Chapter Two

Marxism and Soviet Upbringing, 1917–1924

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Abstract

This chapter examines ideologies surrounding character education in the early years of the Soviet Union (1917–1924). A. Austin Garey analyzes the writings of Vladimir Lenin, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and Anatoly Lunacharsky to demonstrate how assumptions about child development, often rooted in Marxist theory, influenced pedagogical recommendations in this period. Soviet schools aimed not just to transfer useful skills and knowledge, but to train new socialist selves. This meant that pedagogical theorists focused on moral upbringing, or *vospitanie*, as well as instruction in given competencies. As Garey argues, Marxist-Leninist understandings of the relationships between class structures, labor, and the social good led key educational theorists to promote models of *vospitanie* that taught children to orient towards collective, rather than individual, aims. These thinkers sought to transform the relationship between individuals and the imagined collective through mass, state-led upbringing, remaking moral assumptions about right and wrong in the revolutionary society.

Keywords: Soviet, Bolshevik, education, character, vospitanie, upbringing.

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Introduction

In 1918, Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first Commissar of Education, rhetorically asked, "[F]or whom should a child be raised – for himself or for society?"[1] The Bolshevik answer was society, not self or family, wealth or legacy. But raising children who would serve the new Soviet society required rethinking the goals

[1] Anatoly Lunacharsky, *O vospitanii i obrazovanii* ["On upbringing and education"] (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1976), 227.

of the school system and reengineering how education itself was delivered: more schools, new methods, new curricula. As Lenin said in a 1920 speech, "Only by radically remolding the teaching, organization and training of the youth shall we be able to ensure that the efforts of the younger generation will result in the creation of a society that will be unlike the old society, i.e., in the creation of a communist society."[2] Schools had to train not future employees, but future communists. Lunacharsky framed aspects of this training process as upbringing (*vospitanie*), writing, "upbringing (*vospitanie*) for us means the education of a new person, since the old person, brought up in a chaotic and acultured capitalist society, is unsatisfactory."[3] Nadezhda Krupskaya likewise wrote in 1918 that "[*Vospitanie*] means to systematically influence the younger generation with the aim of obtaining a certain type of person," a person, in this case, socialized into "the socialist spirit."[4]

The Commissariat of Education sought to bring up (*vospitovat'*) children to adopt a Marxist worldview by introducing new curricula and new teaching methods.[5] "We want to liberate the teacher," Lunacharsky wrote, "and return him to the role he is called to, namely to produce people, and not individualists, but people who would be an element of human justice. This is the task of the ideal school for us." [6] N. P. Lepeshinsky, a Commissariat of Education collegium member, similarly maintained in a 1918 speech that the goal of Soviet *vospitanie* was to change children's character to align with social needs, saying, "The methods in the child's bringing-up and in the educational training of children are to change their former character in accordance with the new problems of the school. […] There ought to exist a direct organic connection between the educational mental work in the school and the element of productive labor." [7] Krupskaya, writing more specifically about the *vospitanie* training process, used the words "habit" and "instinct" when describing how children

[2] Vladmir Lenin, "Zadachi soyuzov molodezhi" ["The tasks of youth associations"]. *Khrestomatiia po istorii pedagogigiki* ["Anthology on the history of education"], ed. Vasily Smirnov (Moscow: Ministerstva Prosveshcheniia RSFSR, 1957), 423–335, 431.

[3] Lunacharsky, *O vospitanii i obrazovanii*, 227.

[4] Nadezhda Krupskaya, "Idealy sotsialisticheskogo vospitaniia" ["Ideals of socialist upbringing"]. *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia* ["Works on education"], vol. 2 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akedemii Pedagogicheskikh Nauk RSFSR, 1958), 83–91.

[5] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 18–19.

[6] Lunacharsky, *O vospitanii i obrazovanii*, 240.

[7] N. P. Lepeshinsky, "Commissary Lepeshinsky's Paper, Read at the First All-Russian Congress of Teachers-Internationalists, June 2, 1918." *Education and Art in Soviet Russia, in the Light of Official Decrees and Documents*, ed. Max Eastman (New York: Socialist Publication Society, 1919), 15–20, 19.

should think about their relationships to the collective good.[8] Rather than teaching rules, *vospitanie* was about developing dispositions.[9]

This chapter examines ideologies surrounding *vospitanie* in the early years of the Soviet Union (1917–1924). I analyze the writings of Vladimir Lenin, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and Anatoly Lunacharsky to demonstrate how assumptions about child development, often rooted in Marxist theory, influenced pedagogical recommendations in this period. I argue that Marxist-Leninist conceptions of the relationships between class structures, labor, and the social good led these influential figures to promote a *vospitanie* that taught children to consistently orient towards collective aims.

"By *vospitanie*," Lunacharsky wrote, "we mean the organization of character."[10] To teach character, right and wrong, good and bad, is to teach morality; it is to train moral orientations. *Vospitanie*, upbringing, concerns the ideal persons a social order seeks to mold, that is to say, social personhood. Much like the Russian concept of *lichnost'*, personhood refers to the socially-created and socially-expressed self, and the self in relation to the collective.[11] It was this relationship between the individual and the imagined collective that key Soviet theorists proposed to change through *vospitanie*, thus remaking moral assumptions about right and wrong in the revolutionary society.

Pre-Soviet Ideas of *Vospitanie*

> The rules of *vospitanie* are the first foundations that prepare us to be citizens.
>
> Catherine the Great, *Nakaz*, 1767.

In the 18th century, Catherine the Great introduced programs that promoted upbringing (*vospitanie*) specifically, not just education (*obrazovanie*). She called two new orphanages Houses of Upbringing (*Vospitatel'nie domy*), for

[8] Nadezhda Krupskaya, "K voprosu ob obshchestvenno neobkhodimoi rabote shkoly." *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akedemii Pedagogicheskikh Nauk RSFSR, 1959), 203–206, 204.

[9] George Bereday, William Brickman and Gerald Read, *The Changing Soviet School: The Comparative Education Society Field Study in the U.S.S.R.* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1960), 416.

[10] Lunacharsky, *O vospitanii i obrazovanii*, 230.

[11] In a similar vein, Shiela Fitzpatrick chooses to study "self-identification" as a public representation as opposed to "self-understanding" as a psychological exercise in her work on persona fashioning in the Soviet Union. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8–14.

instance, and a girl's boarding school the "Society for the Upbringing of Well-Born Maidens."[12] She also included a chapter on *vospitanie* in her 1767 "Instruction" (*Nakaz*), which outlined reforms to society and the legal code. In this tract, the empress directed parents to teach their children the fear of God, piety, patriotism, industriousness, courtesy, and empathy for the less fortunate.[13] Like the Soviets, she saw *vospitanie* as training in values. But unlike the Soviets, she placed responsibility for *vospitanie* with the family, not the state, framing her suggestions for upbringing as "advice for parents."[14] For many in the aristocracy, mothers managed *vospitanie*, particularly for female children.[15] Legally, too, *vospitanie* in this period fell fully in the realm of the family. A Russian imperial law scholar wrote, "In the choice of the character and direction of upbringing [*vospitanie*], the state leaves complete freedom to parents, on the assumption that they should be familiar with the inclinations and abilities of their children, which will determine their future roles."[16]

Yet as the 19th century progressed, parents, if they still supervised *vospitanie* – often along with wet-nurses, nannies, and tutors – found their authority to decide what proper upbringing should consist of eroded by the scientific study of child development. Insights from physiology, psychology, and hygiene were meant to structure child development practices. Physicians and psychologists published how-to articles in a host of new journals: *Journal of Upbringing* (*Zhurnal dlia vospitaniia*, 1857–1859), *Family and School* (*Sem'ia i shkola*, 1871–1917), and *Upbringing and Instruction* (*Vospitanie i obuchenie*, 1877–1917).[17] But only the educated classes would have access to journals like these, and only wealthy and likely urban parents could make appointments with pediatricians. If all children

[12] Anna Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic: Raising the Nation in Enlightenment Russia* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 15.

[13] Catherine II, *Nakaz Komissii o sostavlenii proekta novogo ulozheniia, danniy komissii o sochinenii proekta novogo ulozheniia, s prinadlazhashchim k tomu prilozheniiami*, 1767. Chapter 14, "O vospitanii." https://www.prlib.ru/history/619449; *Catherine II, Documents of Catherine the Great: The Correspondence with Voltaire and the Instruction of 1767 in the English Text of 1768*, ed. William Fiddian Reddaway (New York: Russell & Russell, 1971), 271–273.

[14] Catherine II, *Documents*, 272.

[15] Catriona Kelly, "Educating Tat'yana: Manners, Motherhood and Moral Education (Vospitanie), 1760–1840." *Gender in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Linda Edmondson (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2001), 1–28.

[16] A. Rabinovich, Roditeli, deti, i rodstvenniki (Moscow, 1912), quoted in Byford, Andy. *Science of the Child in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 44, n. 15.

[17] Byford, *Science of the Child*, 45–48.

in the Russian Empire got some kind of moral upbringing, *vospitanie* was theorized for the elite, not the masses.[18]

But it was the masses, precisely, that the novelist Lev Tolstoy undertook to educate at a school he established for peasant children on his estate, Yasnaya Polyana, and at some twelve additional schools in the Tula region of Russia.[19] Tolstoy directed and taught in the school at Yasnaya Polyana from 1859 to 1862. Rather than giving rote tasks, Tolstoy sought to stoke intellectual fires. And for some, for a while, this strategy worked. In an 1861 letter, he wrote:

> The classes are supposed to be from 8 to 12 and from 3 to 6, but they always go on till 2 o'clock because it's impossible to get the children to leave the school – they ask for more. In the evening it often happens that more than half of them stay and spend the night in the garden, in a hut. At lunch and supper and after supper we – the teachers – confer together. On Saturdays we read our notes to each other and prepare for the following week.[20]

The words "Come and Go Freely," posted at the entrance of the school at Yasnaya Polyana, declared from the outset Tolstoy's desire to inspire learning, not compel it. He considered student choice, flexibility, egalitarian classrooms, and skilled teachers the keys to effective learning. Instead of drilling a grammar school curriculum, teachers adapted content to meet the needs of students. Tolstoy wanted to give perceptive teachers "the ability to invent new methods."[21] He thought good teachers were like artists, reliant on training but ultimately creative. Artists can't paint, dance, or teach if constrained by rules of best practice. The converse of this premise, though, is that no pedagogical guidelines could generate good teachers: "No instruction can make a dancer catch just the time of the music, or a singer or a fiddler take exactly the infinitely minute center of his note, or a sketcher draw of all possible lines the only right one".[22]

Tolstoy considered the free educational process at Yasnaya Polyana to be at odds with *vospitanie*, as he understood it. *Vospitanie*, he claimed, was a

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[18] Krupskaya made a similar observation in a 1918 speech, noting that the bourgeoisie taught one kind of *vospitanie* to their own children and something different to children in the working classes. Krupskaya, "Idealy sotsialisticheskogo vospitaniia," *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 2, 84.

[19] Daniel Murphy, *Tolstoy and Education* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992).

[20] Leo Tolstoy, "The School at Yasnaya Polyana." *Tolstoy as Teacher: Leo Tolstoy's Writings on Education,* ed. Bob Blaisdell (New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 2000), 75–173, 2.

[21] Tolstoy, "On Methods of Teaching the Rudiments," *Tolstoy as Teacher,* 1.

[22] Tolstoy, "What is Art," in *Tolstoy as Teacher*, 13.

destructive attempt to inculcate set traits rather than an initiative to let children explore, learn, and discover more about their interests. In an essay titled "Upbringing and education" ("*Vospitanie i obrazovanie*"), he wrote,

> *Vospitanie* is a compulsory, violent influence of one person on another with the aim of forming a person who seems good to us; and education [*obrazovanie*] is a free relationship between people, based on the need of one to acquire information, and the need of the other to communicate what he has already acquired […]. The difference between education and upbringing is only in violence […].[23]

Rather than forcing children to meet rigid ideals, Tolstoy encouraged questioning. Krupskaya also championed education for personal development, often citing the "comprehensive development (*vsestoronnee razvitie*) of a person" as the ultimate mission of schools.[24] But Krupskaya disagreed with Tolstoy's assertion that *vospitanie* should not seek to "form a person" with particular traits, or as Tolstoy put it, "a person who seems good to us."[25] Krupskaya called the goal of *vospitanie* exactly this, "obtaining a certain type of person" – a person with socialist, not bourgeois, values.[26]

The move to *vospitanie* for the collective good marked the first of three major departures in approaches to *vospitianie* from the imperial period to the early years of the Soviet Union. This shift necessitated a second ideological and institutional restructuring, namely, transferring responsibility for *vospitanie* from the parents to the state. Raising children became a task for state-approved experts in state-run schools.[27] The third major change initiated by the Soviets was planning for the moral upbringing of all children, not just the elite. Everyone had to help build the communist society.

Reflecting on his overall goals for peasant education, Tolstoy wrote, "It should be said straightaway that people do not like to work, and that therefore there must be people who act as slaves, working for the rest of society. Is it good, is it bad, is it necessary to lead the working people out of the conditions they live under? Who knows?"[28]

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[23] Lev Tolstoy, *Vospitanie i obrazovanie* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1936).

[24] Krupskaya, "Shkola i gosudarstvo," in *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 2, 46.

[25] Tolstoy, *Vospitanie i obrazovanie*.

[26] Krupskaya, "Idealy sotsialisticheskogo vospitaniia," in *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akedemii Pedagogicheskikh Nauk RSFSR, 1958), 83–86.

[27] Lunacharsky, *O vospitanii i obrazovanii*, 238.

[28] Tolstoy, "The School at Yasnaya Polyana," in *Tolstoy as Teache*r, 97.

The Bolsheviks presumed to know. And their answer was not only that all people should work, but that all should work for the collective good.

Revolution and Soviet Schools

> Dear Lev Nikolaevich,
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> You sent me a book, *The Count of Monte-Cristo*, from the publisher Sytina. I checked it against the original and tried to restore cohesion where it was lacking […].
>
> Nadezhda Krupskaya, letter to Lev Tolstoy about work copy-editing literature in translation for the general public, June 4, 1887.

When Anatoly Lunacharsky took charge of the Commission of Education in November 1917, the Soviet Union faced a literacy crisis. Because illiterate people could neither complete political education nor participate in the industrializing Soviet economy, Lenin made mass literacy a priority.[29] The Soviets mobilized largely volunteer forces for the *likbez* campaign (the abbreviation for *likvidatsiia bezgramotnosti*, or *liquidation of illiteracy*), which ran from 1920 to the 1930s. The state expended substantial resources on teaching the population to read – in both urban and rural areas – and saw corresponding surges in literacy rates.[30] Between 1920 and 1928, over eight million people enrolled in literacy schools.[31] In 1926, the literacy rate in rural areas was 51%. By 1939, that number had jumped to 85%.[32] The increase in rural literacy is significant because it makes plain just how much money and manpower the Soviets invested to create a fully literate country. Cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg could marshal the resources of pre-existing schools, universities, and libraries. But in villages, the Soviets had to build such educational infrastructure nearly from scratch. They sent teachers, literacy trainers, and books to towns and villages spanning over six million square miles – and that only counts the RSFSR.

The Bolsheviks also wanted to overhaul the school system. A 1911 Russian survey found that only 30% of elementary-age children were enrolled in

[29] Vladimir Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 33, 2nd edition (Moscow: Progress Publishers,1965), 78.

[30] Charles Clark, *Uprooting Otherness: The Literacy Campaign in NEP-era Russia* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2000), 17.

[31] Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 157.

[32] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 225–226.

schools.[33] To remedy this, in December of 1917, the Commissariat of Education decreed universal public education.[34] In 1919, the Eighth Party Congress further mandated that education would be free for all children, male and female, until age seventeen.[35] It should be noted, however, that the increase in school enrollment that the Party prescribed under Lenin was not realized until the Stalin era. The early Bolsheviks concretized their aspirations in writing, but they could not fiat changes to schools nationwide. Due to the destruction of buildings in the Russian Civil War (1917–1922) and general underfunding, the number of children enrolled in school actually decreased 38% between 1921 and 1923, from six million to 3.7 million.[36]

Expanding educational access to the masses, even in rural areas, addressed both practical and ideological problems the revolutionary state faced. Practically, the Soviets needed people who could read, operate machinery, and innovate in the fields of science and technology. Ideologically, they needed a populace that prioritized the collective good over individual gain. If, as Lenin says in the passage below, bourgeois individuals were brought up to take all they could from others, Soviet individuals must be brought up to contribute instead. Lenin explained the transition from bourgeoise to communist thinking this way:

> The old society was founded on the principle that either you rob another or someone robs you; either you work for someone or they work for you; either you are a slave owner or a slave. And it's clear that those brought up (*vospitannie*) in such a society perceive, as with their mother's milk, the psychology, habits, understanding […] of a person who only cares about what he can get for himself and doesn't care about anyone else.[37]

But communist *vospitanie* could not gain ground without teachers. Lunacharsky therefore argued that teachers, as stewards of the youth, needed respect and resources: "So give [the teacher] great resources, confess that with his hands you are growing that healthy branch for which we are fighting, for which we exist, without which it would not be worth living and fighting. This is the most

[33] Wayne Dowler, *A History of Education in Modern Russia: Aims, Ways, Outcomes* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).

[34] "Circular of the People's Commissaire of Education to All Regional Commissioners of Education," *Education and Art in Soviet Russia in the Light of Official Decrees and Documents*, 9.

[35] "Program of the 8th Party Congress of the Russian Communist Party (of Bol'sheviks)." *Vos'moi s'ezd RKP(b) Mart 1919 goda: Protokoly* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1959), 400–401.

[36] Dowler, A *History of Education in Modern Russia*, 139–140.

[37] Lenin, "*Zadachi soyuzov molodezhi*," 431.

important thing in our struggle […] Only then will it be possible to develop the new [Soviet] person."[38]

The Bolsheviks aimed to change the economic structure of the Soviet Union, to be sure, breaking the relationship between the exploited and the exploiting classes, giving workers control over the means of production. In a communist society, there would be no more private property, private industry, or private profiteering. But the Commissariat of Education also wanted to bring up children who were oriented towards the collective as a daily practice. Reshaping schools was an essential step in building a communist society.

Vospitanie and Marxism

> Since the bourgeoisie vouchsafes [the workers] only so much of life as is absolutely necessary, we need not wonder that it bestows upon them only so much education as lies in the interest of the bourgeoisie; and that, in truth, is not much.
>
> Friedrich Engels, *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845).

Under the Bolsheviks, the Russian concept of *vospitanie* changed from a theory of private nurturing to one of public character formation. Just as the state transferred private property to collective ownership, it made child-rearing a societal concern rather than a familial one. The Soviets understood socialization processes through a Marxist frame: change the environment, change the person. As Marx said, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past."[39] The revolutionary government planned to transform these circumstances – economically, socially, politically, and institutionally – and set the conditions to generate proletariat selves. Drawing on the writings of Marx and Engels, the early Soviet program of *vospitanie* adopted four main elements of Marxist thought: the role of the family in society, work for the collective, the centrality of labor, and anti-religious sentiment.

State over Family

Engels viewed the family as an exploitative economic unit. Not only were women, he claimed, subjugated within families, but families helped preserve capitalist class structures by consolidating and transferring wealth along

[38] Lunacharsky, *O vospitanii i obrazovanii*, 283.

[39] Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *The Marx-Engels Reader,* 2nd ed., ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 594–617.

hereditary lines. But when the means of production (money, factories, land) became commonly held, these relations of domination would crumble. Inheritance, and marriage for inheritance, would disappear. Patriarchs would have no more status or authority than mother-workers. And many tasks previously subsumed under the private sphere would become collective. Engels envisioned a socialism in which household chores would fall on the shoulders of communes instead of individual women, and where the education of children would become "a public affair."[40] In pursuit of these goals, the Bolsheviks promised canteens, public laundries, and crèches.[41] But although a Soviet woman's double burden of working as well as cooking, cleaning, and caring for children never disappeared, Engels's parallel prophecy that the education of children would become a collective concern did materialize. Lunacharsky proposed preschool *vospitanie* conducted by female specialists rather than working mothers, writing, "we will seek out a woman who knows how to be a mother in the full sense of the word, who does not have to wash clothes, does not have to go to the factory, etc., who will receive her piece of bread specifically for her pedagogical work […]. It is necessary that in this area, as well as in the field of art, technology, science, etc., there be a specialist.[42]

Lunacharsky's statement signaled a move not just to relieve women's familial childcare burdens, but to enforce policies that gave state experts control over children's upbringing in both school and home environments. He argued that children should be brought up by a "chorus" of moral social voices rather than a single family.[43] The Declaration of the Principles of a Socialist School, adopted by the All-Russia Congress of Teachers-Internationalists in June of 1918, said more specifically, "In a society of toilers the task of caring for children is the duty of its members […]. Therefore, the infants are taken in charge by communal nurseries; young children – by the so-called 'kindergartens'; children of primary age – by the school communes".[44] These measures did not replace parents, but they put policies in place that would funnel children into state institutions from a young age.

Krupskaya claimed that the influence of the family was waning, which allowed the state to step in and assert positive influence. She gave the example of a kulak

[40] Friedrich Engels, "The Economic Origins of Monogamy," in *Karl Marx on Society and Social Change: With Selections by Friedrich Engels*, ed. Neil Smelser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973. 22–40), 33.

[41] Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3.

[42] Lunacharsky, *O vospitanii i obrazovanii*, 238.

[43] Ibid., 233–234.

[44] "Declaration of Principles of a Socialist School," *Education and Art in Soviet Russia,* 28.

who refused to send his child to school because he wanted to bring him up in his own way (*propitat' svoim dukhom*). "That won't work anymore," Krupskaya wrote, remarking, "Thus the influence of the kulak and his family on the child […] becomes less and less as the influence of the school and surrounding environment increases."[45] Schools were not the only sites of communist socialization. But Krupskaya and Lunacharsky both framed the role of schools as not just providing education (*obrazovanie*), but also upbringing or moral education (*vospitanie*). Since the child was raised for society, not himself, *vospitanie* became a social concern.[46]

Work for the Collective

Rather than through abstract understandings of right and wrong, justice, truth, or liberty, Lenin assessed the morality of an action by whether it helped or harmed the communist project. Explaining his understanding of morality as material rather than spiritual, Lenin said, "We reject any morality based on extra-human and extra-class concepts. We say that this is deception, dupery, stultification of the workers and peasants in the interests of the landowners and capitalists […] Our morality stems from the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat."[47] In essence, he framed moral acts as those that benefited communist society as a whole.

Krupskaya insisted that labor education could teach children to view themselves as responsible members of such a collective. She recommended that teachers assign real-world projects, such as fixing potholes in village roads, that would "give an emotional charge" to socially useful labor.[48] She instructed teachers to instill habits not only of seeing social issues as theirs to solve, but of working with others – organizing – to find feasible solutions. The schoolchild, she said, must learn to instinctively ask:

> What can we, the school collective, do to eliminate this mess? We lack skills. Can we acquire them? Will we have enough physical strength? How best should we divide up work among ourselves? They'll come around to the conclusion: we cannot cope alone. With whom should we cooperate? Who should we involve in the work?[49]

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[45] Nadezhda Krupskaya, *Voprosy Kommunisticheskogo vospitaniia molodezhi* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatl'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1959), 27.

[46] Lunacharsky, *O vospitanii i obrazovanii*, 227.

[47] Lenin, "Zadachi soyuzov molodezhi", 430.

[48] Krupskaya, "K voprosu ob obshchestvenno neobkhodimoi rabote shkoly," in *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 3, 204.

[49] Ibid.

In writings like these, Krupskaya added methodological specificity to Lunacharsky's more theoretical calls to action. Lunacharsky said, for instance, that children must not be raised to die for communism, for dying wouldn't help build the new society. No, he said, the collective required more: "We demand that you live by these tasks, live every hour of your life."[50] Lenin, Lunacharsky, and Krupskaya all wanted to bring up the next generation of communists, but Krupskaya was one of the few who detailed what that meant, in practical terms, for teaching.

Labor *Vospitanie*

The Communist Manifesto proclaimed that the school system in a communist society would be free for everyone, child factory labor would be abolished, and education would include an understanding of labor processes.[51] In a 1918 speech, Krupskaya cited the Manifesto and proceeded, in checklist fashion, to explain how the Bolsheviks were working to meet Marx's criteria.[52] But in her pedagogical writings, she divided her comments on labor education into two categories, one directly engaging Marx's directives and one inspired by Marxist theories of the alienation of labor.

Krupskaya seems to have genuinely believed in the mission of the "united labor school," a pedagogical framework the Commissariat of Education adopted as early as 1918.[53] In the "Regulations on the Unified Labor School of the RSFSR," the All-Russia Central Executive Committee described the task of the united labor school in this way: "Work should serve as the basis of school life, not as a means of paying for the costs of maintaining children and not only as a teaching method, but as productive, socially necessary work".[54] Soviet schools were not to forego teaching reading, science, and arithmetic, but they were supposed to tie traditional subjects to labor – ideally, to regionally specific manufacturing.[55] In a 1922 article, Krupskaya described a plan for integrating labor into curricula based

[50] Lunacharsky, *O vospitanii i obrazovanii*, 292.

[51] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Jeffrey Isaac (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 92.

[52] Krupskaya, "Idealy sotsialisticheskogo vospitaniia," *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 2.

[53] William Partlett, "Bourgeois Ideas in Communist Construction: The Development of Stanislav Shatskii's Teacher Training Methods," *History of Education* 35, no. 4–5 (2006): 453–474.

[54] "Polozhenie o edinnoi trudovoi shkole Rossiskoi Federativnoi Sovetskoi Respubliki," in *Khrestomatiia po istorii pedagogiki,* 444.

[55] Ibid. For a discussion of debates about labor education within the Commissariat of Education (Narkompros), as well as differences in Russian and Ukrainian secondary education, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 42–48.

on the theme of the history of the Earth and the history of the human race. In this way, she said, students could understand the role of the Soviet Union in the development of human labor activity. This curriculum, for teenagers, would impart:

> acquaintance – theoretical and practical – with the labor activities of people, with the organization of that labor, with how, through this activity, people master nature, use strength and wealth to build the material basis of social life, how in the process of labor activity the society is divided into classes, how these classes fight amongst themselves, how class domination is organized, how class ideology and psychology are formed.[56]

Krupskaya advocated hands-on activities like excursions and labs, as well as work in workshops, factories, and fields.[57] This aligned with a progressive movement in Bolshevik education initiatives based on John Dewey's activity method and Stanislav Shatskii's complex method.[58] Both approaches stressed linking education to real life, giving students, as Dewey famously said, "something to do, not something to learn." In the 1919 *ABC of Communism*, for instance, Communist leader Evgeny Preobrezhensky advised teaching children labor as play, viewing work "not as an unpleasant necessity or punishment, but as something natural, a spontaneous manifestation of capacities […] [And it] must be instilled and developed in the communist school.[59]

Krupskaya also drew out some implications of a Marxist approach to education that Marx himself did not. An additional benefit of making labor the centerpiece of *vospitanie* was that it would condition students not to feel alienated from the products of their labor. If a child had a chance to develop their skills, they stood a better chance of enjoying work in the future:

> The task of the socialist system is to make work less monotonous and tiring. If a child can develop all his talents, he will more easily choose a job to his liking, and work will not be a burden to him. In the same way,

[56] Krupskaya, "Edinaia trudovaia shkola," *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 2, 129.

[57] Ibid., 130.

[58] Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 20–25; Partlett, "Bourgeois Ideas in Communist Construction".

[59] N. Bukharin, and E. Preobrzhensky, *Azbuka kommunizma: Populiarnoe ob"iasnenie programmy Rossisskoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii bol'shevikov* (Petersburg: Gosudarstvenooe izdatel'stvo, 1920); Sheila Fitzpatrick. "The *ABC of Communism* Revisited." *Studies in East European Thought* 70, no. 2 (2018), 167–179, 173.

> collective work develops a number of other valuable qualities. The child learns to distribute his time, organize his work.[60]

But if the principles of the united labor school seem neat and ideologically sound, their rollout to practice hit snags.[61] At a 1919 gathering in Nizhny Novgorod, teachers told Krupskaya that they were not pleased with recent innovations. According to the account in Krupskaya's diary, these teachers "completely did not understand the principles of the labor school."[62] Krupskaya made similar observations in Kazan, expressing frustration with the fact that school administrators had mandated that classes on science be held separately from classes on manual labor.[63] Labor, and the development of "communal instincts" through practical work, should "run like a red thread through the whole life of the school," she noted in an article.[64] But teachers did not know the new methodologies, and even those in the Commissariat of Education would have been hard pressed to give clear examples of "activity methods."[65] Teachers in provincial areas of the Nizhny Novgorod region further complained that "new teaching methods have contributed little" and "the parents […] thought that work in the garden exploited the labor of the children."[66] At another meeting with teachers, someone related a conversation about how to fit traditional subject matter to new ideological requirements:

> A county instructor asked a teacher, "How can I teach history now?"
> —Well, just teach about the Slavs, the Slavs are unchanging.
> —And what should I teach after that?
> —Instructions will be delivered.[67]

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[60] Krupskaya, "Idealy sotsialisticheskogo vospitaniie," *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 2, 91.

[61] For a detailed description of how local schools struggled to adopt new curricular and methodological requirements, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917–1921*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, chap. 3.

[62] Nadezhda Krupskaya, "Dnevnik poezdki na parakhoze 'Krasnaia Zvezda,'" in *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 11 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akedemii Pedagogicheskikh Nauk RSFSR, 1963), 733.

[63] Krupskaya, "Dnevnik poezdki na parakhoze", 740.

[64] Krupskaya, "Idealy sotsialisticheskogo vospitaniia," *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 2, 89.

[65] Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, 20–25.

[66] Krupskaya, "Dnevnik poezdki na parakhoze," *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 11, 733.

[67] Krupskaya, "Dnevnik poezdki na parakhoze," 741.

Many never received clarification, particularly in rural areas.[68] In a 1927 essay, Krupskaya reflected on some of the reasons the united labor school was, in her words, "falling apart."[69] Teachers couldn't carry out educational reforms as directed because they lacked training in both Marxism and the specifics of labor school curriculum development. Since the labor school tried to establish links between work in the classroom and actual local production, teachers had to look beyond textbooks to find out about the geography, population statistics, and economic activities of their regions. Few were prepared to do this. "And there was no help," Krupskaya added.[70] Krupskaya included a sample regional description consisting of seven sections and sixty-four subsections, but by that time, she rightly surmised, the labor school movement was dying. In 1937, the Commissariat of Education directed: "Abolish labor as an independent subject in all classes of the elementary and secondary school."[71]

Much of the labor school reform work, though, took place during the Russian Civil War, which lasted until 1922. Resistance to new methods, inconsistencies in training, and disorganization might have accompanied any radical changes to an existing system.[72] But the war undoubtedly made logistics more difficult. In her diary entries about a set of educational site visits in 1919, Krupskaya wrote about villagers who had been shot, desks and materials destroyed by the White Army, and school buildings that had been requisitioned by the Red Army.[73] The war added turmoil to an already uncertain situation.

Anti-religious Sentiment

Marx stressed that people invented religion. Appeals to an imaginary God, he wrote, let people make wishes, but could not lead to social change. Humans had to recognize the real causes of suffering before they could find solutions.[74]

The Bolsheviks made atheism official state policy, and this stance affected schools. In 1918, the All-Russia Communist Party declared that schools were

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[68] Partlett, "Bourgeois Ideas in Communist Construction," 468.

[69] Krupskaya, "Vazhnaia problema," *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 3, 255.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Larry Holmes, "Magic into Hocus-Pocus: The Decline of Labor Education in Soviet Russia's Schools, 1931–1937," *The Russian Review* 51, no. 4 (1992), 545–565, 545.

[72] See Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility and Larry Holmes, The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse: Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917–1931* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 44–55.

[73] Krupskaya, "Dnevnik poezdki na parakhoze," *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 2, 729–754.

[74] Karl Marx, "The Basis of Religion." *Karl Marx on Society and Social Change: With Selections by Friedrich Engels*, ed. Neil Smelser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 13–14.

prohibited from teaching religion.[75] For her part, Krupskaya recommended introducing antireligious ideas in preschool, guiding children to focus on science and social studies instead of religion. Krupskaya also suggested that teachers guard against religious proclivities in their students by alleviating loneliness. If schools successfully integrated young people into collective life, they would not feel lonely, anxious, or have a need to seek out religious solutions to life's problems.[76] Lunacharsky framed the Christian project as morally bankrupt, saying, "Recently I debated with priests and was heartily glad when they declared that the previous regime did not correspond to the ideals of Christianity, that socialism is the 'true understanding of Christianity and its ideals.'"[77] Lenin maintained, more simply, that God didn't exist, and bourgeois rules made in his name were designed only to oppress.[78]

Many Soviets understood Marxist social theory as first principles. For Lenin, Marxism offered a cohesive, scientific account of historical process and social change. Marx claimed to present dialectical laws, not "random" facts and isolated events, as traditional historians did.[79] Lenin, Krupskaya, and Lunacharsky cited Marx, then, not as one might quote the Bible, but as one would quote Newton: an object at rest remains at rest, an object in motion remains in motion, the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle.[80] As Lenin wrote in 1913, earlier historical theories "at best examined only the ideological motives of the historical activity of human beings, without grasping the objective laws governing the development of the system of social relations."[81] Pedagogical theorists followed Marx's teachings closely; where they innovated, thinkers justified their ideas in terms of Marxist precepts.

Conclusions: Ideological Entextualization

The Marxist linguist Valentin Voloshinov wrote in his 1920s work *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*: "Reported speech is speech within speech, utterance within utterance, and at the same time speech about speech,

[75] "Ob otdelenii tserkvi ot gosudarstva i shkoly ot tserkvi," *Khrestomatiia po istorii pedagogiki*, 441–442.

[76] Krupskaya, "Ob antireligioznom vospitanii," in *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 3, 199–202.

[77] Lunacharsky, *O vospitanii i obrazovanii*, 227.

[78] Lenin, "Zadachi soyuzov molodezhi," 430.

[79] Vladimir Lenin, *Karl Marx: A Brief Biographical Sketch with an Exposition of Marxism*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967. https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/granat/index.htm.

[80] Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 74.

[81] Lenin, *Karl Marx: A Brief Biographical Sketch*.

utterance about utterance."[82] That is, each act of quotation embeds an evaluation of the source. Lenin, Krupskaya, and Lunacharsky overlaid voicings of Marx with their own motives and intentions. Rather than simply quoting Marx, they emplaced – or entextualized – facets of Marxist thought in pedagogical discussions of the time. Entextualization is the process of taking a chunk of discourse, extracting it from its original context, and turning it into an "autonomously meaningful object."[83] Future Soviet educational theorists would later entextualize discourses from these three foundational Bolshevik thinkers as they situated their claims, as well. In this way, new, Soviet concepts became bounded categories with pre-given – because ideologically correct – authoritativeness: "united labor school," "comprehensive development of the individual," "the new person," and even *vospitanie* itself. Long indexical chains linked educational scholarship to legitimacy drawn from Marx, Lenin, Krupskaya, and Lunacharsky, even into the 1970s.[84] Early, more experimental Soviet educational theorists also appealed to the authority of Western educational philosophers such as John Dewey and William Kilpatrick, but praising their works became anathema under Stalin.[85] A 1952 publication rebuked Dewey in a chapter called "J. Dewey – The Henchman of Contemporary Imperialist Reaction":

> Dewey is the wicked enemy not only of the American people but also of all the freedom-loving peoples on our earth. The entire system of his views on the world, society, and the younger generation is, knowing no bounds, an apologia for American imperialism.[86]

Though ideas about ideal character education changed throughout the Soviet period, and certainly after the fall of the Soviet Union, *vospitanie* left a lasting legacy in the educational systems of Russia, Ukraine, and other post-Soviet

[82] V. N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), 115.

[83] Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban, "The Natural History of Discourse," *Natural Histories of Discourse*, ed. Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1–20, 1. For more discussion of the relation between reported speech and entextualization, see Robin Shoaps, "'Pray Earnestly': The Textual Construction of Personal Involvement in Pentecostal Prayer and Song," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 12, no.1 (2002): 34–71.

[84] N. K. Goncharov, "Vsestoronee razvitie lichnosti i shkola," *Sovetskaia Pedagogika*, January 1970: 70–85.

[85] Partlett, "Bourgeois Ideas in Communist Construction".

[86] V. S. Shevkin, *Pedagogika D. Diui na slubzhe sovremennoi amerikanskoi reaktsii* (Moscow: Uchpedgiz, 1952); quoted in Bereday, *The Changing Soviet School*, 68.

states.[87] Educators in Ukraine, where the public display of communist symbols has been banned since 2015, naturally promote different values now than the Soviets did. Instead of "proletarian internationalism," Ukrainian students now learn about civic engagement, national culture, and personal initiative as elements of character development. [88] But the teaching of values remains central.[89] The preamble to the 2017 Law on Education states, for example:

> The purpose of education is the comprehensive development of a person as an individual[90] and as the greatest resource of society – their talents, their intellectual, creative and physical abilities, the formation of values and competencies necessary for successful self-realization, the upbringing (*vykhovannia*) of responsible citizens who are capable of conscious social choice and directing their activities for the benefit of other people and society […].[91]

The preamble echoes Soviet-era *vospitanie* in its emphasis on the development of social selves, state upbringing, and work for the collective good, even if labor *vospitanie* and anti-religious education no longer have relevance in Ukraine. Krupskaya and other Soviet theorists, similarly, cited ideas from Tolstoy even though they rejected his approach overall as bourgeois and apolitical. [92]

[87] Tatiana and Laura Perry Bogachenko, "Vospitanie and Regime Change: Teacher-education Textbooks in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine," *Prospects* no. 45 (2015): 549–562; Alan DeYoung, "The Erosion of *Vospitaniye* (Social Upbringing) in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan: Voices from the Schools," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 239–256; Amy Austin Garey, "The Second Parent: Ideologies of Childhood in Russian Pedagogy Manuals," *Journal of Childhood, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2022): 260–274; Elena Minina, "Money versus the Soul: Neoliberal Economics in the Education Modernisation Reform in Post-Soviet Russia," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 16, no. 4 (2018): 435–52.

[88] Bogachenko and Perry, "Vospitanie and Regime Change," 449–551.

[89] See Verkhovna Rada, *Pro osvitu* ["On education"]. Law No. 2145-VIII of 5 September 2017. Government of Ukraine, 2017, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2145-19#Text; Alla Bogush, "Ditinstvo u tsinnisnomu vymiri," *Bulletin of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine* 3, no. 2 (2021): 1–5; Iryna Sidanich, "Dukhovno-moral'ne vikhovannia ditei doshkil'nogo viku: problemy i perspektivy," *Bulletin of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine* 3, no. 2 (2021): 1–5.

[90] Krupskaya and other Soviet educational theorists often spoke of the "comprehensive development" (*vsestoronnee razvitie*) of individuals. This phrasing is echoed in the preamble to *Pro osvitu*: "comprehensive development (*vsebichnyy rozvytok*) of a person as an individual". Krupskaya, "Shkola i gosudarstvo," *Pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, vol. 2, 46; Verkhovna Rada, *Pro osvitu* ["On education"].

[91] Verkhovna Rada, *Pro osvitu* ["On education"].

[92] Partlett, "Bourgeois Ideas in Communist Construction," 460.

Quotation may imply concord or critique, reporting and relaying what matters now, eliding vestigial words, concepts, and events. In nearly all cases, societal change is not a complete tearing down and reconstruction, but revoicing the given in contexts created by ourselves.