STATEMENT
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before this Committee today to discuss briefly the educational systems of the United States and the Soviet Union. Education today bears more directly than ever before on our national security, and there is an important relationship between education and foreign policy.

The Soviet totalitarian government has obviously appreciated the paramount role that education can play in shaping the character and developing the strength of modern nations. In the USSR, educational programs over the past 30 years have been primarily a function of the regime's economic, military, and political objectives. This relationship has brought about an imposing academic structure, which the Office of Education has been studying, and which is described in the recent publication, Education in the U. S. S. R.

The comparative study of national education systems, which has been a responsibility of the Office of Education since the Act of 1867, is of great value today because it enables the American public to assess educational developments around the world and thus provides a framework for examining and evaluating our own system of education.

In making these comparative studies over the years the Office of Education has found that there are certain pitfalls and difficulties. The difficulty of obtaining accurate and current information is present in all instances, but especially so with regard to the Soviet Union. Until we have firsthand knowledge of the Soviet System, we shall have to be very
cautious in making evaluations. But even assuming the availability of reliable data, there are grave dangers in comparing educational systems. The control and structure of educational systems differ widely from one country to another, as do terms employed to describe them. Of greatest concern, however, are differences in basic philosophies and values on which the respective educational programs are founded. In comparing all the ingredients of the American and Soviet systems of education, therefore, we face a task of immense proportions, involving many pitfalls and misleading analogies. But we can, I think, draw general conclusions as to certain features of Soviet educational programs and consider the implications to the United States in general and American education in particular.

The universal system of education in the USSR today is the result of 40 years of serious study of educational theory and practice, numerous experiments, and rigorous evaluations by both educators and government leaders of academic achievements and failures. Before the 1917 Revolution education in the Russian Empire was restricted to a small elite, and secondary schools were often staffed by teachers from Western Europe. The leaders of the communist state set out with the avowed intent to educate illiterate peasants and workers on a massive scale, and they began quickly to establish a network of schools geared to mass education. In the 1920's they eagerly adopted new educational concepts from Western Europe and the United States, including teaching methods and curriculum requirements stressing greater freedom for the child.

These "experimental" approaches were abandoned in the early 1930's. Notwithstanding the fact that by that time schooling was available to a far larger percentage of the population than before the Revolution, the new program in effect represented a substantial return to the qualitative standards of education prevailing before 1917. That Soviet educators have adopted many pre-revolutionary concepts is illustrated by the fact that Kiselev's Algebra and Geometry, originally published in the 1880's, are standard textbooks in the USSR today.
Despite changes over the past 40 years, the constant goal expressed in Soviet educational literature and official statements has remained "the all-round development of the personality and the preparation of the individual for building communist society." In pursuit of these aims the regime generously finances educational programs for students who, in return, are required to render service to the state. Free schooling, stipends to university students, attractive teachers salaries and bonuses, and facilities are now being financed by the state on a growing mass scale.

It is very important to recognize that the determination and carrying out of educational policies in the USSR are responsibilities, in the first instances, of the small Central Committee of the Communist Party and its many subordinate organs of control throughout the Soviet Union. The Committee's department for science, schools, and culture studies and administers educational affairs at every political level of the Soviet Union, supervising personnel in government ministries and departments of education. Although the USSR is organized on the Federal principle and even though education ostensibly fits that pattern, all controls—political, ideological, and financial—stem from central political organs under the Central Committee. Local and parental influence over educational policy, so central to American education, are virtually excluded in favor of state-planned admission quotas and standardized curriculum requirements.

From the very outset, Soviet young people are made to understand that their economic rewards and prestige in society will depend in large part upon their progress in school. Thus in the USSR there is a clear-cut and strong incentive for academic achievement. And the Soviets can impose relatively rigorous scholastic requirements for those who are given an opportunity for higher education and for leadership in the Soviet society.
The Soviet system provides a standard curriculum through grade 7. On completion of grade 7 Soviet children are subjected to rigorous testing and screening. Those who show academic promise go on to regular secondary schools. Those who have not done so well academically are directed into one of a number of specialized programs: factory schools, special vocational schools, semi-professional schools.

Unlike the State and local school systems in the United States, this centrally-directed system is organized and calculated to achieve the maximum benefit to the regime's economic and military programs. The basic premise of Soviet educational philosophy is that central political authority sets the nature and extent of educational opportunities. Great care is taken to see that able Soviet youth are prepared to serve the State in the most effective possible way.

Since the beginning of long-term planning in 1928, enrollments in all Soviet schools have steadily advanced. Since 1940, the last pre-war year in the USSR, high school, technical school, and university-level enrollments have each increased about 2-1/2 times. There are now approximately 5-1/2 million students in grades 8-10, roughly comparable to the last 3 years in United States high schools; 2 million in 4-year technical schools; and 2 million in university-level institutions. In 1955-56, Soviet higher institutes accepted only about 30 percent of the 1,250,000 graduates from high school. Of that number approximately 250,000 will finish university training.

Soviet elementary and secondary schools, in line with the regime's national objectives, give their pupils considerable concentration in sciences and language. These schools are in general modeled on the European pattern of education, giving considerable emphasis to basic studies, including substantial work in the humanities. In the ten-year program, Soviet youngsters take 5 years of physics, 5 of biology, and 10 of arithmetic and higher mathematics (algebra, geometry, and
trigonometry). Soviet students in high school grades 8-10, who make up about 18 percent of total school enrollment below the university level, spend during their 3-year course over 42 percent of school time in higher mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and other related courses. About 40 percent of the secondary school pupils during the 1955-56 school year in the USSR were studying German, some 40 percent English and 20 percent either French Spanish, or Latin. About 65 percent of the students in USSR higher educational institutions also study English.

The rigid political control of education in the Soviet Union has made it possible for them to produce highly trained people for heavy industry and agriculture, for the advancement of military technology and physical sciences, for foreign aid or other special missions abroad, and in all areas of priority political need. According to statistics on general fields of specialization, Soviet university graduates have in recent years been consistently most numerous in education (49 percent), engineering and physical sciences (23 percent), and agriculture (10 percent). The large percentage for education is a key to the whole Soviet program: prepare more and better teachers for the secondary, technical and higher schools.

We do not know what turns Soviet education will take as it begins to satisfy the State's requirements in formerly deficient fields. We do know that such turns can be effected promptly and fully, because of the strong political control of quotas, incentives and enrollments.

From this brief description of Soviet education, it can be seen that it differs in certain marked respects from education in the United States, and that these differences stem from basically different ideologies. Because education in the United States is considered the responsibility of parents and citizens in each local community, rather than an instrument of the State, the
entire structure of United States education differs from that of the Soviets. Instead of central political control, we have control vested in some 50,000 separate school districts, with policy determined by basically non-political school boards, to say nothing of our independent schools. At the higher education level, we have some 1,860 separate, self-governing institutions. This rich variety of institutions is in keeping with our philosophy of freedom of choice with regard to both education and occupation.

Freedom of choice and of thought is, in a sense, the very thing that distinguishes American from Soviet education. The free choice of occupation well illustrates the broader responsibility which rests upon American education, for the American's opportunity to choose his own occupation contributes to the demand for such a wide range of kinds and types of education. The Soviet policy of concentrating training for certain occupations of current political importance greatly simplifies the Soviet educational problem. It is a major responsibility of the United States schools and colleges, for example, to prepare American youth for a wide variety of professions and occupations which are either non-existent or in relatively little demand in the Soviet Union. And yet Americans consider that these professions and occupations make important contributions to the American standard of living. The need to supply broadly educated men and women for such a diversified society is one of the reasons why we are producing fewer scientists and engineers than are the Soviets despite the fact we have a larger proportion of our youth in college.

And I would interject here that our scientific leaders, like other American citizens, want this element of free choice to remain. They feel that persons drafted or enticed into science or engineering against their true wishes or inclinations, will not be the kind of scientists we need.
I feel that we may have, in one important respect, carried freedom of choice a little too far. We offer to youth still too young to know the importance of their decision the choice between taking more difficult courses which will open greater opportunities to them, and easier courses which may not produce the same long-range benefits. The student who chooses not to take mathematics in school, for instance, can hardly be expected to appreciate fully how he handicaps himself if he should later want to be a scientist or engineer; his failure to keep that wide door open has the ultimate effect of limiting his freedom of choice. While we recognize that not all young people in our high schools should be expected to study advanced subjects, it is a serious waste of human talent to have able students electing not to take courses needed for their full educational development. It is estimated, for example, that only 1 out of 3 of our high school graduates take as much as one year of chemistry, and 1 out of 4 take a course in physics. Just as disturbing is the estimate that only 15 percent of all our high school students are studying a foreign language.

Recognizing that the United States must hold its own with the Soviets in certain areas of competence means that a far greater educational task faces the United States than faces the Soviets. For we must not only match the Soviets in specific areas of competitive importance--such as science and engineering--but we must continue to produce all the kinds of skills and abilities required by our own way of life. At the same time, the educational machinery with which we have to work, in contrast to the Soviets', by the nature of its structure cannot and should not work to meet quotas established by political authority. The task to be accomplished, and the manner in which we must accomplish it, constitute a tremendous challenge to the American people.
We must not seek to imitate or compete with Soviet education on Soviet terms. But we would be foolish to ignore the ominous fact that Soviet education is making an increasing contribution to the military, economic, and political objectives of the Soviet state. We would be foolish to ignore any threat to our freedom posed by the fact that the Russians seem to be putting more emphasis on their education, for their purposes, than Americans are putting on our education for our purposes.

It is an inescapable conclusion that if we are to have the kinds of educated people we need in the numbers we need, a larger proportion of our national resources—of dollars and effort—must be devoted to education.

It is not enough simply to invest more money and more materials in the production of missiles, satellites, or other products of this scientific age. These are vital concerns, but these are end products; over the long-term, our fundamental concern should be to invest sufficiently and wisely in the development of highly skilled and broadly responsible men who will make possible not only scientific and military progress, but advances in the humanities and in all the highest fields of mankind’s endeavor.

While our ability to meet immediate national security needs depends upon effective use of the talents our society already has, we should be even more concerned with our rate of achievement—and with the Soviet rate—10 to 20 years from now. In large part the levels of achievement in the future are being determined in the classrooms now—in their schools, and in ours.

What is needed most is a new emphasis on the pursuit of learning, a new esteem for academic teaching and academic accomplishment. In many of our schools and homes we need more hard work in fundamental academic subjects, and higher academic standards. Good teaching and good scholarship should be highly
prized—by the student, the school, the family and the community. And the rewards our society accords to good teaching and good scholarship should be much greater.

I do not believe we have made as much progress along these lines in this country as we should. Education has not had the priority it deserves. If academic accomplishment has not fallen into actual disrepute, it is at least suffering under indifference and lack of esteem.

More emphasis, more esteem for academic accomplishment cannot be obtained, of course, simply by government decree, or even by investing more money in education, as desperately needed as more funds are. Esteem for scholarship must be an attitude—the result of a sense of values of the people.

The government can, however, provide some leadership. And I believe it can help develop an environment, a climate of opinion, which gives more encouragement to scholastic pursuits. Under our traditional system of education, the bulk of the funds and effort needed for education must be provided by local, State, and private sources.

The President's proposals in education, therefore, are designed to give Federal encouragement and assistance to local, State, and private effort. They are designed to help local, State, and independent sources respond more fully and more quickly to meet certain problems which bear heavily upon the national security.

Under this program, the Federal Government would give new recognition and support to basic scholastic achievement. We would help reduce the tragic waste of talent this country now suffers when many thousands of able students stop their education too soon. Through earlier and improved testing, we would help our schools identify the potential abilities of students at an earlier stage in their education. Through improved counseling services, we would encourage able students to work hard at academic subjects, to stay in school, and to prepare for college.
Through Federal scholarships for the ablest students who need financial help to go to college, we would offer new incentives for potential leaders who otherwise might be denied the opportunity of higher education.

Other proposals would support the teaching of such basic subjects as science, mathematics, and foreign languages, and help our graduate schools meet the crucial problem of providing more college teachers.

This Committee may be particularly interested in our proposals regarding foreign languages. We believe the United States is probably weaker in foreign language abilities than any other major country in the world. This presents a serious handicap in our efforts to build a durable world peace and leaves us at a serious disadvantage in our foreign affairs. Some two billion people--three quarters of the world's population--speak languages that are rarely if ever taught in the United States. A recent State Department study showed that only 25 percent of incoming foreign service officers had a proficiency in any foreign language.

To help correct these appalling deficiencies, we are proposing two steps. First, we would support the establishment of summer and academic year institutes to provide further training to improve the effectiveness of our existing foreign language teachers at all levels of our educational system. This approach is patterned after the successful program of the National Science Foundation in the field of science teaching. Second, we propose to support the establishment of special centers to provide instruction for future teachers, government personnel, and others in those particular languages which are very important today but which have been sadly neglected in this country.

The administration's proposals are, we feel, an appropriate Federal step in the direction of strengthened education. The primary responsibility for
American education should and will remain with the States and local communities, and this program is designed to strengthen, rather than weaken, the role of these agencies.

In conclusion, I should like to express to the Committee my confidence in the American system of education. I feel that our good schools are equal to the best in the world. I feel that these good schools are well-designed in terms of the objectives and values of a democratic society. Our task, as I see it, is to bring more of our schools up to the level of the best. I believe, too, in our system of voluntary, free, and locally controlled education, for I feel that what it lacks in efficiency, compared to the Soviet system, it more than makes up in resourcefulness. Keeping education close to the people not only insures its freedom, but gives it a depth of strength and support that can help education to meet the challenge of our times.

The task is to make Americans aware of the need for more generous support of education, to help develop a climate of recognition and encouragement of scholarship, so that education can do all that will be asked of it in the coming years.