

INTERVENTION BY DR. P. F. M. FONTAINE, THE NETHERLANDS,  
ON THE REPORT OF V. T. PASHUTO: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF  
HISTORY IN SHAPING THE 20th-CENTURY INDIVIDUAL

On Thursday the 14th of August, 1980, afternoon session

Mr. Chairman, dear colleagues,

My name is Fontaine, of the State University of Utrecht, in the Netherlands, and my academic occupation is the professional training of future history teachers. From this point of view I should like to make a few remarks and put a few questions about the report of Mr. Pashuto. I shall follow the report page by page, skipping most of it.

On Part I. I do not think that history teachers have a special responsibility for the promotion of peace and international understanding. The word 'special' seems to me the beginning of political pressure, of indoctrination. Throughout this report I get the impression that the history teacher is a person who gets orders, from the political world or from the academic world, but anyhow, orders. Nowhere he is present as a free person and a free agent. But here I will stress the fact that the history teacher is the only one who is fully responsible for his teaching. All the others, politicians and history professors included, are in a secondary position or worse.

Idem on Part I. Throughout this report the Final Act of Helsinki is spoken about as if it were a sacred text. But I want to be irreverent and ask: why all this fuss about it? In the opinion of the common people of my country, history teachers included, very little has come from it. So why make it the corner stone of education?

On Part I, point 3. The report says the history is the triumph of creation over destruction, of peace over war, etc. But you could easily make it the other way round too: how many times has not destruction triumphed over creation, and war over peace, even in our own days?

It is very superficial and very unpaedagogic to make a success-story of history.

On point 4. What is "the logic of the subject"?

On point 6. I read: there has to be no europeism, etc., but history of all peoples from all regions, with the help of examples of all of them. As a practical solution for this problem I would suggest that history teachers

annex all the lessons in all the school years, on every level of teaching.

On point 7. I read: "history text books must be academic". They are already much too academic, that is to say, much too dependent on scientific historiography, and therefore too abstract and too difficult.

On proposal no. 1. What do you mean by a special commission with rights for the teaching of history? As it stands, it seems to me a very dangerous proposal, as long as I do not know which rights you mean and whose rights.

On proposal no. 2. A journal for history teaching would be a good thing, if only not in the spirit of these proposals.

Returning to Point 9, Referring to the need of finding forms of constant links between this Congress and School Didactics. Here I am sadly missing a few very important facts. It is true that they have probably come too late for this report, but therefore it is still more important to draw your attention to them now:

1. the founding of the International Society for History Didactics, which has members from 13 countries, including some from Poland.

2. the International Workplan for Cooperation in History Teaching and History Didactics, including the training of future history teachers, covering all practical and theoretical aspects, and accepted both by the Council of Europe and the International Society as an official text. It has been published by the Council of Europe.

I therefore suggest that this Congress will take no new steps in the field of history teaching and history didactics, without first consulting the Board of the International Society.

As to Part II, the Soviet Experience, this seems to me very unsatisfactory and absolutely no contribution to the current discussion on history didactics and history teaching. It has virtually nothing to do with history didactics and is here and there in flat contradiction with part I.

1. First there is the conspicuous absence of the pupils. What is done to make them "thinking persons and historians?" Or have they only to swallow down the contents of those excellent text books?

2. There is no word about history teachers. What about their problems? How do they work? How are they trained? Or have they no problems? Do, in the Soviet-Union, all blessings come from above?

It would have been much better, if Mr. Pashuto would have told us somewhat more about these points, instead of criticizing so amply American and German schoolbooks, for this cannot really be a part of 'the Soviet experience'.

ADRIANO GALLIA ZUM 16. DEZEMBER 1980

Ein Mitglied jener Initiativgruppe, welche die Gründung der INTERNATIONALEN GESELLSCHAFT FÜR GESCHICHTSDIDAKTIK vorbereitete, ein Gründungsmitglied unserer GESELLSCHAFT, ein Mitglied ihres Vorstandes feierte am 16. Dezember 1980 - wenn die Notizen der Redaktion nicht täuschen - seinen 60 Geburtstag: ADRIANO GALLIA, einer der führenden Geschichtsdidaktiker Italiens.

Es ist bei weitem zu früh, um auf die vielfältigen Publikationen wertend einzugehen, die er zum Teil allein und zum Teil in Kooperation mit hervorragenden Fachgelehrten seines Landes herausgegeben hat; sie prägen Lehrerbildung und Schule vor allem seines Landes. Es wäre ebenfalls verfrüht, bereits jetzt seine Pläne für die kommenden Jahre anzusprechen, für die er unermüdlich Material sammelt und erbittet.

Der 60. Geburtstag ist uns der rechte Augenblick, um einem treuen Freund von Herzen Glück und Segen zu wünschen, einem Freund, der stets informiert und kritisch an den meisten internationalen Kontakten der letzten Jahre teilgenommen hat. Bei einer Konferenzserie der UNESCO in Helsinki stand er weitweise allein für die diesseits des Eisernen Vorhangs arbeitenden Geschichtsdidaktiker!

Wir wünschen uns und ihm, daß die immensen Lehrverpflichtungen an Schule und Hochschule nun quantitativ abnehmen, damit die gereifte Ernte auch geschnitten und eingebracht werden kann; wir wünschen ihm Gesundheit und uns seinen kritischen Rat wie auch seine freundschaftliche Gegenwart bei unserer weiteren Arbeit und im kollegialen Kontakt!

Pe.