

Didactics of History Teaching under Totalitarian and Democratic Regimes in Latvia: How much has Changed in Fifty Years?

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Abstract. This paper discusses didactics of history teaching in Latvia during Stalin's regime found in "How One Must Teach History" and since 1991 found in "How to Teach History" by examining traits of authoritarianism and democracy in history teaching and the books' usefulness to teachers. Results show history teaching under totalitarianism was severely prescribed with virtually no room for critical discussion. Post-1991 democracy indicates that critical discussion of history can occur, but the text is superficial and lacks examples to assist teachers unaccustomed to such teaching.

Keywords: history teaching, totalitarianism, ideology, scientific acknowledgments.

The study of history and humanities in general was once considered an indicator of social status. Broudy[1] refers to antiquity when Aristotle defined liberal studies as those undertaken for self-cultivation by men who were not constrained by careers and duties owed to the state and family. Later, the study of history became associated with the actions of men in ancient Greek and Roman times, and was also recorded by authors who tried to imitate the ancient authors and actors. During the Renaissance, the investigation of context led to an erudite elite who possessed specialized knowledge and the critical techniques needed to interpret it, and thus became the writers of 'history', as we use the term[2]. Change in the teaching of history occurred slowly as part of the scholarly practices of the Renaissance when a gradual shift from religious and classical authority to rationalist thinking, part of a general move toward empirical methodology, occurred[3].

Historical fact as a foundation for history did not become relevant until the 19th century when positivism was introduced into the study of the past and value was placed on individual initiative and human purpose in the direction of the affairs of civilization[4]. The choice of facts and objective accounts, so deemed by the persons and institutions choosing them, became the basis for history teaching. The choice of what should be taught suddenly became more relevant in a society that was discovering and redefining its identity, and could be used as a tool to influence this process. However, little thought took place on how to teach history, and lessons took place primarily in lecture format with the student as passive recipient.

Barr[5] stated that the understanding of the purpose of the historian as a faithful recorder of the past and how the present order of things came into being is the primary concern of the

history student, and the understanding of these purposes is the essential equipment of every history teacher. Dewey, on the other hand, made a departure from this type of education in his conception of the progressive school, and unlike lessons that children learned through recitation of what was read in a book or heard from a teacher, pupil activity was central thereby focusing on a pragmatic theory of knowledge, which was an outcome of action. While textbooks were still used, children gleaned information from them not for the mere purpose of reproducing it, but to make it relevant to their own lives[6]. Here he differentiated from Aristotle who believed in the cultivation of intelligence as an end in itself, but Dewey focused on the process of cultivating intelligence as a tool to solve problems. This struggle between the significance of the process of acquiring knowledge and erudition as a product continues to be the focus of both teachers of history and pedagogues in general.

Barton and Levstik[7] state, "Despite differing political perspectives or varied disciplinary backgrounds, many people consider the nature and purpose of history – or more to the point, of history teaching – to be entirely self-evident." Gudem[8] cites Dolch for the most comprehensive and widest definition of didactics as the science and theory about teaching in all its circumstances and in all its forms. Weniger succinctly describes didactics as the theory of the contents of formation, *Bildung* – a multifaceted understanding that emerged from the Enlightenment between 1770 and 1830, mostly in the German-speaking part of Europe, and its overreaching aim is to identify the formative elements of the disciplines, as well as cultural values and norms, and ensure their transmission into individual subjects within the school curriculum. However, if one recognizes that didactics, particularly *Bildung*, ensures that cultural norms and values are transmitted through curriculum, then one must recognize that history, as a subject, most frequently succumbs to political pressure and ideology, and is the victim of politicians and bureaucrats. This is most vividly shown by the politics of totalitarianism in comparison to democracies.

The early Soviet regime's commitment to proletarian internationalism forced the adoption of an educational system that turned the existing tsarist educational system immediately on its head. The Soviet system was based upon the work of Marx, who overturned the traditional philosophy based on the essence of man and created a theory of history and politics based on radically new concepts of the relationship between social formation and productive forces and a radical critique of

philosophical humanism. Earlier (bourgeois) philosophy was based on a problematic assumption of the essence of man (human nature), which Marx replaced with not only a new history of societies, but also a new philosophy – historical materialism[9]. Marx and Engels developed ‘theoretical anti-humanism’ in which consciousness did not determine a person’s social life, rather it was social life that determined consciousness[10]. This shift from classic theories of humanism influenced changes in the education system.

Early Soviet pedagogues were at the forefront of addressing educational problems similar to their colleagues in Europe and North America. The progressive schooling philosophy, which was gaining popularity in Europe, was deemed acceptable in early Soviet schools. Soviet pedagogical thought between 1920 and 1930 was characterized by active experimentation, but was also based not only on social ideas, but political motives which actively destroyed all that was associated with the old, bourgeois schools. Mikhail Pokrovsky (1868-1932), the father of Marxist historiography in the Soviet Union and author of *Brief Sketch of Russian History* (1922), dismissed traditional narrative form charting history in terms of great reigns by great rulers, focusing instead on broad models of stages of economic development, and even painted Russian history darkly as the story of chauvinistic, colonizing, and oppressive czarist regimes. The teaching of history was no longer to be a recitation of naked facts but an interdisciplinary study that would supposedly instill in students a Marxist worldview through subjects like labour, economy, and class conflict. Textbooks were to be replaced with use of journals, revolutionary songs and holiday celebrations, important speeches and decrees, and interviews with workers and peasants. This type of material seemed to be more relevant to Soviet students’ lives rather than dry, historical facts[11]. Initially, free and open discussion and experimentation took place, but soon the authoritarian nature of the highly centralized Soviet system grew more oppressive, and many Soviet educators were forced to discontinue their work. Stalin killed progressive reform in 1928 and supported an anti-intellectual movement that moved away from a broad cultural approach to a narrow technical one. This was termed an attack on ‘bourgeois learning’[12], and led to a politicized history curriculum and the reintroduction of textbooks, which were carefully censored and approved by the government. The only acceptable history justified the existence of the regime and glorified its heroes while denigrating and denying political, social, ethnic, or religious alternatives. There was also no leeway for free and open examination and discussion of alternative forms of evidence that may contradict state ideology[13].

After the occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union in 1944, the teaching of history in independent Latvia prior to World War II fell into the unacceptable bourgeois category, and a new didactical approach was necessary to teach history in the post-war ‘liberated’ Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (Latvian SSR). The creation of a history curriculum and methodology was problematic, and although Latvians who had been living in Soviet Russia during the interwar period were

actively repatriated to the Latvian SSR and wrote on the subject of history teaching, the majority of literature on the subject was translated from Russian into Latvian. Such a translation can be found in the book published in 1946 – *How One Must Teach History*[14]. The book is edited by S. Balode, but her editorial role is passive, as she gives no explanation of the purpose of this edition and does not comment on the book’s contribution to literature on the subject. More detailed investigation shows that she translated works from Russian to Latvian and thus may have been responsible for accuracy in the translation, or translated it herself. It appears she was not a historian. However, if one considers the authoritative stature of the contributors and the historic period in which it was published, such comments were probably considered unnecessary. In addition, the title clearly indicates that discussion is also not expected or desired.

This short booklet consists of two articles by Stalin, another two by Stalin, Kirov, and Zhdanov, as well as excerpts from the 1934 directive on how to teach history and the results from a state commission competition for the best history textbook for third and fourth year secondary school students. The articles are reprints of letters to the editorial board of several Soviet publications. These letters are exclusively responses to publicly published articles that discuss historical events in which Stalin finds fault with the interpretation. The textbook reviews are equally scathing in their criticism of incorrectly interpreted events. The book offers no actual instruction on methodology, but rather gives voice to Stalin’s interpretation of history, which, at the time, was the only acceptable one, and in which he reduces all other interpretations to traitorous actions against the state.

The book has no introduction by the editor but begins with a reprint of a letter by Stalin, *On several historical questions about Bolshevism*[15] to the editorial board of the magazine *Proletarskaya Revolucia*, a historical magazine devoted to the study of the history of the October Revolution. This letter criticizes an article published by Slutzkij in 1930 in which, among other things, Lenin’s relationship to German Social Democrats and his adherence to Bolshevism are questioned. Stalin notes that the magazine printed a retraction, but only after a significant period of time had elapsed. This retraction, however, committed yet another serious mistake by declaring that events surrounding the relationship between the Bolsheviks and others during the pre-WWI period as a problem that should be researched further. Stalin names Slutzkij a distorter of history, and states that the editors of the magazine have erred in allowing discussion of history by such a person. Stalin claims it is rotten liberalism that allowed ‘historians’ and literary figures, such as Slutzkij, to adopt such false interpretations of history. In Stalin’s opinion, the editorial board should raise questions of Bolshevik history to appropriate heights by encouraging the study of history and sharpening the struggle against Trotskyites by systematically unmasking them as falsifiers of history.

This article clearly serves as a warning to anyone who wishes to challenge the interpretation of history accepted by Stalin. Although authors of the Soviet history were cultural

representations of the system, they had no academic freedom in their work, as only Stalin's interpretation of history was acceptable. For teachers of history in the Latvian SSR, it is a clear statement that they must quickly learn the correct – Stalinist – interpretation of historical events. Concrete didactic instructions were condensed into a short, one-page description indicating a retreat from a socially intertwined interpretations of history as proposed by Pokrovsky, and adopting a formalist, chronological study of personalities and events leading to a Marxist world view in the widely published *Excerpt from the Council of Peoples Commissars and the Central Committee of the Communist Party's Decision On the Teaching of Civil History in the Schools of the USSR* adopted on 16 May 1934.

The USSR People's Commissariat and the Central Committee of the Communist Party have found that history teaching in USSR schools is unsatisfactory. Textbooks and teaching methods themselves are abstract and schematic in nature. Instead of teaching history in a vital and interesting way by analyzing principal events and facts in chronological order including the role of leaders, pupils are presented abstract definitions of social or economic systems, thus replacing rational analysis of civil history with abstract sociological schema.

The most important requirement is that pupils, when retelling historical events, observe the chronological order of historical events, and recall important historic phenomenon, leading figures, and important dates. Only this type of history course can ensure students attain the required understanding of the material by making the content accessible and concrete. It is only this type of basis upon which it is possible to come to a correct analysis of historical events and a correct overview, which guides the pupil towards a Marxist understanding of history[16].

While this document may indicate a general tendency within the authoritarian regimes that were springing up throughout most of Europe, it is significant that this basis for history teaching developed in a different time and place was later adopted in a completely different setting with no regard for local circumstances.

A reprint of the article published in Pravda on 27 January 1936 gives more details about this decision and relates the June 1935 decision on the content of new history textbooks. History was divided into five periods: ancient history, Middle Ages, modern history, history of the USSR, and modern history of dependencies and colonized countries. The Council of Peoples Commissars and the Central Committee of the Communist Party organized five groups who were charged with the responsibility of creating the new textbooks. Stalin, Kirov, and Zhdanov submitted critiques of the entries, which were subjected to detailed examination and severe criticism. The remarks of Stalin, Kirov, and Zhdanov clearly indicated that the sociologically-based Pokrovsky school of historiography was no longer acceptable[17], and that the Communist Party was the final arbiter of historical truth and accuracy.

Stalin, Zhdanov, and Kirov write scathing reviews indicating incorrect interpretations of historical facts, as well

as incorrect understanding of the point of the exercise of textbook writing. The modern history textbook was criticized for not using precise language in descriptions of historic events such as naming the French Revolution as only 'great', as opposed to the more correct 'bourgeois', or the incomplete title given to the October Revolution which should be designated consistently as Socialist and Soviet as well[18]. His obsession with 'proper' language use created standard phrases and language forms that permeated language structure and use in general throughout the Soviet Union long after he died. Stalin also wrote a critique on the history of Communist Party in which he stated that the text lacked sufficient Marxist interpretations of events and was incorrect in its classification of periods of events, which he proceeded to correct.

The discussion about the history textbook that won the competition[19] indicated it was also flawed and the critique contained several suggestions for improvement. These included a more structured description of the constitution of the USSR and a greater focus upon the fact that the Russian empire had been punished by other countries for its backwardness and was dependent upon foreigners for economic and political leadership, as well as the role of Bolshevism in freeing the country from foreign oppression. Increased stress upon the role of the worker as the liberator of the peasant was also needed because the peasantry was not capable of being sufficiently organized to liberate themselves. It was also decided that there was insufficient information about the Civil War (1917-1920), and more emphasis needed to be placed on the nature of describing the development of the USSR in terms of political slogans and the Soviet peoples constant struggle against the enemies of the state. Positive elements in the book were discussion of Soviet, not just Russian state development. Yet Stalin, Kirov, and Zhdanov criticized the idealization of pre-Christian paganism, stressing the importance of Russian Orthodox cloisters in contrast to pagan barbarism, the importance of the church in developing literacy, and the importance of monasteries as bases for colonization. The authors were also criticized for not stressing the positive alternative that Ukraine experienced by coming under Russian rule as opposed to Persian or Turkish rule in the 18th c. Also, all authors were criticized for not following Marx's interpretation of the battle in 1242 on Lake Peipus when Nevsky expelled Germans out of Russian territory forever. Despite Stalin's protests that Soviet, not Russian history needed to be the focus, Russian pre-eminence was clear.

This booklet clearly indicates the role of the communist Party as the ultimate arbitrator of interpretations of history, as well as the static structure of history teaching, the Marxist/Leninist/Stalinist ideological basis of the curriculum, and the lasting influence of Stalin on Soviet historiography. Russian superiority is clear in Stalin's arguments, but the full extent of Stalin's glorification of the Russian nation and Russia was yet to come during World War II and after with the expansion of the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence.

The nature of totalitarian rule is clear in Stalin's statements on the consequences of diversion from history according to his

interpretation, particularly if those reflected Menshevik or Trotskyite ideas, which virtually guaranteed a death sentence during the 1930s. The seminal nature of these articles are clear in that the book published in 1946, contains only these articles and nothing more recent. This sent a clear message to teachers and historians in the Latvian SSR that no other form would be acceptable and strict adherence to the chronological teaching of history focusing on facts and personalities was the safest course of action. Latvian historians and history teachers faced an unprecedented dilemma. They had no acceptable teaching materials and, thus, were resigned to adopting and using the safest and only materials available – those supporting Stalin's view of history. These were initially available through translation only as Russian historians were considered reliable, and Latvian historians and teachers were suspect because of their bourgeois past. Even after Stalin's death and the denunciation of his cult status, Stalinist historiography remained the basis for all history teaching up until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Fifty years of Soviet rule and Marxist/ Leninist/Stalinist historiography entrenched formalist didactic practices, which discouraged critical thinking skills. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 required the adoption of democratic methodological practices with which history teachers were unfamiliar. New methods and materials had to be adopted, but lack of experience in democratic teaching methods required looking to outside sources for guidance. Few comprehensive history-teaching guides have been published, and I have chosen to analyze a text published fifteen years after the regaining of independence. Purēns published a handbook for teachers on how to teach history in a democratic society – *How to Teach History*[20]. Unlike the editor of the previously discussed booklet who was most likely a simple functionary within the state publishing institution, Purēns is a historian, educated under Soviet rule, and has written several history textbooks. The title of the book indicates that he offers suggestion on history teaching and does not hesitate to state his opinion about the positive and negative benefits of certain methods. However, it is also clear that this book is a translation in which he describes history-teaching methods and, in Latvian context, uses untraditional terminology. It is also resembles an instruction manual in that it has few exemplars illustrating good practice. Nevertheless, it is one of few comprehensive texts in Latvian illustrating alternative teaching practices.

In his introduction, Purēns addresses the philosophical questions regarding the purpose of teaching history and history's relationship role the education system. He criticizes history teaching in previous eras highlighting authoritarianism and totalitarianism and their practice of using history to prove the correctness of their philosophy of hero glorification and sacrifice for the good of the nation.

Purēns states that democratic history teaching traditions indicate that history should be presented as a ball of contradictions, and society can only be strong if it is self-critical and acknowledges its deficiencies. Three paths of study become necessary to accomplish this:

1. The experience of humanity's past, both positive and negative, to discover and acknowledge those values that are desirable;
2. Understanding of events in society in order to be able to analyze events in society and determine the future results from one's own actions, as well as the actions of others; and
3. Cultural heritage in order to become acquainted with the multifaceted nature of humanity and to encourage the protection of resulting values[21].

His statement appears to indicate that this is a long-standing tradition in well-established democracies such as the United States or Great Britain. However, this idealized presentation of democratic ideals in history teaching is not as long-standing as Purēns implies. The aboriginal peoples of the United States, Canada, and Australia, African-Americans, as well as those nations colonized by Great Britain and other European powers can attest to the biased and decidedly white middle-class interpretations and representations of history in textbooks that were used in classrooms until very recently, and in many places, are still available. Pedagogies of difference, such as oppressed and feminist pedagogies, continue to challenge mainstream pedagogical ideas and are not regularly included in history textbooks.

Purēns states that society usually does not understand the need to study history, and does not realize that it uses its knowledge of history on a daily basis. He claims that the average citizen analyzes political campaigns, political processes, and cultural accomplishments on a daily basis. People choose holiday destinations and books in the library based on their knowledge of history. Society compares the accomplishments of its own society with that of others. Purēns continues that this is so self-understood, society neglects to ask itself how it came to such an understanding. This must make the reader accept the importance of history teaching, particularly in elementary school and that learning about history is just as important as learning to read and write.

While I would not argue the value of history lessons as a course of study, Purēns confuses erudition with critical thinking skills. Deciding to visit Egypt because of a fascination of the pyramids acquired in an ancient history class is vastly different from being able to analyze political campaigns and make decisions based upon these analyses. Purēns misguidedly assumes that all former history students have acquired the critical analysis skills needed to make such decisions.

History also plays a role in politics, according to Purēns. Here he reveals his Soviet upbringing by assuming that historians and politicians need to coexist. Purēns states that the purpose of politicians is to lead society in such a way as to solidify the rule of law, ensure a satisfactory level of standard of living, and create harmony and solidarity between differing groups in society. If politicians support democratic teaching practices, they can be allies with historians. However, too many politicians are interested in history only as a tool to prove the infallibility of their political position, highlight their own accomplishments, and ensure that the general public does not find out about their mistakes. He states that the historian

must be wary of the outstretched hand of a politician, and that the best thing a politician could do was to inform historians of his or her failures as a teaching tool for pupils and students. As noble as this final gesture may be, this suggestion is clearly unrealistic and utopian in nature. It is not usually the historian who reveals the immediate failings of politicians, but rather the media who report on and political scientists who analyze the flaws and accomplishments of politicians. If this statement was ironic in nature, perhaps this publication is not the most effective or appropriate vehicle through which to vent the author's misgivings.

History and its effects on patriotism play a minor role in Purēns' introduction, despite the recent debate about the role of the teaching of history in developing and strengthening national identity throughout Europe. Here it appears that he may be conflating the more positive concept of patriotism with the negative associations surrounding nationalism. He mentions only that Latvia has experienced both authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, and that many citizens still believe that the purpose of historians is to raise patriots at all costs, and that this view is misleading and dangerous. Patriotism is love of one's homeland, but it cannot be forced upon anyone. Purēns explains that to achieve patriotic feeling, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes attempted to exaggerate the nation and show other nations in a negative light. They portrayed the nation as the ideal and others as a dangerous force. This created the most undesirable model of patriotism based upon fear of expulsion and does not encourage ties to one's homeland, but rather makes one feel hatred towards one's society [22]. While his discussion of forced patriotism has merit, once again Purēns reveals his Soviet historical training by lumping the Ulmanis authoritarian regime together with Stalin's totalitarianism. Ulmanis' dictatorship was relatively mild and did not actively propagate hatred towards other nations. Purēns also neglects to mention that Latvia experienced parliamentary democracy prior to Ulmanis' dictatorship during which the government actively supported innovative methodological practice and was a leader in models for minority education, although its creation of a history curriculum took on a decidedly patriotic nature. This error of omission is a classic tactic of Soviet historiography, which continues to remain evident in modern day Latvian historiography. Some may consider reminders of these omissions unnecessary and redundant for the audience of this book, but the insidious nature and effects of propaganda cannot be underestimated, and knowledge should never be assumed.

Purēns notes that the number of history lessons have been reduced in several countries based upon the assumption that historians unnecessarily burden children's brains with facts, and that teaching social theories would be more beneficial. Purēns states that this is misleading, as theories are only valuable when history shows us examples of their effects on society. History is the only repository of examples of social theories. If students do not know history, then knowledge of political or social theories are pointless and meaningless statements. Indeed, this reduction of history to a general field

of study frequently called social studies or civics in the west has often been accompanied by a general reduction in the hours devoted to the subject. Historians and devoted history teachers continue to advocate for history as a separate subject stressing the critical thinking skills proper study of history can develop.

Purēns highlights several fallacies regarding curriculum assumed by the general public. A common misconception, according to Purēns, is that to achieve objectivity, the teacher must teach only facts, but students only should come to conclusions. He disagrees stating that in addition to generally accepted ethical norms (do not kill, steal, or lie) the basis of democracy (listen, respect, reach a consensus) needs to be taught. Secondly, students need to understand the mechanisms by which views are formed, and that almost every statement about historical facts can be debated. However, he believes students must be protected from having ideology forced upon them. It is generally accepted that key elements for democratic education include promotion of a moral atmosphere in class and school in general, acknowledgment of role models exhibiting good character within the school and general community, guided peer discussion of moral issues and participation in school and classroom governance, learning about character through curriculum, inclusion of the family, particularly parents in moral education, and finally, practical experience in moral behaviour. Purēns assumes that generally accepted ethical values have remained intact in post-Soviet society in Latvia where, not very long ago, the ruling order actively persecuted those who adhered to religion, the primary advocate of ethical norms. Lying and stealing were regular occurrences in both public and private life as a means of survival for many and personal benefit for some. While most individuals may have not lost their own sense of a moral compass, the corrupt nature of Soviet society changed the social fabric instilling in society a general belief of inevitable inherent corruption as opposed to a positive hope for moral and decent behaviour geared towards the good of all members of society.

Nevertheless, Purēns suggests that students can be taught to think for themselves without having ideology impressed upon them. This statement, again, may show a problem with translation and resulting confusion between the terms ideology and propaganda, but he does suggest methods to prevent this. All statements must be supported by facts; not only facts supporting a statement, but also contrary statements are necessary. Students need to be aware of how opinions are formed, values must be defined which are the basis of what is being studied, and students must be able to explain how their opinion is connected to the defined value. Also, students' attempts to formulate their views must be positively supported, and they must be assisted in their formulations. How this is done appears to be addressed by Purēns in his brief discussion on the nature of the science of history and pedagogy of history.

Purēns states that history teachers must base their teaching on scientific acknowledgments. Purēns continues to use Soviet-style terminology describing, what in democratic

societies is generally accepted as a social science, in 'exact' science terms. He states that scientists complete research to support or refute hypotheses, and that the history teachers' job is to encourage student thought processes and ability to assess facts from various viewpoints. Teachers should be interested in 'colourful' facts to create interest and encourage reflection on the part of the student. Thus, not everything that is of interest to scientists is necessary for teachers. Teachers have the right to use scientific materials and sources such as modern interpretation of historic events, movies, and comics. They do not have to ask that students' interpretations are scientifically accurate. This differentiation between teacher and historian fits the Soviet mold where the teacher was the passive recipient of information supplied to him or her to be passed on to students. Teachers spent much of their own time embellishing this information with visual aids in order to make the facts in the relatively dry textbooks being used more interesting. Yet, his description does not suggest that the teacher is an active participant in his or her own continued education. He suggests that questions of history should be left to the 'scientists' and not history teachers, whereas passionate history teachers in democracies will take on challenging issues in history lessons. This leads into Purēns discussion of curriculum and student interests.

Under authoritarianism and totalitarianism, a narrow elite group appointed by politicians determines education policy, what youth should learn, and force their opinions upon society. Purēns asserts that democratic societies include a dialogue between teacher and student in the creation of curriculum. Purēns continues by stating that in democracies, the learning of historic periods occurs in the following manner and coincides with the categorization of curriculum into three groups:

1. Acquiring information – events, personalities, concepts (relates to both far-reaching events such as the Renaissance, as well as defined events such as World War I);
2. Learning through research – learning by using primary sources, research, creating assignments (relates to societal structures and their interrelationships). This way they learn the traits of democracy – how to express an opinion, how to listen to and understand a differing opinion, and how to come to a mutual agreement; and
3. Expressing a personal opinion – this period is characterized by how the student assesses historic events based upon his or her own ethical values (relates to both local and global cultural systems and their effects on society)[23].

Purēns idealizes democracies by implying that both teachers and students have a say in history curriculum. More careful study will show that this is highly unlikely because, democracies, like other forms of government, keep a close watch upon what is taught in schools. A quick check of most departments or ministries of education will indicate what history curriculum is to be taught in what grades and textbooks approved by the government for use in classrooms. Such an example is Ontario, Canada where the history curriculum is clearly described in The Ontario Curriculum and lists of government-approved textbooks are found on The

Trillium List – both documents are easily accessed on-line. It should be noted, however, that although a list of government-approved textbooks exists, it does not exclude the use of non-approved materials in the classroom, but rather indicates that only approved books can be purchased with public funds. Also, defined curriculum does not exclude discussion of topics not specifically mentioned in curriculum documents as teachers and students are not always under pressure of performing well on state history exams, which do not exist in Ontario, unlike Latvia. Finally, such democratic discussion about content implies a degree of confidence and knowledge about history as a subject in the teacher that may not exist, as many teachers of history are not necessarily students of history.

This discussion of the short introduction by Purēns to his book indicates a very superficial and idealized look at the teaching of history in democracies. It also indicates yet another Soviet legacy in that those who lived under the Soviet system realized the inferior nature of their system with a resulting attitude that everything foreign must be better. Teachers of history, for whom this book was written and who have limited, if any experience teaching outside Latvia, could find this utopian in nature and dismiss it as yet another example of the liberal views of teaching which have only shown poor academic results in the west. However, in contrast to the lack of an introduction and discussion of theory of the 1946 text, this offers a point of reference for thought and reflection on the practice and purpose of teaching history.

The remainder of Purēns book offers some concrete examples and suggestions for methods to be used in history lessons. He begins with illustrating how to present basic historic material using such methods as timelines, flow charts, maps, and gives a basic introduction on how to use various sources to acquire knowledge of facts and information. This is followed by discussion on research and analysis using primary sources such as written records, oral histories, and artifacts and learning to differentiate these from secondary sources. He warns that the phrase 'source reliability' [avotu ticamība] should be avoided because that was a phrase used during the Soviet regime to reinforce the notion that only Communist sources were believable and all others falsified or ignored the truth. He falls into the oft-favoured Communist trap of discarding the old in favour of the new, but does not, however, offer a more acceptable phrase for use in Latvian. Purēns also encourages that primary sources should be considered according to the time frame and source of the material. He also suggests using classic debates and discussion as a means of expressing oneself basing upon facts. The use of debates as a proof of knowledge has also been tainted by the Soviet past. After Communist Party meetings, the floor would officially be opened to debate, but predictably, no one would actually express their opinion or thoughts as that was not what was expected or desired, but rather only agreement with the Party line. Purēns could have addressed this issue by offering examples of informal debates, which do not require the discipline needed to perform a classic debate, and are more inclusive, such as the four-corner debate. The third chapter

discusses how students can demonstrate their knowledge and consists almost exclusively of reproductive assignment such as essays, creating exhibits, writing and performing in role, building models, and other such performative assignments. The fourth chapter discusses assessment and includes an example of a rubric as well as inquiries as to the students' capability to create his/her own assessments and come to conclusions. However, he does not offer exemplars of what could be considered upper level work in comparison to lower level work. Purēns gives very few examples of the type of assignments and strategies suggested to teachers.

The conclusion of the book asks the teacher to reflect upon his/her work. This, too, does not come easily without practice and some indication of what part of the teaching and learning process needs reflection. Purēns compares the previous totalitarian system to newly independent Latvia by stating that the totalitarian education system was formal and that the completion of assignments was of primary importance. He claims that in democracies knowledge has a different function in that formal requirements and testing are less important than realizing how the student will use his/her knowledge in every day life. Purēns' stress on the use of factual knowledge in every day life belies the claim by leading Latvian educators of the importance of learning critical thinking skills, which can be developed during the study of history. He cites various Internet sites on Latvian law regarding teaching standards for history and information about centralized exams as an appendix to the book, as well as other educational sites that may be useful to history teachers. However, the educational sites are predominantly foreign sources focusing on the needs, requirements, and educational culture of the education system in foreign countries. During Soviet occupation, foreign examples of practice were non-existent and only Russian models were used. Today, Purēns adopts a similar tactic by using only western examples, ignoring any possible positive contributions current Russian teaching may exhibit.

While this purpose of this book as a didactical handbook might seem clear on the surface, its dense nature could be overwhelming for a new teacher of history or for those who have not had training in this style of teaching. The book would have been well served by the addition of concrete examples for the many practices Purēns indicates. It also appears that, despite a lack of references, this book is based on translated sources, and the terminology and concepts might be misunderstood, if not completely foreign, to local Latvian teachers.

Despite its drawbacks, this book is a welcome addition to the body of literature for teacher education, and would be a good basis for a training course for teachers of history, which included both in-class assignments using the methods described by Purēns, as well as practicum training in the classroom. The book, on its own, unfortunately, could be quite daunting and difficult to comprehend. The publishing of this book does prove, as well, that history teaching in democracies offers various methods and allows for discussion and dissent, unlike under totalitarian regimes. The 1946 book is clearly a political document dictating the nature of history teaching, as

can be seen in the title, whereas Purēns' book is an offering to teachers on various methods they can adopt, if they choose.

Both books are examples of the influence of historiography of the era and the exclusion of contradictory philosophies. They both offer the view that their didactic paradigm is the only and best paradigm, with little or no self-criticism as indicated by lack of substantive discussion or evidence of positive practice from alternative systems. Neither book critically discusses the use of history teaching as a tool of ideology, and negative or positive aspects of such education on the ability of students to reach personal conclusions. While this is not expected from a totalitarian society, it is one society in general should be encouraging in democracies. Perhaps, lack of substantive discussion on this topic in Purēns' book indicates that while Latvia might have achieved independence politically from the Soviet Union, more effort needs to be placed on the education system to expel totalitarian thinking from its educators.

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Aija Ingrida Abens. Vēstures mācīšanas didaktika totalitārisma un demokrātijas režīmā Latvijā: kas mainījies piecdesmit gados?

Šis raksts ir pētījuma daļa, kas veikts gatavojot disertāciju Latvijas Universitātes Pedagoģijas un psiholoģijas fakultātē par autoritārās varas iespaidu uz Latvijas vēstures mācīšanu. Vēstures mācīšana un mācīšanās, kādu mēs to pazīstam šodien, ir samērā jauna parādība izglītības sistēmā. Tā laika gaitā pārvērtusies no studijām par izcilām personībām senvēsturē uz specializētām zināšanām par faktiem, kurus pētot jāpielieto kritiskas metodes. Vēstures mācīšana arī tika pakļauta politiskiem spiedieniem un ideoloģijām, kas it sevišķi parādās totalitārās un demokrātiskās iekārtās 20. gs. Rakstā salīdzināta vēstures mācīšanas didaktika divos Latvijas vēstures posmos. Pirmais posms ir tūlīt pēc Otrā pasaules kara, kad valdīja Staļina totalitārais režīms, kas aprakstīts 1946. gadā izdotā grāmatā „Kā jā mācā vēsturi“. Otrs posms ir demokrātijas posms kopš neatkarības atgūšanas 1991. gadā, kas aprakstīts V. Purēna 2006. gadā izdotā grāmatā „Kā mācīt vēsturi“. Darbā salīdzinātas autoritārās un demokrātiskās iekārtas iezīmes vēstures mācīšanā un kā tās atspoguļojas minētās grāmatās un kā minētās grāmatas noder vēstures skolotājiem. Konstatēts, ka vēstures mācīšana totalitārās varas iespaidā bija ļoti ierobežota un nebija iespēju kritiski diskutēt par vēsturiskiem faktiem, ko Staļins atklājis. Purēna grāmata norāda, ka vēsturi spēj un vajadzētu mācīt bez ideoloģijas spiedieniem. Viņš apraksta dažās demokrātiskās iekārtās pieņemtas mācīšanas metodes, bet apraksts ir pavisam un trūkst pietiekamu konkrētu piemēru, kas varētu palīdzēt skolotājiem, kuri nav raduši pielietot šādas metodes.

Айя Ингрида Абенс. Дидактика преподавания истории в тоталитарном и в демократичном режиме Латвии: как много изменилось за пятьдесят лет?

Эта статья часть исследования, которое проведено в ходе подготовки диссертации о влиянии авторитарной власти на изучение истории Латвии на факультете Педагогии и психологии Латвийского Университета. Преподавание истории и её изучение в современном виде – довольно новое явление в системе образования. Процесс шел от изучения жизни и деятельности выдающихся личностей древней истории к специализированным знаниям, при исследовании которых необходимо применять критические методы.

В данной статье сравнивается дидактика преподавания истории на двух этапах истории Латвии. Первый этап – сразу после Второй мировой войны, когда правил тоталитарный режим Сталина, описанный в книге „Как надо преподавать историю“, изданной в 1946 году. Вторым этапом является этап демократии после восстановления независимости в 1991 году, что описано в книге В.Пурена „Как преподавать историю“, изданной в 2006 году. В работе сравнивается преподавание истории в демократическом и в авторитарном обществе на основе вышеупомянутых книг и указывается на сколько эти книги пригодны для учителей истории. Доказано, что преподавание истории под давлением тоталитарной власти было очень ограниченным и отсутствовали возможности критически дискутировать по фактам, которые раскрыл Сталин. В книге Пурена указано, что историю необходимо преподавать без идеологического давления. Он описывает принятые методы преподавания истории в некоторых демократических обществах, но описание поверхностное, и отсутствуют конкретные примеры, которые помогли бы учителям, не привыкшим использовать эти методы.