foundation for this myth, nor for the wishful thinking that the quality of Soviet education in science and technology was not comparable to ours.

The recent study of the National Science Foundation must come as a shock to the complacency of these self-satisfied thinkers. Its conclusion was:

"Soviet professional higher education in most scientific and engineering fields is at least equivalent to, and sometimes more extensive than the United States or western European institutions of higher learning."

The study also pointed out that although "narrow specialization" is a limiting characteristic of Soviet scientific education, this is recognized by the *Communist leaders* ~~Soviets themselves~~ and corrective measures are being taken to broaden the "theoretical and academic preparation of Soviet professional specialists."

5. Scientific research

The emphasis on scientific education in the Soviet Union is fully matched by the high priority accorded scientific research. Probably the most important body in the Soviet Union, after the Presidium of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers, is the Academy of Sciences. This elite body, comprised of about 200 full members and 300 candidate members, directs the work and research of some 250,000 Soviet scientists and engineers.

There is no counterpart in America or elsewhere in the Free World which remotely resembles in ~~power and~~ ^{scientific} importance the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

6. Incentives and rewards

The Soviets astutely encourage this entire program by an ingenuous system of incentive and rewards. Most Americans think of our free enterprise system as the one which best stimulates and rewards individual initiative. We likewise think of Communism as the exact opposite in this respect. The truth is the Soviets have in fact adopted many

capitalistic methods. As President Mallott of Cornell University said, following a study in 1958 of Soviet higher education:

"The Soviets are becoming capitalistic almost faster than the western world is embracing socialism."

There is no such thing as a "classless society" in Russia. Incomes and positions vary widely. Article 118 of the Soviet Constitution not only provides that all citizens have "the right to work", but they are "guaranteed employment and payment for their work in accordance with its quantity and quality." *

The new aristocracy in Russia today - enjoying privilege and position comparable to the nobility under the czars - includes educators, scientists and engineers at the top level, second only to the inner circle of the Communist Party who actually control the country.

* Communist leaders frankly admit that until the entire world is communized, they have abandoned the fundamental Marxian concept: "From each according to his ability, and to each according to his needs."

Full members of the Academy of Sciences may earn from \$50,000 upward per year, depending upon their position, their writings and other scientific contributions. It will be remembered that the top bracket of the income tax in the Soviet Union is only 13%!

Not only are scientists and engineers compensated extremely well (even by western standards), but they enjoy the perquisites of the Communist elite. They are entitled to larger apartments; they may travel more freely; and they may enjoy the "private enterprise" right of receiving royalties on books and publications. Talented young scientists are also exempt from military service.

These are some of the ways in which the Communist leaders encourage and promote scientific progress. In short, neither money nor manpower is being spared in the most massive drive in all history to create the scientific, engineering and technical capacity which will enable the Soviet Union to communize the world.

IV. Communist Party Indoctrination Schools

Although the great concentration of Soviet education is in science and related fields, there are various other types of highly specialized institutes - for the military, athletes, artists, actors, espionage and many others. Among the more interesting are the "Party Schools." These are the training establishments of the Communist Party itself.

The Communists leave little, if anything, to chance. Only about 4% of the Soviet population are actually members of the Communist Party. Membership is considered a privilege and not a right. One can become a Party member - not by asking or registering as such - but only after years of demonstrated devotion and capacity.

This process starts in the elementary grades, where there are "circles" for the younger children. At the secondary level, there are the Young Communist Pioneers, and at the teen-age level there are the Konsomuls. But these are basically indoctrination organizations, rather than schools.

There are two levels of formal Party schools, namely (i) Inter-Regional Party schools, and (ii) the Higher Party school.

These train the leaders - the hard core - of the Communist Party, and their graduates occupy governmental and Party positions of importance throughout the Soviet Union.

It is of special interest that several of the Party schools concentrate on the training of "newspaper personnel." Only a member of the Communist Party can be admitted to these schools, and the graduates become the reporters and editors of the Soviet press and other mass communication media.

Although accurate information on the Party schools is difficult to obtain, the National Science Foundation study recently released indicates that in 1956 annual enrollment was about 25,000.* This is to be compared with enrollment in the schools of jurisprudence of less than 10,000.

* National Science Foundation study, "Education and Professional Employment in the U.S.S.R.", (1962) p. 222-223.

Another interesting division of the higher Party school is its program for training foreign Communist Party personnel. This is a three year program of intensive indoctrination and training for Communists sent to the Soviet Union from all parts of the world. The graduates return to their native lands to plot and lead the subversion which is the hallmark of the international Communist movement.

V. Summary and Conclusion

We have been ~~taking a look~~ ^{examining} tonight at certain aspects of Soviet higher education. Of necessity, this has been an incomplete presentation - with emphasis on selected areas of special interest. But perhaps enough has been said to indicate that the Soviet Union attaches the greatest importance to its educational program.

The recent National Science Foundation study states that "5% of the gross national product of the Soviet Union is currently spent on education, as compared with about 3.6% in the United States." This includes both public and private education at all levels.

Barbara Ward, former Editor of the London Economist, concluded early in 1959 that:

"Virtually all western nations devote less of their national incomes to education than does Russia - the United States perhaps only half as much. * * * In Russia the priority given to education has enabled that country not only to leap forward from illiteracy in 40 years, but to produce in absolute terms more scientists, engineers and technicians than the west." *

* New York Times, February 8, 1959.

But the magnitude of Soviet emphasis on education would not be disturbing (indeed, it would be heartening) except for the frightening characteristics of its program.

In brief summary, these include:

- (i) The employment of intensive political indoctrination at all levels of education;
- (ii) The emphasis, unparalleled in the history of education anywhere else in the world, on training scientists and engineers;
- (iii) The absence of liberal arts education as we know it, and its humanizing quality;
- (iv) The corresponding concentration on pragmatic specialization, so that each student is trained - not to become a well-rounded person - but a specialist to fulfill some mission in the cog of Communist machinery;
- (v) The requirement that every Soviet student in a university or institute must learn a foreign language - not for personal satisfaction or cultural benefit, but to enable the sending of Communist missionaries to the four corners of the earth;
- (vi) The Party schools of higher education, dedicated solely to the task of training Communist leaders at all levels at home and abroad;
- (vii) The requirement that the personnel of all media of information (namely, the press, radio, television) be Party members and graduates from the Party schools; and

(viii) The countless special schools busily engaged in the preparation of espionage agents, agitators, propagandists - all being trained as highly specialized "troops" for the Cold War army of Communism.

Nor have I mentioned in this summary another characteristic of the Soviet educational system which is especially depressing to lawyers - dedicated as we are to a free society and a system of freedom under law. This is the de-emphasis and downgrading of law as a field of knowledge and learning.

It has been said many times that one cannot fairly compare the Soviet educational system with that of the free western world. The one is designed to serve the collectivist state and the international Communist movement. The other, to serve the needs of individuals in a free society.

It is indeed difficult to make valid comparisons between educational systems which have such basic differences in fundamental objectives. But we dare not be complacent about Soviet education merely because we think it compares unfavorably - or not at all - with our own. The problem goes far beyond an evaluation of two educational systems.

The unwelcome truth is that education is one of the major "battlefields" of the Cold War. The Soviets are using it in many ways to assure a Communist victory in this "war." The question may fairly be asked whether our educational system should continue to remain essentially aloof from this struggle.

As one who has long been deeply interested in our American schools, this is a profoundly disturbing question. I certainly do not want to weaken the human values which characterize our schools and colleges. But as in the case of other wars in our history, the survival of our country must be our primary concern.

The first step is to accord to education the emphasis which it deserves. There must be a willingness to support it more effectively - not merely with increased appropriation, but by an informed and aroused public interest.

But support of education in general is not in itself enough. There must be a conscious and determined effort to relate our education to the needs of our time and of our country. Obviously, we should never subvert American schools and colleges in the

Soviet pattern. But in our anxiety to see that education properly serve the needs of individuals in a free society, we must never lose sight of a paramount duty - namely, that education also has a responsibility to work affirmatively to see that a free society is indeed preserved.

This means, quite specifically, that education must re-evaluate its emphasis and its curriculum in light of the Cold War and the challenges of the Space Age. We must indeed educate scientists and engineers who will maintain the technical and industrial supremacy which has made this country the strongest power on earth. We must in the national interest improve and expand the teaching of foreign languages.

And, urgently at all levels of education, we must teach our people to understand and appreciate the values of our form of government, to comprehend that this form of government and freedom everywhere is gravely threatened by the international Communist movement, and to be willing to serve and defend America - the great country upon which the entire free world depends.