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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORY (PREDOMINANTLY
AS TAUGHT IN SCHOOL) IN SHAPING
THE 20th - CENTURY INDIVIDUAL

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INTRODUCTORY NOTES

Problems of teaching history in school were frequently raised at the preceding International Congresses of Historical Sciences. However, this is the first time that a special paper is presented on teaching history in school as a means of shaping the 20th - century individual.

The international round-table discussion of a similar problem in Bucharest (1977) clearly showed that the longstanding idea of a standard European history textbook is utopian at present. When the draft General Report was being discussed in Moscow by co-speakers L. Genicot (University of Louvain, Belgium), C. Laville (Laval University, Canada), R. Petrovich (Sarajevo University, Yugoslavia), M. Sandorzh (Institute of History of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences) and S. Stefanescu (N. Jorga Institute of History of the Rumanian Academy of Sciences) it was also recognized that the variety of national and regional didactic schools makes advisable the collective formulation of only some of the general principles guided by which both authors of textbooks and teachers could shape the man of the future in the best possible way. The letters received afterwards from other co-speakers (A. Prentice (The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Canada), G. Spini (Florence University, Italy), Sh. Takahashi (Science Council of Japan), L.A. Rodrigues and O. A. Donoso (Panamerican Institute)) confirmed that the chosen structure of the report was correct.

Thus the General Report consists of two parts. The first part, which formulates the principles and the proposals to the Congress

that follow from them, is common to the Soviet general speaker and the reports of co-speakers from other countries¹. In specially singling out the principles and proposals we also proceeded from the desire to attract the greatest possible attention of the Congress participants to the problem in view of its importance.

The second independent part reflects the Soviet experience. The co-speakers in their special reports show the concrete possibilities of teaching history and the distinctive features of the didactics of their countries. The second part has two aspects - the reflection of international history in the national, and perhaps regional, school historiography, and the reflection of the national (regional) history in the international school historiography.

PART I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND PROPOSALS

Considering the role of historical consciousness in the life of society, it can be said that teachers of history who are professionally informed about the suffering that wars have inflicted over the centuries have a special responsibility in the struggle for peace and understanding between peoples.

The man of the future is destined to live and work - at least in Europe and a considerable part of America - in the climate of the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference. The teachers in the U.S.S.R. and the socialist countries and the main educational institutions of UNESCO², the European Council (Strasbourg)³, the Federal Republic of Germany⁴, Britain⁵, Belgium⁶ and Switzerland⁷, come out for the cooperation of teachers. It would be very important to receive the respective information of the activity of such centers in other countries.

In formulating the principles of teaching history in school we proceed from the following.

1. The individual of the future should have such knowledge about the history of his country and the world history which will enable him to be a conscious inhabitant of the planet, i.e. to understand the purpose of life and work, and, if the need arises, to defend his outlook, be humane, and oppose chauvinism, racism, the inequality of the sexes and religious and other intolerance; he should make a sober assessment of the contemporary stage in the history of all mankind and his own country, as well as his own field of endeavor, professional or party organization, family and the place he occupies.

2. The demands of the century on the young person beginning his independent life require, from the professional and educational point of view, a knowledge of history as a worldwide process of consecutive