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A History of Education in Modern Russia: Aims, Ways, Outcomes, by Wayne Dowler, London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney, Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, ix +238 pp., £76.50 (hardback). ISBN: HB: 978-1-350-10132-6.

This is in Bloomsbury Academic's *History of Modern Russia* series. Wayne Dowler provides in a single short volume an excellent readable account of the system of education in modern Russia. This is difficult to do considering the vicissitudes of the country's modern history. It is timely as Russia enters of its own accord into another period of stress and fracture with its invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. A professor of History, at the University of Toronto, Wayne Dowler is well placed to attempt this, with *Classrooms of Empire: The politics of schooling Russia's eastern nationalities, 1867-1917* (2000) among his publications.

The present book is a survey of formal education '...within the confines of organized schools and nursery.' (2). It comprises a preface, an introduction, and nine further chronological chapters beginning with Peter the Great and his successors, ending with Gorbachev to Putin, and a brief conclusion. There are also figures, a glossary, notes, a bibliography, and an index. It is structured in text-book style but without the usual questions and exercises. Each chapter begins with a political, social, diplomatic, and cultural context. This is followed by an account of the educational initiatives in each period and how students and teachers experienced them. The themes include tensions between an open system and an estate-based education, between utility and broader human development, the role of the Church, state language policy and the schooling of minorities. Each chapter assesses the success or failure of formal education's objectives in each period.

Dowler reminds us that the Russian language distinguishes between *obrazovanie* (academic learning), *obuchanie* (training of skills) and *vospitanie* (moral education and upbringing). This has had an important place in Russian education with implications, as in all educational systems, for values and indoctrination, key themes in the history and philosophy of education. This brings state objectives into tension with those of independent intellectuals and artists, aggravated by the political notion of 'cameralism.' This '...entrusted to the state the leading role in advancing the public good.'(30). This tension is not exclusive to Russia, although marked there throughout its modern history.

First, Peter I considered education to be the business of the state which he

associated with the public good. However: 'Limited resources and a lack of trained personnel prevented the state control over schooling that Peter envisaged' (20), although later regimes were to impose it. Again, after Peter: 'Differences in education began to define social divisions.' (20). New scientific, technical, administrative, and military knowledge created a fresh vocabulary important in the cultural development of modern Russia, especially among the emerging *raznochintsy* (educated people of various ranks).

Secondly, Catherine II, an enlightened absolutist, '...shared with Peter the Great the cameralist values of utility, service, and the centrality of the state as fundamental to governance.' (23). Her object was the utilitarian one of enlightening her subjects '...in such a manner as to achieve the greatest good for all.' (23). This meant an emphasis on *vospitanie* and: 'From Catherine's reign onward moral upbringing became a major concern of the state in education policy-making.' (24).

Thirdly, by the reign of Alexander II there was, says Dowler, '...near universal agreement that an education that conferred on citizens the skills needed to compete in the modern world of Europe was essential.' (64). There was a reaction from his successors, notably Alexander III, under '...the old banner of Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and Nationality.' (87). The autocratic state '...feared the consequences for the existing political order of an education that fostered Western liberal or democratic ideals.' (64). As is well known, this was a theme of nineteenth-century Russian literature and debate '...in a profusion of journals devoted to education and pedagogy.' (65). By 1917, despite the hesitancy of the autocracy, Russia had been modernized, although not sufficiently to challenge Germany or prevent its collapse.

Dowler considers education in the Soviet Union in two chapters. It is a well-known story told simply and clearly. The first: 'Schooling for Socialism: Revolution to Cultural Revolution' describes the ideologically shaped yet contested progressive policies of *Narkrompos* (Commissariat of Enlightenment) led by A.V. Lunacharsky and N.K. Krupskaya, together with efforts at proletarian cultural revolution. The role of the Communist Party is emphasised, with teachers '...the main army of socialist education.' (128). However: 'In the real world, schools bore scant resemblance to the ideals of *Narkrompos*' (128) and were often rejected as utopian by provincial education departments

and disapproved of by parents. In the second: 'Retrenchment: Stalin to Chernenko,' Dowler notes: 'The disorder in the schools during the cultural revolution and its consequences for the economy and social order had alienated parents, teachers, students, and industrial managers.'(143). The chapter describes how education became geared to the fulfilment of the Plan. In practice, this built an *apparat* or bureaucracy and: 'The 'new class' denounced by Milovan Djilas in 1957 was already in formation.'(141).

The final chapter, 'Ends and Beginnings: Gorbachev to Putin,' describes the educational reform of 1984-1985 as part of the *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (reconstruction) intended to shore up a system in demographic and economic crisis, and their failure. The reforms of 1992 were intended to '...counter the authoritarianism of the past and nourish a democracy of the future.'(195). These also failed and gave way to central authoritarianism under Putin. The aims now are nation-building and patriotic identity that includes Russia's 'ancestral faith in God.' (197). As Dowler concludes: 'Education in modern Russia has served primarily as an instrument for the advancement of state interests' (199), as determined by those who control and benefit from it. The book was written before Putin's renewed imperial aggression against Ukraine but anticipates his ambitions for Russia as a state-civilization. The consequence is likely to be autarchic, an education system which, unlike that of Peter the Great, is intellectually closed; and lacking in humane *vospitanie*.

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