

**EDUCATION AND
AUTOCRACY IN RUSSIA
FROM THE BOLSHEVIKI**

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Education and Autocracy in Russia from the Bolsheviks by Daniel Bell Leary

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DANIEL BELL LEARY

**EDUCATION AND
AUTOCRACY IN RUSSIA
FROM THE BOLSHEVIKI**

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Education and Autocracy in Russia

From the Origins to the Bolsheviki

DANIEL BELL LEARY

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PREFACE

In view of present social and political conditions, pointing to the beginning of the growth of a closer relationship between the old world and the new, it becomes more imperative than ever that mutual understanding and knowledge be the basis of the new relationship. The history of Russian education, from an interpretative point of view, has scarcely been begun, even in Russia, though the materials for it have been collected. It is intended that this first survey shall be followed by other investigations giving, for the various periods, a more detailed account than has been possible in this broader analysis.

I am glad to express my appreciation for the aid and encouragement which have been given me. Professors Monroe, Kilpatrick and Kandel of Teachers' College have been particularly kind, while to Professor Prince of the Russian Department of Columbia University I owe my first introduction, some five years ago, to the language and the affairs of Russia.

I am also under obligation to my many Russian friends who, however much they have differed in political and social creeds have, one and all, exemplified a spirit of service in giving many hours of their time to a foreigner who had no other claim than a sincere and friendly interest in their land and language.

D. B. L.

July 29, 1919.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Explanation of Thesis.

This essay will endeavor to trace the following four movements in the history of Russia, and to show their mutual relationships: 1, the growth of democracies in the period from the 9th to the 13th centuries; 2, the evolution of an autocracy, dating from the 13th century; 3, the creation and imposition by this autocracy of a system of education directed to class and politician ends; 4, the resultant struggle against this autocracy and its system of education.

Finally, an examination will be made of the program of the Bolshevik regime as a type of education radically different, in principle and method, from that which it has, for the time being, supplanted, and which claims to be of and for that people whom the previous system neglected.

In other words, an attempt will be made to correlate the social, economic, political and educational evolutions of Russia. It seems, to the writer, that it is easy to trace, in Russia, a clear connection between these different factors of history. Political and economic disaster or dissatisfaction have led to social and educational advancement, newly established security at home and abroad, after a period of disorder, have often led to new social and educational restrictions. The influence of the West is predominant throughout—now leading to reform, again to insular attempts to be self-sufficient; but it cannot be too much insisted that Russian history is a part of that larger field of history represented by Western civilization in general.

The history of education in Russia affords an example of this influence of the West. Under Peter, and even to some extent under some of his immediate predecessors, Russia was literally forced to share in the culture of the West and to think some of her ideas; under some of the later Tsars it was forbidden even to travel abroad. But in every case, under the Romanov dynasty, the principles of Russian education have been formed by and for the sake of the ruling class and the government.

Education has always been considered in Russia, by both the autocracy and its opponents, as an eminently serious and important matter. Russian literature, all but the very lightest, has concerned itself with the question. Education and schools are viewed, and have always been viewed, in intimate connection with life, but the kinds of life for which the reformers and the government wished the schools to prepare were, of necessity, totally different. It was the inability of the government either to stem the tide of the revolutionary movement, or to bring about, under its own direction, the necessary and widely demanded educational and social reforms which led to the present state of affairs. But it must be kept constantly in mind that the social revolution, of which the Soviet government is the culmination, began in a very real sense with Peter the Great. The present is only the historical outcome of a long and intricate struggle between the Russian people and their government which, ready more than once to fall, needed but the final and too disintegrating conditions of the World War to bring it to an end. But the beginning was long ago.

In addition to establishing the main points of the first paragraph, it is hoped that this essay may help to a better understanding of Russia and things Russian. The rest of Europe and, in particular, the people of the United States have not known or understood much of Russia and her history in the past; if we had, there might have been less surprise at the Revolution and more preparation for it. For better or for worse, we of America are, since the war, more closely knit to Europe and its problems, and Russia is a large part of Europe, both from the point of view of resources and size, as well as of population. Her problems are our problems, even if not so acute; and her solutions, whether failures or successes, should be followed closely and accurately, and as they really are, not as interested propaganda too often misrepresents them. Autocratic Russia, like Germany, had a highly centralized national system of education, with very definite national ideals, and a highly specialized conception of mass and class,—and it has all come to nothing. We, of the United States, are also a nation; we, too, have problems not unlike Russia's, and it is not stretching possibilities to expect that we can perhaps gain in educational outlook by understanding conditions and solutions in both the old and the new Russia. In any case, we can help her. American educational ideas and ideals are well known in Russia, many of them most favorably; American text-books are highly thought of; but we cannot offer adequate or substantial advice without an intimate knowledge of her past and present conditions.