

EIRFeature

Russia: Education is a matter of national security

by Our Special Correspondent

After almost two years of preparatory work, the Education Commission of the Duma (the parliament of the Russian Federation) convened on May 21 in Moscow, for a half-day hearing on “Education and National Security.” Over 430 experts and representatives came, from regional governments across Russia, filling the plenary room.

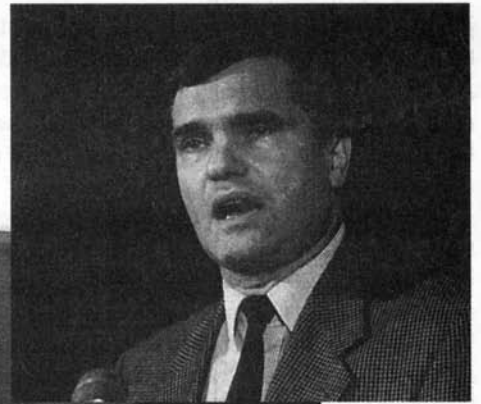
The number of participants, and the often shocking content of the reports on education in today’s “reformed” Russia, demonstrate that Russian society’s concerns are much more profound than one might gather from the superficial Western news reports on whether “pro-” or “anti-Yeltsin-reform” popular moods will prevail. The question of education as an essential component of the future shape of the Russian state—hence, the core element of any true “national security” and “national economy”—was what brought so many people to this hearing, and points to issues far beyond Election Day and the identity of Russia’s next President.

The Schiller Institute was the only non-Russian organization invited to address the hearings. Institute representative Anno Hellenbroich of Germany spoke seventh, following government ministers, commission chairmen, and rapporteurs; he discussed shaping education according to the Classical principles of the Humboldt education reforms in nineteenth-century Germany. The organizers of the hearing had invited the Schiller Institute because they knew that in recent years, the Institute, founded by Helga Zepp LaRouche and her husband, Lyndon LaRouche, has become one of the world’s leading independent sources of ideas in the fight for human civilization, for the dignity of the individual, and on issues of human rights and education.

For the hearing, Zepp LaRouche had submitted a paper on “Education and National Security: The Moral-Philosophical Foundations of National Economy,” which, with Hellenbroich’s address on “Classical Curriculum and Socratic Dialogue: An Answer to the Challenges of the 21st Century,” was included in the hearing’s written proceedings (both papers are published in full in this *Feature*



The Russian Duma's Education Commission meets to discuss "Education and National Security." Inset: Schiller Institute leaders Helga Zepp LaRouche and Anno Hellenbroich. Hellenbroich presented papers by the two of them to the plenum.



package). Zepp LaRouche's thesis on the requirements for future education, was also presented orally.

Security, independence

The rapporteur of the Parliamentary Education Commission, Oleg Smolin, put his finger on the burning issues of education in Russia today. He deplored the drastic cuts in the education budget: Elementary schools now receive only one-third of the funds required to cover even their most basic needs. For orphans, the schools have only 30% of the funds they need for lunch programs, and only 25% of what they need for clothing subsidies. No funds at all are available for handicapped children. Smolin (who is blind) referred to reports from the Attorney General's office, which show the criminalization of children and youth as a direct consequence of the lack of education.

In the past year, crimes committed by teenagers and cases of teenage drug abuse rose by about 5%. Western observers familiar with the situation in the slums of Colombia and the United States, might shrug this off. But what it signifies for the traditions of Russian society and families, in the big cities and, even more, in the social structure of small country towns, is suggested by the fact that in Russia, when an elderly person boards a bus, other passengers immediately stand to offer a seat—a courtesy all but dead in big cities in the West.

That is why the rapidity of "modernization," the destruction of traditional values in Russia, is so horrifying, the speaker emphasized.

"Education influences our security, our psychological sense of security and stability; without a rich education, humanity cannot survive, nor can a normal social system develop without values," Smolin told the experts. "Today, children do not universally enjoy equal levels of education; all the experts say that the development of educational potential is the determining factor for individuals and for the nation in the world of the future."

Smolin continued: "In the past five or six years, all connection to Russian history, to its intellectual and spiritual traditions, has been broken. Largely thanks to television, 'money' has been raised up as the only important value. The television has been turned into an 'idiot machine.' Previously, you might see a Fellini film once in a while; but today, we are subjected to third-rate films from the Third World, or worse. In the school textbooks, so-called 'modern' poems are presented to the children. Now, I don't have anything against modern poems, but I *do* have something against bad ones, and I have something against the fact that neither Pushkin nor Lermontov can even be found in these textbooks. Children today often have no serious relation to life; how quickly can spiritual values be destroyed! But a renaissance in education takes a long time; for example, children must learn Pushkin at an early age, in order for values to be imparted."

Smolin reported on project groups whose preliminary results were presented at the hearings by Yuri Gromyko, president of the Moscow Education Academy, among others. Gromyko stressed that educational goals must be formulated

jointly by various social forces. He deplored the “draining of the intelligentsia” into foreign countries, and the in-fighting among the various domestic political powers: “But toward what goal? There now exists an informal war, without front lines; the mass media are waging war against us, in the cities, and in the country.”

Gromyko attacked the activities of big speculative funds (a scarcely veiled reference to the infamous George Soros Fund), which do not so much commit “espionage,” as “spread a mind-deadening climate.” And he posed questions to the hearing: “How are scientists reproduced? What is our image of the educator, and what is our strategic educational goal?” (An interview with Gromyko is published as part of this package.)

Schiller Institute standards

As a concept for “education and national security,” the Schiller Institute presentation by Hellenbroich focussed on

Pravda reports Schiller Institute attack on Soros

In coverage of a dispute between Communist Party of the Russian Federation Presidential candidate Gennadi Zyuganov and Russian Federation Minister of Education Ye.V. Tkachenko, over who better defends the Russian classics, *Pravda* of June 6 covered the Schiller Institute’s intervention at Russian parliamentary hearings on education and national security.

Pravda’s Irina Strelkova wrote: “For several days in early May, all TV channels were playing the speech of Russian Federation Minister of Education Ye.V. Tkachenko, who ‘exposed’ Presidential candidate G.A. Zyuganov’s ignorance about contemporary schools. Meeting with voters in St. Petersburg, Zyuganov had said that schoolchildren were not being given Pushkin, Tolstoy, and the other classics. The minister of education rejoined, that they are taught better now, than ever. He affirmed the same on May 21, at parliamentary hearings on ‘Education and National Security.’

“Those assembled particularly criticized the history textbooks, published under the Soros Fund’s ‘Renewal of Humanities Education in Russia’ program, which the Ministry of Education supports. One of the participants called the Soros history texts ‘anti-scientific and anti-patriotic.’ The German scholar Anno Hellenbroich, from the Schiller Institute, also spoke very emphatically in this regard, saying that Soros’s interference in education was doing harm not only in Russia, but also in several other European countries.”

the development of Eurasia as a common goal for all humanity. Crucially important for this undertaking, is the Platonic method of hypothesis-formation. Students must become conversant with all the main human “languages”: spoken language, the language of hearing, and the language of vision. Hellenbroich’s sharp attack, in this connection, on the “information society” utopia which Soros is currently using his money to promote in eastern Europe, drew loud applause.

Early in his presentation, Hellenbroich referred to the increasing influence of Lyndon LaRouche and his views in the U.S. Presidential campaign. Then, summarizing the thesis of Zepp LaRouche’s paper, Hellenbroich said that education must be based on the proper transmission of universal history: “This transmission of universal history in the Schillerean sense, thus primarily involves tracing the development of ideas that have brought humanity forward.”

And, in conclusion: “Once the student has gone through all these disciplines, . . . we now have the prerequisites for the development of the kind of personal character that Schiller calls the ‘beautiful soul.’ . . . Any educational program that seeks to foster, in the best possible way, the sovereign nation-state, as well as the creative abilities of its citizens, must be oriented toward these ideals.”

Prospects for Russia

Speakers from the military sector, Russian Orthodox Church, and government health agencies, provided examples of the deepening crisis—especially the financial situation—and its effect on Russian education in recent years. Pediatricians and child psychologists report growing numbers of illnesses afflicting schoolchildren, and also new syndromes displayed by children of the *nouveaux riches*, children overtaxed by “their parents’ new career aims,” prone to neurotic episodes, even suicide attempts.

The textbooks financed by the Soros Foundation were criticized for their one-sided Western orientation (no reference at all to daily life in Russia). A general spoke of the future of Russia’s military academies, and the shrinking budget for military education—a loss which will affect hundreds of thousands of youth who had relied on these academies to obtain an education.

From Omsk, it was said that this winter, the region’s 80 schools and colleges will probably have to close when the temperatures drop to their normal level of -22° F, since there won’t be any money to pay for heating.

Russia’s education minister attempted to point out a few positive sides of the reforms under Boris Yeltsin, but failed to convince those present, who must confront the problems every day.

The very fact that, at this rather desperate moment in Russia’s history, a discussion could be so successfully begun in the Russian parliament on the connection between education and national security, gives hope that a better future is in store for the country.