FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 / (618)462-5415

RELEASE: MAY 1, 1981

THE SOVIET EDUCATIONAL REVOLUTION

"The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims." So proclaimed the Communist Manifesto. Yet, Americans have a long and dismal record of disdaining to believe what the Soviets say they plan to do.

On November 10, 1966, following the 23rd Party Congress, the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party adopted a resolution calling for the development of highly skilled labor pools. That was the start of a far-reaching plan for a two-tiered educational program to develop both the most academically proficient students and those placed in three- or four-year technical vocational schools.

The Soviet Five Year Plans for agriculture and industry were failures, but their Fifteen Year Plan for education has been a stunning success. It came to light only as a result of unique research by Izaak Wirszup, professor of mathematics at the University of Chicago and an internationally recognized authority on Soviet computer technology and mathematics education in the Soviet bloc.

Dr. Wirszup produced some dramatic comparisons between Soviet and American education. More than 5,000,000 graduates of Soviet secondary schools in 1978 and 1979 have studied calculus for two years, while only 3,150,000 students graduate from U.S. high schools and only 105,000 of those have taken even a one-year calculus course.

In addition to teaching two years of calculus to an entire young generation, all Soviet students are required to complete five years of algebra, 10 years of geometry, five years of physics, four years of chemistry, 1 year of astronomy, 5-1/2 years of biology, 5 years of geography, 3 years of mechanical drawing, and 10 years of workshop training.

By contrast, the average college-bound U.S. high school graduate has only 1 year of basic algebra, 1 year of geometry, 1 year of advanced algebra or trigonometry, 1 year of biology, and, at most, 1 year of chemistry or physics.

(more)

But the biggest contrast between the Soviet record and ours is not between our brightest college-bound students and theirs, but between the non-college-bound students in the two countries. The difference between the average Soviet and American skilled worker or military recruit, according to Dr. Wirszup, "is so great that comparisons are meaningless."

The Soviet citizen has the tremendous secondary school training in mathematics and science detailed above, while the average American has only 1 year of algebra, 1 year of geometry at most, and no physics, chemistry, biology or astronomy. In 1977, only 59 percent of the entrants into the U.S. Army had a high school diploma.

This is precisely why the American All-Volunteer Army and our major industries are having a terrible time finding persons who can run modern technological, military, and industrial equipment. Our armed services and major businesses have had to put in their own training programs to teach job applicants and military recruits what they didn't learn in high school. Of course it is much harder to teach a young person after he has wasted so many teenage years in activities that did not challenge his mind.

Dr. Wirszup's conclusion is important for all Americans to take to heart and mind. "The Soviet Union's tremendous investment in human resources, unprecedented achievements in the education of the general population, and immense manpower pool in science and technology will have an immeasurable impact on that country's scientific, industrial and military strength."

"It is my considered opinion," he says, "that the recent Soviet educational mobilization, although not as spectacular as the launching of the first Sputnik, poses a formidable challenge to the national security of the United States, one that is far more threatening than any in the past and one that will be much more difficult to meet."

When Dr. Wirszup's research was made public, several critics complained that the Soviet successes were achieved only by the use of totalitarian tactics unacceptable in the United States. That's true, but it begs the question. Admiral Hyman Rickover pointed out the problem: "By promoting the notion that learning is easy and entertaining, we are letting our children grow up believing they need not struggle to excel -- a notion which is damaging to both the child and to society."

(end)