

Child Studies in Udmurtia in the 1920s

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ABSTRACTS

Die interdisziplinäre Kinderforschung entstand im späten 19. Jahrhundert im Umkreis des amerikanischen Psychologen und Sozial-Darwinisten G. Stanley Hall. Bald wurde sie zu einer länderübergreifenden wissenschaftlichen Bewegung, die sich unter der Bezeichnung der Pädologie verbreitete und im bolschewistischen Russland der 1920er Jahre besonders stark an Fahrt gewann. Der vorliegende Aufsatz gibt einen Einblick in die pädologische Praxis in der Sowjetischen Udmurtischen Republik und zeigt die Auseinandersetzung der lokalen Eliten mit den theoretischen Implikationen sowie den praktischen Konsequenzen der Anwendung des pädologischen Wissens für die indigene Bevölkerung. Udmurtische Intellektuelle empfanden die sozial-biologischen Theorien als diskriminierend und formulierten alternative Konzepte für die Erziehung der nächsten Generation. Im Beitrag werden die bis heute wenig beachteten Bildungsprojekte udmurtischer Intellektueller vorgestellt, die im Kontext des neuen Programms der Kinderforschung in der Region entstanden sind. Der intellektuelle und wissenschaftliche Transfer, der in Udmurtien stattfand, war keine Einbahnstraße, sondern reflektierte den reziproken Kommunikation- und Austauschprozess. Die lokalen Eliten verfügten in den 1920er Jahren über gewisse Freiräume und versuchten, die sowjetische Wissenschaftspolitik zu beeinflussen. Die Pädologie erwies sich als ein wichtiges, wenn auch kurzes Kapitel in der russischen Wissenschaftsgeschichte.

Interdisciplinary child research emerged in the late nineteenth century with the pioneering work of the American social-Darwinist psychologist G. Stanley Hall. It soon became a transnational scientific movement, pedology, which gained particular traction in Bolshevik Russia in the 1920s. The present essay offers an insight into pedological practice in the Soviet Udmurt Republic and highlights the engagement of local elites, who were concerned with both the theoretical implications and practical consequences of pedology for the indigenous population. Udmurt intellectuals regarded social-biological theories as discriminatory and formulated

alternative approaches to school the next generation. This article presents their hitherto little documented educational projects, which evolved in the context of the new programme of child studies conducted in the region. The intellectual and scientific transfer that took place in Udmurtia was not a one-way street, but reflects a reciprocal process of communication and exchange. For about a decade, local elites enjoyed a modicum of freedom and attempted to influence Soviet scientific policy. Pedology proved to be an important but short-lived chapter in the history of Russian science.

Introduction

Just over a century ago on the streets of Petrograd and Moscow, the Bolsheviks seized power in an audacious attempt to radically restructure a crisis-wracked country and, in the course of time, to reassert Russia's position as a leading actor in global history. The new administration launched a programme of unprecedented modernization that demanded nothing less than a comprehensive transformation of Russian society. This programme included a concept of "cultural revolution"¹ and far-reaching educational reform. To advance the latter, the regime looked to an emerging branch of child studies, "pedology."

In this paper, I investigate the adoption of pedology by Soviet scientists in the 1920s, with a particular focus on pedological research conducted in the 1920s in the central Russian region of Udmurtia. Furthermore, I will consider reactions in a local educational journal to pedological practice in Udmurt schools. I shall then examine alternative proposals for studies of Udmurt childhood that were formulated by local intelligentsia. The contradictions and complex interdependencies of science and politics, as well as centre and periphery in Imperial and Soviet Russia have engaged the attention of a number of historians in recent times.² However, the history of the Volga region, populated by Udmurts and other ethnic groups, remains a largely neglected chapter in Soviet historiography. This research is intended to contribute to the history of child studies in this region and to consider the local and national impact of Udmurt elites.

1 I use the term "cultural revolution" in a broad sense, not restricting it to the years 1928–1931. See M. David-Fox, *What Is Cultural Revolution?*, in: *The Russian Review* 58 (1999) 2, pp. 181–201, here 182.

2 For the history of ethnographical and anthropological research see, R. Cvetkovski/A. Hofmeister (eds.), *An Empire of Others: Creating Ethnographic Knowledge in Imperial Russia and the USSR*, Budapest 2014; M. Mogilner, *Homo Imperii: A History of Physical Anthropology in Russia*, Lincoln 2013; F. Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of Soviet Union*, Ithaca 2005. For child studies in Central Asia, see C. Cavanaugh, *Biology and Backwardness: Medicine and Power in Russian and Soviet Central Asia, 1868–1934*, PhD diss., Columbia University 2001. For specific ethnopedological research on children in the periphery and local influence on pedological theory, see A. Byford, *Imperial Normativities and Sciences of the Child: The Politics of Development in the USSR, 1920–1930s*, in: *Ab Imperio* 2 (2016), pp. 71–124; S.N. Tseniuga, *Pedologicheskaya rabota v Sibiri pervoi treti XX veka* [Pedological work in Siberia in the first third of the twentieth century], in: *Obrazovanie i nauka* 67 (2009) 10, pp. 82–93; N. Kurek, *Istoriya likvidatsii pedagogii i psikhotehniki* [A history of the liquidation of pedology and psychotechnics], Saint Petersburg 2004.

Early Years of Pedology

The American scholar Oscar Chrisman (1855–1929) introduced the term “paidology” in 1893 in the journal *Pedagogical Seminary*. Originally, Chrisman simply envisioned pedology as an offshoot or branch of pedagogy, one that would carry out investigations in a “field of new work [...] to study the child scientifically in the laboratory, and then to apply the results of this study in a further study of the child in the home, in the school, and in all the life of the child.” However, he then proposed the creation of an entirely new “department in college or university, whose sole aim of study and centre of attention is the child [...]. Such work as this [...] might be known as a department of Paidology.”³ From these bold, if somewhat vague roots, American, European and Russian scholars soon adopted the term for the nascent science of comprehensive child study.

Pedology offered a scientific alternative to pedagogy, which, at the time, had a strong philosophical orientation.⁴ Pedologists, in contrast to exponents of pedagogy, employed a positivist approach based on experimental methods. Evolutionary theory, in particular, the “recapitulation” theory of biologist Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), a German disciple of Darwin, had a major impact on pedology. The core of Haeckel’s doctrine is the “biogenetic law,” which is based on the notion that an animal embryo replays or “recapitulates” the same developments that occurred during the long process of the evolution of the particular species. Thus, “ontogeny” (the specific biological development of an individual organism from the moment of fertilization) “recapitulates phylogeny” (the evolutionary history of a species).⁵

Originally a biological principle, Haeckel’s theory was soon applied by Western social scientists to determine and classify the purported developmental level of individuals within a particular race⁶ or society. Certain races, particularly those associated with pre-modern cultures, were considered to be genetically stunted, arrested at a lower level of the evolutionary ladder. According to this logic, individuals of such races, even if

3 O. Chrisman, The Hearing of Children, in: *Pedagogical Seminary* 2 (1892/1893) 3, pp. 418–441, here 439. The term “Paidology” is derived from the Greek, *παις* (*pais*, child) and *λόγος* (*logos*, reason). Chrisman’s use of the suffix “-logy,” which often appears in the names of scientific disciplines, emphasizes the intended scientific aspect of paidology/pedology.

4 Similar reasons spawned the development of experimental pedagogy in Germany at the turn of the century. However, it did not gain the popularity of the pedological movement. See C. Hopf, *Die experimentelle Pädagogik. Empirische Erziehungswissenschaft in Deutschland am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Bad Heilbrunn 2004. For an overview of different forms of experimental child studies at the time, see M. Depaepe, *Zum Wohl des Kindes?: Pädologie, pädagogische Psychologie und experimentelle Pädagogik in Europa und den USA, 1890–1940*, Weinheim 1983.

5 “Die Ontogenese ist die kurze und schnelle Recapitulation der Phylogenese, bedingt durch die physiologischen Functionen der Vererbung (Fortpflanzung) und Anpassung (Ernährung). Das organische Individuum [...] wiederholt während des raschen und kurzen Laufes seiner individuellen Entwicklung die wichtigsten von denjenigen Formveränderungen, welche seine Voreltern während des langsamen und langen Laufes ihrer paläontologischen Entwicklung nach den Gesetzen der Vererbung und Anpassung durchlaufen haben.” E. Haeckel, *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen*, vol. 2, Berlin 1866, p. 300.

6 The term race appears here without quotation marks, as I employ the term as it was used in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific discourse.

removed from their group and transferred to another environment, would not be able to climb to a higher rung because their particular development “corresponds” to, and in this case is restricted by, the general limitations of their race. Children from advanced races go through very similar stages; however, they soon attain and move beyond the level of the fully developed adult “savage.” This explains the alleged correspondence between the behavioral pattern of the Western child, for example, and that of the uncivilized, primitive adult.

Recapitulation theory influenced the thinking of the American child psychologist G. Stanley Hall (1846–1924), one of the founding fathers of pedology. Adopting Haeckel’s biogenetic law, Hall developed a general phyletic theory, which divides the duration of childhood into stages that correspond to the ancient history of mankind.⁷ Bolstered by the evolutionary theories of Haeckel and Hall, pedology began to take on the characteristics of a comparative science, with particularly negative implications for pre-modern societies.⁸

After the First World War, interest in pedology in the West declined, but the course of its journey was to expand elsewhere.⁹ Russian pedologists, encouraged by the new government, continued their research after the October revolution. Certainly until the early 1930s, Russian scientists were in continuous contact and exchanged knowledge with their Western colleagues.¹⁰ However, Soviet pedologists and developmental psychologists also began to pursue their own theories and lines of research. Crucially, they were divided on the matter of recapitulation theory.

Pavel Blonskii (1884–1941) was the most prominent adherent of Hall’s phyletic theory. Blonskii regarded the biogenetic law as universal for all living organisms and emphasized biological factors in the stepwise development of children. He asserted that it is impossible to skip required stages, and that mental development could not be accelerated in this manner. Instead, he emphasized that every child advances from the stage of “primitive” to “civilized” in order to foster a harmonious personality.¹¹ The pedagogue must con-

7 Hall maintained that youths should be given the possibility to express their “hereditary impulsions” in accordance with their “phyletic stage.” G. S. Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*, vol. 1, New York 1904, p. x. He claimed that the same principle of development should be applied in the curriculum and criticized the teaching of writing in the first years of school: “Here again we violate the great law that the child repeats the history of the race, and that, from the larger historic standpoint, writing as a mode of utterance is only the latest fashion”. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 462.

8 The judgements of the adherents of Haeckel’s recapitulation theory were not restricted to the field of child development. The “child-savage” analogy was widely employed by criminal anthropologists and psychologists who argued that the savage, the mentally retarded person and the born criminal are all arrested at a child’s level of development and cannot ascend to the level of the civilized man. See J. Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* Cambridge, MA 1977, pp. 115–165.

9 Regarding the wane of interest in pedology in the West, see Depaepe, Zum Wohl, pp. 127–130.

10 A well-researched study on intensive international relations between Western and Soviet scholars of psychological and human sciences during the interwar period may be found in A. Yasnitsky, *Ob izolyatsionizme sovetskoi psikhologii* [Concerning the isolationism of Soviet Psychology], in: *Voprosy Psikhologii* 3 (2010), pp. 101–112; 1 (2011) pp. 124–136; *Idem*, *Izolyatsionizm sovetskoi psikhologii?* [Isolationism of Soviet Psychology?], in: *Voprosy Psikhologii* 6 (2011), pp. 108–121; 1 (2012), pp. 100–112; 2 (2012), pp. 66–79.

11 See chapters 2–5 in P. Blonskii, *Pedologiya*, Moscow 1925, pp. 26–273.

sider these stages to facilitate “natural” conditions for the maturation of a child. “Naturalization” of the child reflected the positive-scientific developmental approach of some pedagogists and was an inherent part of Blonskii’s theoretical scaffolding. In Blonskii’s most famous book, *Trudovaya shkola* (The labour school), the “authentic” child-worker assumes a central role, and juvenile activity is explained as the child’s “natural” will “to make things” (“*delat’ veshchi*”).¹² In 1921, Blonskii, along with other pedagogues, was invited by Lenin’s wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya (1869–1939) to collaborate on a new school curriculum. In 1923, the curriculum, reflecting Blonskii’s views, was released, with one edition for urban areas, and the other for rural regions. From 1924 onward he started to regard himself not as pedagogue but as a pedologist; in 1925 he published his major work *Pedologiya* (Pedology), which was the first monograph on this new science in the USSR. In the monograph, Blonskii proposed standards of child development according to different “age stages.” While he considered social factors in his research, his claim that biological determinants influence the process of maturation and growth evoked criticism among colleagues.¹³

One of the most adamant opponents of Blonskii was the neuroscientist Aron Zalkind (1888–1936).¹⁴ The latter dubbed Blonskii and his adherents “*biogeneticists*.” Zalkind favored a “*sociogenetic*” approach. Sociogenitists emphasized the influence of environmental factors and rejected the limiting principle of correspondence between the stages of ontogeny and phylogeny. Zalkind was convinced of the boundless malleability of the brain, of its capacity to adapt to a changing cultural and social environment, and its ability to develop at a rapid pace. With the introduction of Stalin’s First Five-Year Plan in 1928, Zalkind’s theories gained increasing attention.¹⁵ His promise that the heterogene-

12 P. Blonskii, *Trudovaya shkola: Chast’ I* [The labour school: Part I], Moscow 1919, p. 113. Rousseau, of course, emphasized the natural aspects of childhood. In *Émile*, he refers to an “authentic” child who “lives and is unconscious of his own life” (“*vivit, et est vitae nescius ipse suae*”). The concept of the authentic child became central to theories of progressive education developed by Blonskii’s contemporaries John Dewey (1859–1952) and Maria Montessori (1870–1952). Both pedagogues were very influential in the West and in the Soviet Union. Regarding the impact of these three figures on Blonskii, see P. Blonskii, *Kak ya stal pedagogom* [How I became a pedagogue], in: B.P. Esipov et al. (eds.) *Izbrannye pedagogicheskie proizvedeniya* [Selected pedagogical works], Moscow 1961, pp. 7–45.

13 See A. Pinkevich, Blonskii, Pavel Petrovich, in: *Bol’shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* [Great Soviet Encyclopedia], 1st edn., vol. 6, Moscow, 1927, pp. 522–523.

14 For Zalkind’s prominent role in the pedological movement, see C. Kuhr-Korolev, “Gezähmte Helden”: Die Formierung der Sowjetjugend 1917–1932, Essen 2005, pp. 106–108. During the 1920s, Zalkind was an enthusiastic supporter of psychoanalysis, which he sought to reconcile with Marxism. After his works on “Freudo-Marxism” were heavily criticized, he openly apostatized from his adherence to Freudian theory. In the mid-1920s he published several works on the sexual education of proletarian youth, which proclaimed the complete subordination of sexuality to proletarian class interests. Zalkind formulated his conservative views on sexual ethics in a concentrated form in his declaration of “twelve sexual commandments for the revolutionary proletariat,” which first appeared in his popular brochure *Revoliutsiya i molodezh’* [Revolution and youth], Moscow 1925. See A. Etkind, *Eros of the Impossible: The History of Psychoanalysis in Russia*, Boulder 1997; M.B. Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union*, New Haven 1998; E. Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*, Princeton 1997.

15 Aron Zalkind’s popularity was spurred by his organizational talent. In 1928 he became the editor of the flagship journal for pedological research, *Pedologiya* [Pedology] (1928–1932), was appointed president of the Interdepartmental Pedology Planning Commission and organized the first All-Union Congress of Pedology.

ous and asymmetrical Soviet population could be swiftly transformed was appealing.¹⁶ “Backward” peoples, especially those who lived in remote areas of the country, urgently needed to be converted into a modern productive force. Zalkind’s theory of “plasticity” would facilitate the emergence of the optimized Soviet man.¹⁷

Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), known today as the founder of the cultural-historical approach in psychology, was also engaged in the pedological movement. He was convinced of the possibility of accelerating human transformation through cultural change. Vygotsky expected to observe such advancement in the course of the First Five-Year Plan and supported Zalkind’s efforts to establish a new research field, the pedology of *natsmen* (national minorities). Both scholars aimed to better coordinate pedological laboratories in the outlying Soviet republics with the central institutes and administration.¹⁸ The absence of a unified theoretical framework and a standard methodical approach proved a significant problem, in particular in regard to pedology’s treatment of *natsmen* children. In some national republics, pedological work was poorly conducted and the conclusions were of questionable scientific quality. Minority children were often depicted as physically and mentally “underdeveloped.” The results of such laboratorial research produced an aversion among local elites and pedagogues to the budding science.

Udmurts and Votskaya Autonomous Oblast’ (VAO)

In the mid-1920s, pedological research expanded to a particular group of *natsmen*, Udmurts, an indigenous Finno-Ugric ethnic minority, referred to by Russians at the time as Votyaks. In tsarist times, the Udmurts were clustered within Vyatka guberniya (governorate, or province), within which they constituted the largest non-Russian ethnic group.¹⁹ In 1920, part of that large administrative area became the independent territorial unit of Votskaya Autonomous Oblast’ (VAO), the designated homeland for the Udmurt people.²⁰ In tsarist times, the non-Russian population of this area had become

16 Party ideologists explained the hierarchy between ethno-national groups in Soviet Russia according to the social-economical model of historical materialism, which assumed a transition of societies from a primitive stage to slavery, feudalism, capitalism and eventually communism. Marx and Engels maintained that this scheme did not necessarily apply to the development of every folk or nation. See J.H.J. van der Pot, *Sinnebeelding und Periodisierung der Geschichte: eine systematische Übersicht der Theorien und Auffassungen*, Leiden 1999, pp. 467–468.

17 For the history of the concept of neuroplasticity see G. Berlucchi/H.A. Buchtel, *Neuronal plasticity: historical roots and evolution of meaning*, in: *Experimental Brain Research* 192 (2009), pp. 307–319.

18 See L. Vygotsky, *K voprosu o plane nauchno-issledovatel'skoi raboty po pedagogii natsional'nykh men'shinstv* [On the question of a plan for scientific research work regarding the pedology of national minorities], in: *Pedologiya* 3 (1929), pp. 367–377, here 369.

19 According to the 1897 census. http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_lan_97_uezd.php?reg=307 [31.03.2019].

20 In June 1928, VAO was absorbed into a larger entity, Nizhegorodskii Krai; in 1932, VAO was renamed Udmurt Autonomous Oblast'; in 1934 it became Udmurt Autonomous Republic, a part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Regarding the struggle of Udmurt elites for self-determination, see K. Kulikov, *Bor'ba za samoopredelenie Udmurtskogo naroda v 1917–1937gg.* [Struggle for self-determination of Udmurt people in 1917–1937], in: K. Kulikov (ed.) *Natsional'no-gosudarstvennoe stroitel'stvo v Udmurtii v 1917–1937gg.*: *Sbornik statei* [Construction of the nation-state in Udmurtia, 1917–1937: collected essays], Izhevsk 1991, pp. 4–40.

partially Christianized; however, many Udmurts retained their animistic beliefs or practised syncretic rituals.

The education of non-Russians in Vyatka governorate began in the eighteenth century and often took place in the context of enforced Christianization. During that century, some church schools accepted children of baptized non-Russians, preparing them for the clergy with a three- to four-year course. However, Udmurts often could not afford church schools, and some were reluctant to send their children to such schools. Moreover, since the language of instruction was Russian, the teaching was ineffective and many children dropped out of school in the first year.

Even after secular schools were opened for Udmurt children in the middle of the nineteenth century, attendance remained very low. The situation began to change only at the end of the century, after linguist and missionary Nikolai Il'minskii introduced his method of education for non-Russian children of the Vyatka region in their mother tongue.

At that time, a number of Udmurts started to work as pedagogues for their own people. In 1890, one of them, K.A. Andreev, became the principal of Central Udmurt School, the first Udmurt teaching seminary, in the village of Staryi Karlygan.²¹ However, in 1913, Russia's Ministry of Education prohibited teaching in a minority language.²² Chronic underfinancing worsened the situation. As of 1917, 18 per cent of the entire population of the territory that later became the Udmurt Republic was literate; the percentage of literacy of the indigenous Udmurt population was 14.7 per cent.²³ In June 1921, at the "First Meeting of Udmurt Educators" conference, it was noted that there were 450 teachers and eight pedagogical lecturers in the entire region, which had a population of about 900,000.²⁴ In response, local elites initiated a large-scale reform of the educational system, building schools, educating teachers, and transforming the

21 For the history of the Karlygan teaching seminary, see G. Frolova, *Iz istorii Udmurtskoi shkoly* [From the history of Udmurt school], Izhevsk 1971, pp. 47–52.

22 In 1913, the Minister of Education, Lev Kasso issued *Pravila o nachal'nykh uchilishchakh dlya inorodtsev* [Regulations for basic schools of non-Russians] which significantly modified policies concerning non-Russian ethnic minorities. The regulations allowed teaching of children of non-Russians in their native language for no more than two years. Russian language commenced from the third month of schooling. The requirement to teach in pupils' mother tongue was abandoned under the pretext that there were not enough qualified instructors. See *Pravila o nachal'nykh uchilishchakh dlya inorodtsev* (14 June 1913, N 25897) [Regulations about the basic schools for non-Russians], in: *Russkaya Shkola* 9 (1913), pp. v–viii. With the Regulations of 1913, language was enlisted to consolidate the heterogeneous population of Russia. This became an urgent necessity after the failed attempt to unite ethnically diverse groups through religion. See I.A. Anokhina, *Gosudarstvennaya politika v dele prosveshcheniya nerusskikh narodov Povolzh'ya. Vtoraya polovina XIX–nachalo XX veka* [State policy in the matter of the education of non-Russian peoples in the Volga region from the second half of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century], in: *Izvestiya PGPU* 3 (2007) 7, pp. 85–90. Concerning the impact of the Regulations on Udmurt public education, see K.A. Ponomarev, *Iz istorii narodnogo obrazovaniya Udmurtii* [From the history of Udmurt public education], Izhevsk 1996, p. 12.

23 V.A. Maksimov, *Kul'turnyĭ rost Udmurtii za 17 let diktatury proletariata* [Udmurt cultural growth during 17 years of the dictatorship of the proletariat], Izhevsk 1935, p. 4.

24 *Iz Rezoliucii Pervogo Vserossiiskogo S'ezda Rabotnikov Prosveshcheniya i Socialisticheskoi Kul'tury Udmurtov* [From the Resolution of the First All-Russian Meeting of Udmurt Educators], in: A.A. Tronin (ed.) *Kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo Udmurtii: sbornik dokumentov* [Udmurt cultural construction: collected documents], Izhevsk 1970, pp. 84–85.

church school into the “labour school” (*trudovaya shkola*), which aimed to link learning to productive work.²⁵

In 1924, in the midst of the extensive transformation of Russia’s educational system, a newly designed national school curriculum was introduced in VAO. The curriculum was characterized by four principles, which were referred to as i) *kompleksnost’* (a comprehensive, thematic approach to subject learning) ii) *kraevedenie* (studies of the local environment) iii) pedology, and iv) *sovremennost’* (contemporaneity, modernity).²⁶ A distinct, localized sub-branch of pedology developed in Udmurt schools. In 1926, a pedological laboratory (*kabinet*) was opened in Izhevsk, the capital of VAO. The office was part of the regional bureau, *Okhrana zdorov’ya detey* (Bureau for the Protection of Children’s Health), or OZD, and employed medically educated pedologists who supervised the teachers’ work at schools and orphanages.²⁷

In 1924, the superintendency of the educational measurements in VAO was delegated to *Oblastnoy otdel narodnogo obrazovaniya* (The Regional Department of Public Education), or OBONO, which became the administrative body responsible for Udmurt education.²⁸ The official organ of OBONO, the bilingual *Prosveshchenie Udmurtov* (Enlightenment of Udmurts),²⁹ which was launched in 1927, devoted much attention to pedological examination of Udmurt children, as well as studies of the local environment (*kraevedenie*). OBONO published relevant materials for teachers involved in child studies, inviting them to professional exchange and discussions in the columns of the journal. Four reports from the pedological laboratory appeared in the first issue of *Prosveshchenie Udmurtov*. These included anthropometrical studies on Udmurt and Russian children, the results of tests of children’s writing in Russian and Udmurt language, and assessments

25 Concerning the Declaration on United Labour School (30 September 1918), see E.M. Balashov, *Politika v oblasti shkol’nogo, professional’no-tekhnicheskogo i srednego spetsial’nogo obrazovaniya, 1917–1941 gody* [Policies in school, professional-technical and intermediate special education, 1917–1941], in: A.N. Dmitriev (ed.) *Raspi-sanie peremen: Ocherki istorii obrazovatel’noi i nauchnoi politiki v Rossiiskoi imperii – SSSR (konets 1880-kh – 1930e gody)* [Schedule of changes: essays on the history of educational and scientific policies in the Russian Empire (from the late 1880’s – to the 1930’s)], Moscow 2012, pp. 436–443. Regarding the realization of the declaration in Udmurtia, see V. G. Bobrova, *Stanovlenie sovetskoi shkoly v Udmurtii* [Establishment of the Soviet school in Udmurtia], Izhevsk 1967, pp. 24–41.

26 Frolova, *Iz istorii*, p. 111. A.I. Klepova maintains that pedological examinations of Udmurt children were inaugurated in 1923. *Tsentral’nyi Gosudarstvennyi Archiv Udmurtskoi Respubliki* [Central Governmental Archive of the Udmurt Republic] (herein: TsGA UR) f. R 175 op. 1 d. 122 ll. 1–9.

27 The early history of childcare in VAO has yet to be written. Due to a dearth of sources and lack of secondary literature it is difficult to reconstruct how many medically educated pedologists worked at the pedological office. The fact that the numbers of medically educated personnel in VAO in the 1920s was very low suggests that the investigations were not of large scale. Apparently, the medical personnel supervised the work of teachers, who actually conducted the investigations. In 1920 only 32 doctors were available in the entire VAO, which counted 970,000 people. See V. Tuganaev (ed.) *Udmurtskaya Respublika. Entsiklopediya* [Udmurt Republic. Encyclopedia], Izhevsk 2000, pp. 41, 102.

28 Before OBONO, *Narodnyi Commisariat Natsional’nostei* [The People’s Commissariat of Nationalities], or Narkom-nats, was responsible for the education of national minorities. The Commissariat was disassembled in 1924.

29 The term *prosveshchenie* (enlightenment) is one of a number of terms in Russian that refer to education. See R. Harris, *Society and the Individual: State and Private Education in Russia during the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries*, in: D. Johnson (ed.) *Politics, Modernisation and Educational Reform in Russia from Past to Present*, Oxford 2010, pp. 17–57, here 17–19.

of their arithmetical skills.³⁰ According to the reports, Udmurt children were shorter than their Russian schoolmates, and the deficiency gap between their weight and the Russian norm began to increase from the age of nine. Local pedologists attributed these developmental gaps to the living conditions and anthropological constitution of Udmurts and Finns in general. In a similar vein, the authors of the reports argued that Udmurt children's writing skills were rather underdeveloped due to the specifics of the Udmurt language. The low mathematical fitness of both Russian and Udmurt children in the schools of VAO, as compared with children from Moscow and America, was left without explanation. Even though no direct connections between mental and physical underdevelopment were made, the overall impression regarding Udmurt children, as expressed by pedologists in the first issue of the only local journal devoted to education and child studies, was rather unfavorable.³¹ These scientific results endorsed the description of Udmurts as a backward people and played into a narrative of savageness, which had become dominant among Russian psychiatrists and ethnographers by the turn of the twentieth century.³² Methods widely applied in Udmurt schools did not take in consideration ethno-cultural peculiarities of minority groups, other than noting linguistic difference. Similarly, in their withering criticism of the past, Udmurt pedological studies repeated the biased and demeaning tropes that continued to wound the local population. In the second issue of the journal, a group of teachers from Udmurt schools presented their report on pedological work, which they started to implement in four Izhevsk schools.³³ The "mental age" of Udmurt children was diagnosed as lagging about two to three years behind the prescribed norm for their actual age (the terminology used is *pasportnyi vozrast*, passport age), and was assessed as lower than the "mental age" of Russian children. Regrouping the children according to their ranking allowed for more appropriate teaching. After two trimesters of learning in one of the reconstructed groups,

30 See the reports by O. Sokolovskaya, M. Sushkov, and N. Polyakova in: *Prosveshchenie Udmurtov* 1 (1927), pp. 27–44.

31 Blonskii's reference works, which were widely used by Udmurt pedologists, allowed for such developmental linkage. In particular, many of Blonskii's assumptions were based on Ernst Kretschmer's *Konstitutionslehre*, which was very popular in Soviet anthropological research in the 1920s. Kretschmer's theory assumed an interdependency between one's inherited bodily constitution and behavioral pathologies. See P. Blonskii, *Pedologiya*, Moscow 1925, p. 182; E. Kretschmer, *Körperbau und Charakter. Untersuchungen zum Konstitutionsproblem und zur Lehre von den Temperamenten*, Berlin 1921. On popularity of the *Konstitutionslehre* in Soviet anthropological studies in 1920s and its Soviet interpretation, see Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, pp. 231–246.

32 In 1892, a group of Votyak (Udmurts) from the village of Old Multan faced accusations of human sacrifice for ritual purposes. In the ensuing blood libel trial, the Multan Case (1892–1896), the convictions were annulled; however, the stigma of Votyak savageness persisted for years after. See M. Khudyakov, *Politicheskoe znachenie Multanskogo dela i ego otgoloskov v nastoyashchee vremya* [Political impact of Multan case and its reminiscences in contemporary times], in: *Sovetskaya etnografiya* 1 (1932), pp. 43–62; R. Geraci, "Ethnic Minorities, Anthropology, and Russian National Identity on Trial: The Multan Case 1892–96," *The Russian Review* 59 (2000) 4, pp. 530–554. According to Marina Mogilner "the archetypal 'Multan Case' [...] documented the turning point in the attitudes of scholars toward survivals of primitivism in the midst of Russian society." Scholars who had previously considered ethnic differences as dynamic and cultural began to regard characteristics of the Other as "stable and biologically preconditioned." M. Mogilner, *Racial Psychiatry and the Russian Imperial Dilemma of the 'Savage Within'*, in: *East Central Europe* 43 (2016), pp. 99–133, here 103, 105.

33 Z. Sokovikova, Bazhutina, Pinagina, M. Shigina "Kak my primenyali pedologiyu na praktike" [How we applied pedology in practice], in: *Prosveshchenie Udmurtov* 2 (1927), pp. 65–70.

teachers, who had enthusiastically adopted pedological methods, reported that pupils displayed positive dynamics in their skills development. However, reports of these promising changes did not stop some local intellectuals from criticizing the methods of pedological studies. Still others saw pedology and pedologists as rivals to their authority and competitors to scarce finances.³⁴

Critics of Udmurt Pedological Studies

The critical debate regarding the implementation of pedological studies in Udmurt schools was publicly opened in 1928 by one of the authors of *Prosveshchenie Udmurtov*, signed only as Knyazeva.³⁵ In her essay, Knyazeva criticized the use of inappropriate tools in evaluating a child's physical fitness, as well as the lack of professionalism of teachers, who acted as assessors.³⁶ Furthermore, she rejected the notion that the results of the anthropometrics, which she considered to be grossly flawed, constituted “proof” of the alleged unfitness of Udmurt children. Such conclusions of the pedologists nourished, according to Knyazeva, a deleterious image of the Udmurt people, particularly since the latter was often described in public discourse as “backward” and “being in state of degeneration.”³⁷ Knyazeva argued that the norms and standards defined by the scientists in Moscow (“the general Russian norms”) should be subject to critical revision when applied to Udmurt children:

*Marxist pedology has declared that the characteristics of physical development are closely tethered to external conditions, the economic situation, professional occupation and the cultural way of life [...]. Consequently, there can be no general anthropometric standards for all Russian children.*³⁸

Knyazeva's critique contributed to the emerging discussion regarding the application of universal Russian norms to *natsmen* children. The results of pedological investigations pointed to discrepancies between the developmental pace of Russian and *natsmen* children. These incongruities were often attributed to race. Some practitioners and theoreticians of *natsmen*-pedology tried to rectify the gap, introducing ethnic-specific correctives and lowering the targeted norms of mental and physical maturation for *natsmen* children. Although the correctives were not intended to imply a racial hierarchy,

34 Protocol of a UONO meeting in Glazov (1 March 1927), in TsGA UR f. R-202 op. 1 d. 447, ll. 1–2.

35 Most likely, the full name of the author is Evdokiya Afanas'evna Knyazeva (1896–?). In the late 1920s, she held responsible positions at the department of methodology of education in the OBONO. I am grateful to Vladimir Churakov from the Udmurt Institute for Research in History, Language and Literature for providing information about Knyazeva.

36 Knyazeva, O materialakh po izucheniyu rebenka Votoblasti [Regarding the documentation of child studies in Vot[skaya] Oblast'], in: *Prosveshchenie Udmurtov* 3 (1928), pp. 65–67, here 65.

37 Knyazeva, O materialakh, p. 65.

38 Ibid., p. 66.

some pedagogists faced accusations of chauvinism.³⁹ Knyazeva does not suggest lowering the standard for Udmurt children by applying correctives, but rather disputes the entire principle of a uniform standard. Not only the weight, but the muscular structure of peasant children should be taken in consideration. Similarly, she criticizes the written tests given to Udmurt children, who often had insufficient command of Russian. In doing so, Knyazeva emphasizes the value of linguistic diversity and cultural distinctiveness (*svoebrazie*), arguing for a more differentiated approach in child studies.⁴⁰

Udmurt Folk Pedagogy: Ethnographic Approach in Child Studies

Knyazeva's criticism of the work of the local pedagogical laboratory coincided with the rise in the popularity of Aron Zalkind's sociogenetic approach, which stresses sociological and environmental factors. Although Zalkind energetically popularized his position on child development, it was not until 1930 that he published a textbook that was comparable to that of his opponent, Pavel Blonskii. The majority of local pedagogists in VAO used Blonskii's texts for reference. However, it is highly likely that some Udmurt pedagogues were in contact with Zalkind or heard of his ideas while studying pedagogy in Moscow.⁴¹ Zalkind's theory, which stressed the importance of pedagogical studies of *natsmen* children, offered the Udmurt intelligentsia not only better arguments to explain the poor performance of children, but also supported Udmurt hopes for rapid improvement and transformation.

Concomitantly, national self-consciousness was growing among the Udmurt population, which was engaged in a rediscovery of native traditions.⁴² By the end of the 1920s, as lo-

39 N.S. Kurek, O sotsial'noi istorii kul'turno-istoricheskoi psikhologii: Otvet B.G. Meshcheryakovu i V.P. Zinchenko [On history of cultural-historical psychology: an answer to B.G. Meshcheryakov and V.P. Zinchenko], in: Voprosy psikhologii 6 (2000), pp. 67–72, here 67; Vygotsky, K voprosu, p. 375.

40 Regarding the notion of "distinctiveness" in ethno-pedagogical research, see Byford, Imperial Normativities.

41 See A. Zalkind, Osnovnye voprosy pedagogii [Fundamental questions of pedagogy], Moscow 1930. I have yet to find evidence that Zalkind's text book was used for local pedagogical practice. This may be due to the establishment of Blonsky's 1925 volume as the standard reference text among pedagogists in VAO. The same could be stated with relative certainty for the distribution of the pedagogical ideas of Lev Vygotsky in VAO. I have not seen references to Vygotsky's textbooks in Udmurt printed materials, although by 1929 he had already published three works on pedagogy: Pedagogiya shkol'nogo vozrasta [Pedagogy of school age], Moscow 1929; Pedagogiya yunosheskogo vozrasta [Pedagogy of the youth age], Moscow 1929; Pedagogiya podrostka [Pedagogy of the adolescent] vol. 1, Moscow 1929. Despite the absence of references to these books in the official Udmurt pedagogical organ or in archival documents, Udmurt students undoubtedly established personal contacts with Vygotsky. One of his disciples in Leningrad's Herzen Pedagogical Institute, Serapion Korotaev, was a doctoral student of pedagogy from Izhevsk, VAO. Korotaev received the transcripts of lectures on pedagogy from Vygotsky, which were published only after Korotaev's death. See L. Vygotsky, Lektsii po pedagogii [Lectures on pedagogy], Izhevsk 1996.

42 The "affirmative action" policies (to use Terry Martin's terminology) of the Bolshevik government toward national minorities gave the Udmurt intelligentsia some freedom in comparison to the pre-revolutionary era. The reinstated right to teach in one's native language spurred the rise of a native Udmurt intelligentsia. However, promises of VAO economic and cultural self-determination were left unfulfilled. The rapid realization of the ambitious project of "culturalization" (okul'turivanie) of Udmurts, as envisioned by local and central elites, lacked both financial support and pedagogical cadres. Although one can speak about growing Udmurt self-awareness

cal elites started to express their discontent with the judgments of many mainstream pedagogists, studies of indigenous child culture became increasingly important. This focus on positive cultural distinctiveness contested the notion of inherent ethnic backwardness and sought to relativize the presumed developmental gap of *natsmen* children. Ethnographic studies of local customs of child upbringing featured in the research of local culture. While Yuri Slezkine rightly asserts that “the pre-industrial folks became an easy prey for pedagogists,”⁴³ my research suggests that local ethnographers and pedagogues countered this trend by conducting their own ethnographic research and proposing pedagogical concepts that softened or even avoided negative preconceptions regarding pre-modern ethnic groups.

From August to October 1928, Udmurt ethnographers Kuzebai Gerd (the pen name of Kuž'ma P. Chainikov) (1898–1937) and I. Ya. Il'in (1892–1953) organized an expedition that included an ethnographic research programme, *Trud i byt udmurtskikh detei* (Work and everyday life of Udmurt children). In August 1929 they continued the research together with Iosif Pozdeev (1893–?), an Udmurt pedagogue and doctoral student at Vtoroi Moskovskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet (Second Moscow State University), or Vtoroi MGU.⁴⁴ In 1929, both Gerd and Pozdeev published articles on Udmurt child education in OBONO's journal, which was renamed *Prosveshchenie v Votoblasti* (Education in Vot[skaya] Oblast').

Pozdeev's article is entitled “Narodnaya pedagogika Udmurtov” (Udmurt folk pedagogy).⁴⁵ The key terms of the title require explanation. “Folk” refers, as it often does, to that which relates to the traditional, popular practices of a given ethno-national group. Pedagogy, however, is not clearly defined, and the author often conflates folk pedagogy and family education, to the point where they appear synonymous.

Pozdeev opens his article with the following declaration: “Every tribe and every folk has its own, sometimes *distinctive* educational ideals, views, tasks; different ways, methods, instruments and procedures of child education”⁴⁶ (my emphasis). Although Pozdeev

in the 1920s, this cannot be attributed directly or solely to Bolshevik policies. Regarding the shortcomings of such policies, see Stat'ya Esipova v gazete 'Pravda' A etot front vse eshche zabyt' ot 11 yanvara 1921 g [An article of Esipov in the newspaper 'Pravda' This battle-front still remains forgotten' from 11 January 1921], in: Kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo, pp. 101–105; K. Kulikov, Bor'ba, p. 7.

43 Y. Slezkine, Sovetskaya etnografiya v nokdaune [Soviet ethnography in knockdown], in: Etnograficheskoe obozrenie 2 (1993), pp. 113–125, here 118.

44 Today Moskovskii Pedagogicheskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet (Moscow Pedagogical State University), or MPGU. On Udmurt expeditions, see V. Churakov, Obzor fol'klorno-lingvisticheskikh i arkhologo-etnograficheskikh ekspeditsii, rabotavshkh sredi Udmurtov v 20–30gg. XX veka [Review of folklore, linguistic, archeological and ethnographic expeditions conducted among Udmurts in the 20–30s of the twentieth century], in: Ezhegodnik finno-ugorskikh issledovaniy 2 (2010), pp. 102–115, here 108; Idem, Fol'klorno-lingvisticheskie i arkhologo-etnograficheskie ekspeditsii, rabotavshie sredi Udmurtov v 20–30gg. XX veka [Folklore, linguistic, archeological and ethnographic expeditions conducted among Udmurts in the 20–30s of the twentieth century], in: Idnakar 19 (2014) 2, pp. 54–103, here 74.

45 I. Pozdeev, Narodnaya pedagogika Udmurtov [Popular pedagogy of Udmurts], in: Prosveshchenie v Votoblasti 4–5 (1929), pp. 67–77. Appearing in the last issue of 1929, the article contains no information about Gerd's expedition in which Pozdeev participated.

46 Pozdeev, Narodnaya, p. 67.

claims that old folk ways of child rearing and education generally lack “a clear theory, system and consistency, having many flaws, [such as] traditional, obsolete, irrational, primitive and random [elements],”⁴⁷ he advocates studying Udmurt folk pedagogy in order to understand its cultural particularity. Pozdeev considers Udmurts, if not primitive, then certainly “culturally backward.” However, like any traditional society, their ways of instruction are not without redeeming qualities:

*Even among the most primitive tribes, education is illuminated with the light of consciousness, orientation towards a goal and understanding; and where there is a goal and consciousness, indeed forethought (as weak as it is), then one can speak about what education really means.*⁴⁸

According to Pozdeev’s conception, Soviet pedagogy would enable the “culturally backward” to leap over historical stages, creating a progressive generation of socialists. First, however, the current state of popular pedagogy must be purged of its “negative, weak sides and aspects.” The primitive, individualist forms of traditional upbringing will completely disappear in the course of this transformation:

*Popular folk pedagogy should be studied from the perspective of the educational aims of Soviet pedagogy, the communal, socialist upbringing, which should replace and, with time, completely dislodge family education, which is ideologically antisocialist. Family upbringing, over and above its class heterogeneity, is insulated within the narrow interests of house and yard. It generally nurtures the feelings of family egoism and individualism, separating the family from neighbours and from society.*⁴⁹

Pozdeev’s depreciation of the Udmurt familial structures is rooted in Engels (who regarded the family as an obstacle to communism) and mirrored in strains of early Communist doctrine. Alexandra Kollontai, a high-ranking party activist and feminist, called for the elimination of this “bourgeois institution.” Kollontai asserted that the family, “with its parental squabbles and its habit of thinking only about the well-being of relatives,” constitutes a negative influence on children and “cannot educate the New Person.”⁵⁰ In the 1910s and 1920s, many shared Kollontai’s belief that parents should isolate themselves from their children in order to avoid the transfer of individualist and anti-collectivist attitudes to the next generation.⁵¹

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., p. 68.

49 Ibid., p. 69.

50 A. Kollontai, *Sem’ya i kommunisticheskoe gosudarstvo* [Family and the communist state], Moscow 1918, pp. 18–19.

51 Kollontai’s radical views were confronted by a more conservative wing of Communist ideologues, including Lenin, who was convinced that the family should remain as a voluntary (“svobodnyi,” in the sense that the marriage is not arranged or forced) and equal unit. On family politics in the early Soviet Union, see D. L. Hoffman, *Stalinist Family Values*, in: Idem, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941*, Ithaca 2003, pp. 88–117.

Pozdeev also regards the ideological influence of the family and the village as deleterious. This notwithstanding, he regards Kollontai's project as utopian in the Udmurt context. The lack of schools and the absence of pre-schooling facilities in Votskaya Oblast' make the separation of children from the family at this stage of economic development impossible. Instead of an abrupt change of traditional ways in children's upbringing, he suggests a slow reform of Udmurt folk pedagogy. Pedagogues must first collect and examine Udmurt customs and traditions in order to assess their value and utility. Pozdeev elaborates on ethnographic methods and models of investigation for teachers, such as face-to-face conversations and interviews, observation, and the methods of collecting oral children's folklore. Additionally, he includes an analysis of children's school essays, focusing on children's worldviews and ideological predispositions.⁵²

Although Pozdeev mentions pedological methods of investigation,⁵³ he does not discuss them in any detail, and it may be that the inclusion of pedology was merely perfunctory. The ethno-pedological expeditions, which were initiated at this time by the Moscow-based *Institut Metodov Shkol'noi Raboty* (Institute for the Methods of Work in Schools), or IMSR, differ from the approach chosen by Pozdeev. The expeditions in Siberia, organized by Moscow scientists, used a completely different framework for studies of minorities. Their "monographic" approach, which aimed to investigate each group individually and comprehensively, included "the study of the ethnic child's 'organism' at individual and population levels, both anthropologically and psychologically."⁵⁴ In contrast, Pozdeev's Udmurt folk pedagogy was designed as an ethnographic project with a special focus on traditional child education, and did not employ anthropometric methods or psychological tests.

Pozdeev's article on folk pedagogy appeared in the context of major changes in ethno-national politics. With the introduction of the First Five-Year Plan (1928–1932), the Soviet regime redoubled its efforts to industrialize rural areas and educate the "backward" multi-ethnic population. In 1929, Stalin proclaimed a campaign of rapid economic and social transformation that emphasized the power of nurture over nature.⁵⁵ The "backwardness" of ethnic groups was explained solely in sociohistorical terms and, accordingly, was to be remedied through social-economic progress. Stalin's pronouncements impacted the politics of science. In April 1929, at a meeting of Soviet ethnographers, historian V. B. Aptekar' deemed ethnology "a bourgeois surrogate for the social sciences," incompatible with Marxism due to its reliance on biological theories.⁵⁶ According to the resolutions of the conference, only ethnography was consistent with historical materialism. Its task was to study the everyday life of peoples, registering the changes which were occurring dur-

52 On children's essays as means of ethno-pedagogical investigations, see C. Kelly, *Learning about the Nation: Ethnographic Representations of Children*, *Representations of Ethnography for Children*, in: *An Empire of Others*, pp. 263–264.

53 Pozdeev, *Narodnaya*, p. 70.

54 Byford, *Imperial Normativities*, p. 99.

55 I. Stalin, *God velikogo pereloma* [Year of the great break], in: *Voprosy Leninizma*, Moscow 1932, pp. 432–441.

56 *Soveshchanie etnografov Leningrada i Moskvy* [Conference of Moscow and Leningrad ethnographers], in: *Etnografiya* 2 (1929), pp. 110–144, here 115–116.

ing the Great Transformation. Udmurt elites carried out a number of expeditions from the late 1920s to document the transformational process in VAO. Pozdeev's article and pedagogical programme emerge in this context. However, Gerd, who initiated several expeditions, had a different approach for educating and transforming Udmurt society.

Constructing the New Udmurt Child: Fiction vs. Science

Kuzebai Gerd regarded himself as an “enlightener” of the Udmurt people. Despite the poverty of his childhood, he was among the few Udmurt children to receive formal schooling. At the age of 18, after graduating from a teachers' seminary, he worked as a principal of an Udmurt village school. Two years later, in January 1918, Gerd took part in the Vyatka governorate's “First Meeting of Educators.”

As a participant of the meeting, he filled out a questionnaire regarding his views on the education of children, affirming his support for the “revolutionary” rather than “evolutionary” approach: “It is too long to wait until the wheel of history will turn on its own. One must turn it WITH FORCE”.⁵⁷ Despite his sympathy for revolutionary transformation, Gerd never was a Party member and was skeptical of Bolshevik policy concerning ethnic minorities. He expressed his worries about the fate of Udmurt people in the local newspaper *Izhevskaya Pravda* (Izhevsk Truth) (18 May 1922), rejecting and condemning the notion that Udmurts are “in state of degeneration and Russification.” He claimed that the negative typecast of Udmurts is due to Russian attitudes, which include chauvinism, belittling deprecation, and neglect of indigenous interests.⁵⁸ After studying literature and ethnography in Moscow from 1922 to 1926, Gerd was compelled to return to VAO. From 1926 to 1929, he lived in Izhevsk, working on a doctorate on Udmurt ethnography. During this time, he organized and participated in several linguistic and ethnographic expeditions. During these expeditions, Gerd collected materials on Udmurt culture and folklore, obtaining in 1930 a large collection of photographs documenting children's life in villages.⁵⁹

In 1929, in his article *Detskie tipy v udmurtskoi detskoi literature* (Children's types in Udmurt children's literature),⁶⁰ Gerd appealed to the “masses of the workers of the

57 Accentuation in the original. N. Kuznetsov, *Krest poeta: Istoriko-filosofskoe osmyslenie sud'by Kuzebay Gerda* [The cross of the poet: historical-philosophical reflection on the fate of Kuzebai Gerd], in: *Luch* 11–12 (2010), pp. 83–87, here 84.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

59 Finnish ethnographer Ildikó Lehtinen, who examined Gerd's literary and scientific legacy, discovered that Gerd's interest for child ethnography arose in 1926. Lehtinen bases this conclusion on the list of photographs which Gerd sent to the director of the Finnish National Museum. Of among approximately 600 photographs shot in expeditions from 1925–1929, about 145 illustrated the lives of Udmurt children. I. Lehtinen, *Kommentarii: Kuzeбай Gerд – etnograf i prosvetitel'* [Comments: Kuzebai Gerd – ethnographer and enlightener], in: K. Gerd, *Chelovek i ego rozhdenie u vostochnykh finnov* [Man and his birth among the Eastern Finns], Helsinki 1993, pp. xx–xxii.

60 K. Gerd, *Detskie tipy v udmurtskoi detskoi literature (v poryadke obsuzhdeniya)* [Children types in Udmurt children literature (as a matter for discussion)], in: *Prosveshchenie v Votoblasti* 3 (1929), pp. 13–20.

enlightenment”⁶¹ to conduct in-depth studies of everyday life, of the creative work and literature of Udmurt children. “Every Udmurt child who enters an Udmurt school is a completely unknown entity” who must be discovered by the teacher:

*What conceals this child? How has it lived? What has filled its life before it began to attend school? From what kind of childhood environment did it emerge? For the teacher, all this remains an unknown, alien world. The study of childhood opens that path for the teacher, and as a result she is able to discover the individuality of each child.*⁶²

The child studies that Gerd recommends have little in common with the pedagogical practices adopted in Udmurtia. The above quotation contains clear references to the *Detskii fol'klor i byt* (Children's folklore and everyday life) (1925), written by linguist and folklorist Georgi Vinogradov (1887–1945).⁶³

Both Gerd and Vinogradov emphasize the importance of environmental studies for understanding children's individuality. Gerd's notion of environment includes not only the child's general life circumstances, but extends to the school, and the literature taught in the school, thus encompassing both *con-text* and *text*. As indicated by the title of his article, he provides a critical review of popular Udmurt children's literature rather than an ethnographic case study.

Gerd analyzes books written by three children's authors, each of whom, according to Gerd, create a particular type of a child protagonist. The first type appears in a story by Prokopii Gorokhov (1855–1943). Its protagonist is an energetic, curious and unruly boy, who, despite being raised in a wealthy family, is unhappy. He is merely “a working cog”⁶⁴ in the family economy.” Neglected from a pedagogical perspective, he is caned for his every mistake. Gerd is critical of the protagonist's character and behavior as depicted by Gorokhov:

*Heedless of the warnings – however awful – of adults, he still heads off into the forest to pick troll flowers. He does not refrain from offering sacrifices in the field. He slices off the head of a cock with his own hands, delighting in its anguish. To satisfy his hunger, he does things that are difficult for him. In the end, with two rubles in his pocket, he sets off all alone, on foot, without a proper command of Russian, and boards a steam ship by himself, aiming to enter Karlygan Votskaia teachers' school. For all his curiosity, perseverance, indeed stubbornness, this type of child is extremely poorly equipped in terms of his psychological qualities. His interests do not penetrate deeply.*⁶⁵

61 The concept of “enlightenment” in the 1920s and 1930s was not of one cloth. It ranged from the narrow sense of political enlightenment (loyalty to ideology, leader, and state) to a much broader notion of literacy, hygiene, ethics, customs, *byt* [everyday practices], understanding of science and other categories. See M. David-Fox, *What Is Cultural Revolution?*, p. 199; D.L. Hoffman, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939*, Ithaca 2011, p. 220.

62 Gerd, *Detskii tipy*, pp. 13–14.

63 G. Vinogradov, *Detskii fol'klor i byt* [Children's folklore and everyday life], Irkutsk 1925, p. 6.

64 Russian: *vintik*, literally, “screw.”

65 Gerd, *Detskii tipy*, p. 16.

From a “pedagogical point of view,” notes Gerd, this child is a “negative” example (*otritsa-tel’nyi tip*). Lacking the inner personal strength and endurance for achieving his goals, this “anti-hero” harbors elements of the savage.⁶⁶

Another Udmurt writer, Bagai Arkash (Arkadii Klabukov, 1904–1984), writes of a “spoiled” boy who lives in a “cozy and patriarchal Udmurt family,” surrounded by “sentimental” grannies and grandpas.

The girls in the stories of Ashal’chi Oki (Akilina Vekshina, 1898–1973) – regarded as the first female Udmurt poet – experience a deep inner world; however, Gerd contends that they are also individualistic, lacking a sense of collectivism.

In response, Gerd tasks contemporary Udmurt literature with the creation of a fresh narrative about its people. Influenced in his literary work by the proletarian writer Maxim Gor’kii, Gerd regarded children’s literature as a primary educational tool. Creating heroic role models for the next generation would help Udmurt children move beyond their traditions and open the way to modernity. Disappointed with the state of local children’s literature, Gerd writes:

*None of these types currently satisfies us. We still lack the type of child who exhibits a creative, active, independent personality, a child who organizes its own life and the life of the children’s collective. We lack the energetic child, who would achieve its intended goal through personal effort, despite misfortune, adversity and deprivation.*⁶⁷

The resourceful, perseverant and resilient type of child proposed by Gerd reflects his own biographic trajectory. Gerd grew up in very modest circumstances with six siblings and a single mother. As he was attending school, where he was the only Udmurt boy, Russian schoolmates often bullied him on account of his ethnicity. Although Gerd’s own experiences are inscribed in his literary work and scholarly research, he warns his colleagues of the shortcomings of an approach that does not go beyond mere memoirs and depiction of reality:

*The authors of children’s literature build their stories only on the material of everyday life, while this everyday life is conveyed almost as the refraction of a photographic instrument, the way it is. Compositionally they are very basic, constructed without psychological complexity, without collisions between distinct personalities of each child and the children’s collectives. Each author writes his stories based on the memories of his own childhood. Nearly all of the stories are autobiographical.*⁶⁸

Rejecting the purely factual, autobiographic-realist method, Gerd prioritizes the imaginative and programmatic content in children’s books. In order to “turn the wheel of history,” as he had advocated over a decade earlier, Gerd strives to modernize the traditional

66 For centuries, Russians from the Volga region considered Udmurts as “the least Christianized and the least ‘civilized’ of the Finnic peoples.” R. Geraci, *Ethnic Minorities*, p. 531. Gerd may regard “autobiographic” stories of this kind as supportive of this old narrative.

67 Gerd, *Detskie tipy*, p. 19.

68 Ibid.

worldview with the encouragement of positive narratives. While the social sciences, including pedology and ethnography, perpetuate old pejorative stereotypes, fictional literature is able to transcend and outpace real life, offering the readers an *augmented* reality that raises Udmurt consciousness. Gerd proposes a literature, which, rather than simply transmitting tradition, constructs experiences that inspire progressive role models. Envisioning literature as an essential instrument of advancement and enlightenment, Gerd distances himself from normative concepts based on evolutionary thought.

Conclusion

In the early Soviet Union, scientific research and educational practice were marshalled for a large-scale campaign of social transformation. The urban proletariat appeared to adapt in some measure to this national “civilizing” project; however, peasants and ethnic minorities in the provinces failed to keep pace. To address this problem, local elites were enlisted to collect data about the indigenous inhabitants. Information regarding children’s physical health and mental development was then analysed in the major scientific centres by specialists, who were often acolytes of the relatively new science of pedology. In this way, pedology was increasingly integrated into early Communism’s official scientific programme and incorporated in the attempt to homogenize the Soviet population. Pedology had emerged globally at the intersection of medical-biological, psychological and pedagogical theories about child development, all of which were influenced by various evolutionary theories of the day. In the Soviet Union, evolutionary theories were espoused by pedagogue (and then pedologist) Pavel Blonskii and his disciples, but countered by those from pedology’s socio-genetic wing, who minimized biological factors and stressed environmental influences.

During its heyday in the mid- to late-1920s, pedological research was conducted across several regions populated by non-Russian ethnic groups. Some studies were designed by academics from the main scientific centres and carried out by their students in form of ethno-pedological expeditions. Others were conducted by local teachers who often did not have sufficient training or guidance. The studies which took place in Udmurtia were of the second type and their results appeared to provide evidence of the “backwardness” of the local population, thus inadvertently supporting the pre-revolutionary narrative of Udmurt “savageness.”

Understandably, the application of standardized pedological methods and norms became controversial in VAO. In response, the local Udmurt elite began to develop and innovate non-pedological approaches for child studies, while the pedagogue Knyazeva highlighted the positive cultural distinctiveness of traditional Udmurt child rearing.

This article has considered the proposals of two Udmurt scholars who outlined non-pedological approaches to child studies which appeared in a local educational journal. Iosif Pozdeev pioneered the discipline of Udmurt folk pedagogy. In contrast to the pedological approach, folk pedagogy, a descriptive, ethnographically-based project, did not

assess children through anthropological measurements or psychological tests. However, Pozdeev did pass value judgments on traditional Udmurt child upbringing. He distinguished between useful and harmful customs and advocated the elimination of the latter in order to facilitate the transition to Soviet modernity.

Another proposal came from poet and scholar Kuzebai Gerd. Gerd took up the tradition of education through literature, which constituted a *Gegenbewegung* (countercurrent) to bio-social child studies in the early Soviet Union. Rather than slowly passing through developmental stages in course of natural maturation, Gerd's envisioned Udmurt child, inspired by a fresh, progressive literature, jumps from childhood into adulthood, leaving behind the state of "primitiveness" in which its ancestors had dwelled. The political child, graduating from a programme of enlightened self-awareness, is capable of organizing its own life and the life of the collective.

I have argued that the attempt by leading Soviet pedologists to assert scientific hegemony over the peripheries was often contested by local elites, a fact that has been overlooked by much of the academic literature to date. Moreover, local intelligentsias initiated critical discourse on pedology, and this criticism often made its way back to the scientific centres.

If pedology was not accepted wholeheartedly in the provinces, it was also encountering resistance in major research centres. By the end of the 1920s, "bio-social" sciences such as ethnology and pedology faced strong criticism as being discriminatory, non-Marxist and thus products of "bourgeois science." Such "pseudo-science" promoted notions of unalterable biological characteristics, suggesting the inherent inferiority of non-Western races. These ideas contradicted the core tenets of Communism and went against the grain of Stalin's push for rapid change. In Moscow in 1931, problematic theoretical issues were addressed in the context of Stalin's redefinition of Marxism in Soviet sciences.⁶⁹ By the mid-1930s, Stalin's mistrust of intellectuals came to the fore and was directed toward science as well, including pedology. In the course of these events Blonskii dissociated himself from pedological research; in 1934, Vygotsky died of tuberculosis. Criticism of pedology reached its peak in July 1936, when it was prohibited by a Party decree, On Pedological Distortions.⁷⁰ Within days of the decree, Zalkind suffered a fatal heart attack.

The Udmurt "enlightenment" lost its most active members behind the walls of Stalinist forced labour camps. Kuzebai Gerd was arrested in 1932 for his purported leadership in a major separatist plot of Finnic peoples in the Soviet Union and was killed in 1937 in Solovetskii gulag. Evdokiya Knyazeva was arrested in 1933 for supporting Gerd, but freed in 1935.⁷¹ The fate of Pozdeev remains unknown after his disappearance in work camps in 1938.⁷²

69 Etkind, Eros, p. 281.

70 O pedologicheskikh izvrashcheniyakh v sisteme Narkomprosov [On pedological distortions in the system of the Narkompros] (4 July 1936); http://www.libussr.ru/doc_ussr/ussr_4084.htm [31.03.2019].

71 N. Kuznetsov, *Iz mraka...* [From the darkness...], Izhevsk 1994, p. 385.

72 L. Khristoliubova, Pozdeev, Iosif Yakovlevich (1893–?), in: L. Khristoliubova (ed.), *Uchenye–udmurty; bio-biblio-*

The pedological research and the ethnographical child studies that were conducted in Udmurtia nearly a century ago have been all but forgotten. The snippets of information which have been uncovered to date in Udmurt archives have yet to provide a comprehensive picture of the events surrounding this movement. The larger question of the transfer, exchange, adaption, and transformation of knowledge from the major scientific centres to the provinces and peripheries, and vice versa, and the role of local intelligentsia, remains a desideratum.