

They Speak for Themselves

Soviet Educators on Soviet Education, edited and translated by Helen B. Redl, with a foreword by Fritz Redl (The Free Press of Glencoe, 252 pp., \$6.95), presents for the first time to the general American public a collection of Soviet educators' own writings on their nation's system of education. The reviewer is Associate Professor of Education at Brooklyn College, New York.

By MAXINE GREENE

EVER SINCE the post-Sputnik trauma and the American public's discovery of the Soviet Union's schools, American travelers have been making pilgrimages to see whether they are really better than ours. The reports to the lay public have been journalistic most of the time, sometimes verging on Cassandra cries, sometimes on exposé. There have been, it is true, many field studies carried out by educators; and original source materials have been increasingly available. But these have been translated for the benefit of the educational profession and been published mainly in academic journals, too specialized or too small in circulation to reach the public at large.

Helen Redl has established a precedent, then, in permitting selected Soviet educators to speak for themselves to interested Americans in and out of the profession, particularly those who feel the need to allay what Fritz Redl calls "the pangs of our communicational consciences." Moreover—and this is one of the distinctive strengths of the book—the Redls have been able to confront and articulate "those blocks to communication which stem from the enormous complexity of the task of linguistic and conceptual translation. . . ." To identify such blocks is, in any field, to move a considerable distance toward removing them. In this case, the reader is engaged in the effort to understand and to exercise judgment even with respect to the translator's own choice of terms.

One reason for the Redls' peculiar sensitivity to what is involved in understanding is that both are transplanted Europeans who have themselves undergone the strains of acculturation and of comprehending an unfamiliar world. Another is that they are both educators, equipped with appropriate categories

through which to observe the schools themselves and to make sense of Soviet educational talk. They visited the Soviet Union in 1962 on a Ford Foundation grant and observed a number of its school systems; and Fritz Redl writes that it was partially because of the barriers to communication they themselves experienced that they decided to put their unusual skills to work.

Helen Redl is an educator and a linguist, who grew up in Poland and did her doctoral work at Teachers College in New York. Fritz Redl is the celebrated psychiatrist and educator, long known for his work with disturbed and delinquent children. He grew up in Austria and was at one time a teacher in a Viennese *gymnasium*. This, for example, made it possible for him to perceive such phenomena as a Russian version of the "European Ritual of Child Meets Adult in Authority Role," which the "innocent" American is all too likely to interpret as impressive evidence of children's respect for their elders. Precisely this sort of perceptual sensitivity pervades the translations presented by Helen Redl. She knows, as Fritz Redl indicates, that a word like "pedagogical," repeatedly used by Russian educators, is frequently used to refer to situations Americans would call "psychological." But she also knows that if she translated the term as "psychological" each time it appeared, a false impression would be given: American readers would begin to believe that Russian educators have a concern for the psychology of children equivalent to that in American educational thinking, and this is obviously not so. The same is true about the word "conscious," whose referents are "sociopolitical or characterological" rather than specifically psychological.

Mrs. Redl includes a helpful set of definitions in her introduction to obviate as many of such confusions as possible. She then proceeds to present her translations without comment or additional explanation. Again, the reader is challenged to make his own sense of the way in which a selected group of Soviet educators develop their theories of schooling and discuss their implementation. There is nothing esoteric or particularly difficult in the selections chosen. The topics discussed include adolescent self-discipline, sex education, rewards and punishments, family relationships, and boarding schools, among others—all of

unquestionable relevance for anyone interested in schooling. The names of the writers may be unfamiliar; but all have played significant roles in Soviet educational theory-making, curriculum development, determination of methods of teaching, or preparation of materials.

Most interesting, perhaps, is the selection by A. S. Makarenko, one of the pioneers of Marxist-Leninist education and still a potent influence on Soviet schools. A champion of intellectual challenge and self-discipline, he has written often about respect for the individuality of the child and about joy which "has to be organized, brought to life, and converted into a possibility." Mrs. Redl has translated one of his discussions of educational methods with special reference to work colonies for delinquent children; and many of the crucial themes in other selections in the book are summed up here—especially those dealing with the educational aspects of "upbringing," distinct from but related "organically" to formal education, and equally geared to "a clearly defined political end."

Makarenko, like Petchernikova and others, has much to say about the "socially moral demands" of the collective, the necessity for rules and limits, and the connection between trust, encouragement, and individual well-being—and the orderliness or the productivity of whatever collective is involved. Fundamentally, this is not new; but the opportunity to read first-hand sources makes it possible to reconceive what often seems to be a perplexing interplay of values like regard for the person, freedom, independence, conscientiousness, benevolence, creativity, and "the principles of socialistic life". One section is headed "How to Help the Child Become Idealistic, Highly Motivated, and Industrious"; another (in "Fathers and Children"), "Don't Lose Those Smiles"; and still another, "Be True to Yourself".

THE internal logic of this alien but wholly human Soviet invention begins to come clear for the general reader, whose understanding may well be greater because of the lack of appended conclusions by the translator. Near the end, there is a delightful section on children's literature, which includes Mrs. Redl's own translation of K. I. Chukovsky's poem, "The Magic Tree," which Chukovsky himself approved. But the section also includes a book review of the tale called "The Magic Tree" written by N. K. Krupskaya, the wife of Lenin and, with Makarenko, the most influential force in the early days of the Soviet schools. "Children do not need this nonsense," she wrote. "I find all these very silly fairy tales disturbing and irritating." There follows (in the third person) Chukovsky's defense of fairy tales as a mode of literature that "enriches, improves,

and fosters the child's development."

Those who objected to fairy tales were disturbed by the "unnatural" quality in so many of them; those who supported them saw, with Chukovsky, that the aim of children's stories was to develop "humanness—the marvelous ability to empathize with other people in their fortunes and misfortunes." Oddly enough, this may be the prime justification for the Redls' presentation of Soviet educators to the American people. The National

Writers' Guild once told Chukovsky that fairy tale writers often make mistakes and bestow "positive, heroic characteristics upon harmful and dangerous beasts, birds, and insects," and a letter he received commented upon the danger of promoting sympathy for "parasites."

Too many Americans have had this attitude toward Soviet people and Soviet schools. The Redls are to be thanked for offering readers a proper chance to evaluate and try to understand.

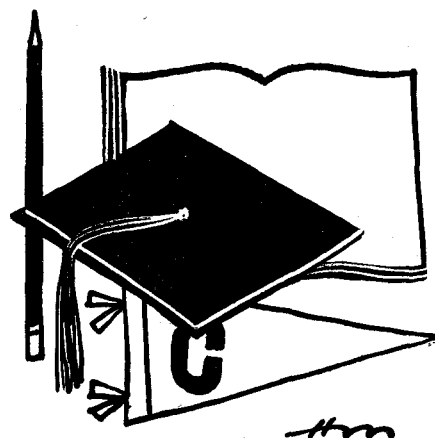
College Consortium

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gains momentum. In the years ahead proportionately fewer and fewer college students will be completing their undergraduate work on a single campus. This is not to say that a continuous program in one spot is bad; simply that the opportunities for following one will become relatively less prevalent and so presumably less important to the college-going scheme of things.

At the same time, the drop-out and transfer rates at many small liberal arts colleges suggest that, like it or not, they are being used as junior colleges by a good many students. Adoption of the concept of the college consortium would recognize this fact and, more importantly, take advantage of it. Retention rates in a college's area of specialization would be improved. Today, the able student who becomes interested in an area of study in which a college is weak and who seeks to transfer is considered somehow to be a negative element. Under the proposed set-up, he would become an asset, a welcome and accepted member of the student body. Today, the student who finds himself inadequately or inappropriately prepared faces the probability of becoming an academic failure and a drop-out. Under the suggested arrangement, the opportunity for study in small classes and through individual instruction could compensate for poor preparation and turn lost freshman and sophomore talent into productive juniors and seniors.

Whether the rewards of federation under the consortium concept are worth the sacrifice is not for me to say. Also it would be improper for me to imply that the issues with which I have dealt represent today's only challenges to the small liberal arts college or that the consortium represents the only response to those few challenges among many. But if the suggestion draws attention to the problems with which it deals, my purpose will have been served.



New Books



The Public Schools of Chicago. By Robert J. Havighurst. Board of Education, Chicago. 499 pp. Price not listed. An assessment of the present situation and recommendations for action "as soon as is reasonably possible . . . perhaps . . . the month of March, 1965."

The Making of Massive Resistance. By Robert L. Gates. The University of North Carolina Press. 222 pp. \$6.50. A report and interpretation of legal actions regarding school desegregation in Virginia, 1954-64. Describes also the activities of the clergy and the Virginia Council on Human Relations as forces for moderation.

Battlefield and Classroom, Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904. By Richard Henry Pratt. Edited with an introduction by Robert M. Utley. Yale University Press. 358 pp. \$8.50. Memoirs of General Pratt, who first led army campaigns against the Indians. Later founding and running the Carlisle Indian School, he played a major role in federal Indian policy of the late nineteenth century.

Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators. By William Harrison Woodward. Foreword by Eugene F. Rice, Jr. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University. 261 pp. Paperback, \$1.95. A study of the Renaissance humanist idea of education. The first part of a trilogy on Renaissance education.

Desiderius Erasmus: Concerning the Aim and Method of Education. By William Harrison Woodward. Foreword by Craig R. Thompson. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University. 244 pp. Paperback, \$1.95. A reprint of the 1904 volume, one of the best accounts of Erasmus's ideas on education. The second part of a trilogy on Renaissance education.

Education Automation: Freeing the Scholar to Return to His Studies. By R. Buckminster Fuller. Southern Illinois University Press (Carbondale, Ill.) 88 pp. \$1.95. A speech to the Southern Illinois University planning committee by the inventor of the Geodesic dome. Presents, within a comprehensive view of the modern world, a strong case for technological aids in teaching and for comprehensive planning of campuses of the future.

Toward a Philosophy of Organized Student Activities. By Herbert Stroup. The University of Minnesota Press. 202 pp. \$4.50. How student activities, given the proper objectives and means of realizing them, can contribute greatly to the educational process.

Barron's Profiles of American Colleges. By Benjamin Fine. Barron's Educational Series, Inc. (343 Great Neck Rd., Great Neck, N.Y.) 698 pp. Cloth, \$8.75. Paperback, \$3.95. A comprehensive source of facts on regionally accredited American four-year colleges.

You Can Win a Scholarship. By Samuel C. Brownstein and Mitchel Weiner. Barron's Educational Series, Inc. 570 pp. Cloth, \$7.95. Paperback, \$3.95. Third revised edition. A guide to the many types of scholarships available today.

College Entrance Guide. By Bernice W. Einstein. Grosset and Dunlap. 112 pp. Paperback, \$1.95. Information on applications, examinations, scholarships and loans comprising the process of getting to college. Revised edition.

Schools Within Schools. By Karl R. Plath. Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University. 83 pp. Paperback, \$1.50. A study of the large high school and its internal organization. Secondary School Administration Series.