Educating the Uneducable: Deafblind Education in the Soviet Union, 1925-1960

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Abstract

This thesis examines the education of deafblind children in the Soviet Union from early 1925 to late 1960. It focuses on the innovative work of Professor Ivan Sokolianskii, the pioneer of *surdotiflopedagogika* (deafblind education). His formation of a unique pedagogical method for educating previous uneducable deafblind children revolutionised the discipline. Its purpose lay within his attempts to provide Soviet deafblind children with the necessary tools needed for their integration into Soviet society. To be considered an equal member of society, Sokolianskii initiated the deafblind child into an intensive educational curriculum which involved the use of self-care proficiency, language acquisition and sensory technology. In tapping into wider discourses on Soviet pedagogy and childhood, the thesis analyses how far it was realistic for deafblind children to aspire to such an ideal and the extent to which the regime facilitated or hindered their efforts to become accepted within the Soviet Union.

The thesis explores Sokolianskii's role in defining and shaping deafblind education. This involves his tenure as director of the Khar'kov orphanage for the deafblind in the 1920s and 1930s. It led to the education of the famous deafblind teenager, Ol'ga Skorokhodova, who was eventually known as the 'Soviet Helen Keller'. The final two chapters will discuss the establishment of his research laboratory at the Moscow Institute of Defectology and his personal tutelage of the deafblind teenager, Iuliia Vinogradova in the 1950s. The thesis utilises Sokolianskii's personal letters, diaries and reports from both the Khar'kov orphanage and the Institute of Defectology. In addition, it draws from material from the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy, the Ushinkii Library for Pedagogical Sciences and the Russian State Archives. This thesis argues that while integration was theoretically possible, virtually all deafblind children during this period struggled to assimilate themselves into Soviet society.

Contents

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Note on Transliteration and Terminology

Russian words have been rendered into the Latin script in accordance with the Library Congress scheme of transliteration. Due to the existence of several different transliteration systems, when citing secondary literature that does not adhere to the Library of Congress system, the original transliteration of the text has been kept in the interest of ease of reference. For ease of reading and consistency, I have used the Russian spelling of Ukrainian locations, such as Khar'kov and Kiev.

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Glossary and Abbreviations

ASEEES	Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies
APN	Academy of Pedagogical Sciences
besprizorniki	displaced children
bukvarnyi	the process of learning literacy
defekt	defect
dobukvarnyi	pre-literate stage of the deafblind child
dogramotnyi child	post-alphabet stage for the deafblind
d.	*delo*, archival file
f.	*fond*, archival fund
GARF	State Archive of the Russian Federation
guberniia	province
l.	*list*, page number
invalid	a person with a disability
Komsomol	Communist Union of Young People
krai	territory
Narkomos	People's Commissariat of Education, UkrSSR
Narkompros	People's Commissariat of Education, RSFSR
oblast'	region
obuchenie	education

ochelovechenie	humanisation
oligophrenopedagogika	education of children with intellectual disabilities
op.	*opis*, inventory
poslebukvarnyi child	post-literate stage for the deafblind
probuzdenie	awakening
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
S-FPS	Connection-Foundation for the Support of the Deafblind
slepoglukhie	deafblind
slepoglukhoi	a deafblind person
surdopedagogika	deaf education
surdotiflopedagog	a pedagogue who specialises in deafblind education
surdotiflopedagogika	deafblind education
tiflopedagogika	blind education
UIEM	Ukrainian Institute for Experimental Medicine (UIEM)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VOG	All-Russian Society for the Deaf
VOS	All-Russian Society of the Blind
vospitanie	upbringing
UkrSSR	Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic

Introduction

In the summer of 1914, Ol'ga Skorokhodova was born into a small peasant family in the Kherson region in southern Ukraine. At the end of the First World War, she contracted meningitis at the age of five in 1919. The illness, which affects the meninges of the brain and spinal cord, permanently robbed her of all sight and most of her hearing. She remembered that

> 'once I regained consciousness, my mother gave me tea with apricot jam. This time I wanted to open my eyes to see where the jam was and what colour it was. I opened my eyes – or so it seemed to me – but I could not see the jam and I could not learn what colour it was.'[1]

Orphaned at the age of six after the death of her mother and father, Skorokhodova was placed at a school for blind children in Odessa after the Red Army had seized the city during the Russian Civil War in 1920. Her tenure at the school was wrought with loneliness and frustration. Her worsening deafness prevented her from interacting with her fellow blind students. She recalled how 'I shunned the crowd, cried a lot… nobody had time to instruct me individually, and there was no point in attending class because I could not hear the teacher's explanation. When addressing me, they had to shout into my right ear.'[2] During these days, she heard little and saw nothing. Not only did she feel alone in a silent world, contemporary society lacked the necessary institutions for her successful education.

However, nearly thirty years later, on 1st November 1947, Skorokhodova published her memoirs, *How I Perceive the World*.[3] The autobiography received

[1] Ol'ga I. Skorokhodova, *Kak ia vosprinimaiu, predstavliaiu i ponimaiu okruzhaiushchii mir* (Moskva, Pedagogika, 1972), p. 3.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ol'ga I. Skorokhodova, *Kak ia vosprinimaiu okruzhaiushii mir* (Sovietskaia Pedagogika, Moskva, 1948), p. 108.

enormous praise from the literary and academic communities, and she was awarded the prestigious first prize of the Ushinskii Prize for Literature. In a review of her memoirs, Aleksei Leont'ev commented that she

> 'paid attention to the remarkable subtlety of descriptions of the… various types of sensitivity – touch, smell, vibration, sense, temperature and taste, which replaced her hearing and sound… [Skorokhodova] not only complemented and analysed her own feelings, but also the desire to understand the experiences of others, especially those seeing and hearing people.'[4]

Fourteen years later, Skorokhodova successfully defended her PhD thesis at the age of fifty and was awarded the degree of Candidate in Educational Psychology in 1961. Her achievements turned her into a celebrity in the USSR and she was affectionately known as the 'Soviet Helen Keller'.[5] She had, to all intents and purposes, assimilated herself into the body politic and become an accepted member of wider society.

Skorokhodova's accomplishments were the triumph of *surdotiflopedagogika*, or Soviet deafblind education. The discipline was pioneered by the Ukrainian psychologist and pedagogue, Professor Ivan Sokolianskii. From the early 1920s until his death in 1960, he was the foremost expert on the education (*obuchenie*) and upbringing (*vospitanie*) of deafblind children in the Soviet Union. He understood the unique set of societal circumstances which excluded deafblind from the Soviet collective. The combination of blindness and deafness made it practically impossible for deafblind children to independently pursue their own education. Without such education, deafblind children were unable to learn how to communicate with others, form relationships or even take care of their most basic needs. Consequently, these children with disabilities were not considered fully 'human'

[4] Aleksei I. Leont'ev, Review of '*Kak ia vosprinimaiu okruzhauishii mir,* Ol'ga I'Skorokhodova', *Sovetskaia pedagogika*, 3 (1948), p. 108 cited in Aleksandr I. Meshcheriakov, *Awakening to Life* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979), p. 37.

[5] For further information about Helen Keller, see also Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1904); Helen Keller, *Helen Keller's Journal* (Cedric Chivers, Bath, 1973).

within Russian and Soviet pedagogical circles due to their apparent inability to be educated.[6] However, Sokolianskii saw it differently. Deafblind children could be 'humanised' through education. He sought to address such isolation through the establishment of his revolutionary educational framework, titled '*ochelovechenie*' (humanisation), in which he intended to educate previously uneducable deafblind children. Using self-care techniques, language acquisition and sensory technology, Sokolianskii's pupils were taught to be 'human' in a Soviet context; learning to be independent, engaged, literate individuals who legitimised their position in Soviet society through an engagement in socially useful labour.

The thesis will analyse the practical application of Sokolianskii's educational techniques within the *ochelovechenie* theoretical framework. Utilizing Sokolianskii's personal archive of letters, diaries and reports, the thesis discusses the extent to which his method successfully provided the necessary tools required for the assimilation and 'humanisation' of deafblind children into wider Soviet society. Tapping into wider discourses on Soviet childhood and pedagogy, it concludes that while many deafblind children who studied using Sokolianskii's method succeeded in becoming literate, independent individuals, many of them struggled to find employment in their post-educational lives. While Sokolianskii provided them with the necessary education to be considered 'human' within a Soviet context, their 'humanisation' was never fully accepted by a regime which proved largely indifferent to their circumstances. Nevertheless, his pedagogical work lay the foundation for future generations of deafblind children to pursue part-time and full-time employment opportunities. Not only did he shape *surdotiflopedagogika* in the Soviet period, Sokolianskii's work continues to influence current deafblind education in the present-day Russian Federation.

Deafblindness and the Soviet 'Defective' Child

Disability remains a complex concept, taking on varying, often conflicting, definitions in different societies. Within a Western context, the

[6] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 33.

individual, or medical, model of disability emerged. It stipulated that the individual is 'always determined by their impairment'.[7] The model emphasized that it was the individual's disability (the loss of physical or mental functions) which prevented them from participating in society. It was closely linked to the 'personal tragedy theory of disability', where people with disabilities were victims of a tragic set of circumstances.[8] Furthermore, the medical model includes a rehabilitative ethos, where disabilities could be treated or even 'cured'.[9] These model was based upon flawed assumptions of what was considered 'normal', where any difference from the supposed societal standard was considered 'abnormal', 'deviant' or even 'defective' in a Western context.

While such terms to describe individuals with disabilities eventually became outdated and prejudiced in Western societies, it proved to be substantially different in a late tsarist and Soviet context. *Defekt* (defect) was the term for the specific disability, with people with disabilities labelled as *invalid* (invalid). Despite the term being utilised in the 1910s and 1920s to describe disability and the field of disability studies (known as defectology, which will be discussed in further detail later in the introduction), the term itself is still used in the present-day Russian Federation.[10] While it may have been a term deemed appropriate for the late tsarist/early Soviet period, it also revealed the attitudes of the educational professionals towards people with disabilities. William McCagg, in his analysis of the term, labelled it as 'a terminological relic from prerevolutionary Russia.'[11] It reinforced the notions of the medical model of disability, where 'defective' or 'abnormal' individuals could only be considered normal through rehabilitation and 'curing' their disability. Without

[7] Colin Barnes, Geoff Mercer and Tom Shakespeare, *Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction* (Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, 1999), p. 67.
[8] Dimitris Anastasiou, 'The Social Model of Disability: Dichotomy between Impairment and Disability', *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 38 (2013), p. 443.
[9] Sharon L. Synder and David T. Mitchell, *Cultural Locations of Disability* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2006), p. 8.
[10] William O. McCagg, 'The Origins of Defectology', in *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory and Practice* eds., William O. McCagg and Lewis Siegelbaum (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1989), p. 40; Alex Kozulin and Boris Gindis, 'Sociocultural Theory and Education of Children with Special Needs: From Defectology to Remedial Pedagogy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Vygotsky* eds., Harry Daniel, Michael Cole and James Wertsch (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007), p. 333; Liya Kalinnikova and Sven Trygged, 'A Retrospective on Care and Denial of Children with Disabilities in Russia', *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 16, 3 (2014), p. 242.
[11] McCagg, 'Origins of Defectology', p. 57.

such education or training, 'defective' individuals were deemed incapable of leading independent lives within contemporary Soviet society.

Unsurprisingly, the medical model of disability has received substantial criticism from various Western academics due to its over-emphasis on the individual.[12] Blame on the individual for their 'deviance' invariably led to castigation and exclusion from society due to their perceived differences from the supposed norm. Such exclusion has manifested itself in the adoption of state-level practices, specifically in the form of as eugenics.[13] With the medical model seen as a flawed lens for analysis, alternative methods were considered. During the 1980s, a different approach focused less on the individual with disabilities but society's relationship with the individual.[14] This social model of disability was defined as such; 'the main cause of social exclusion of disabled people [is] the way society responded to people with impairments.'[15] It is society that disables people, not the individuals themselves. While the medical model placed the emphasis on the disabled child to conform to the needs of society, the social model highlighted the need for society to adapt to the needs of the disabled individual.

Furthermore, the social model identified key differences between *impairment* and *disability*. Dimitris Anastasiou stated that

> '*impairment* is the functional limitation within the individual caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment. *Disability* is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the

[12] Anne Waldschmidt, 'Disability-Culture-Society: Strengths and Weaknesses of a Cultural Model of Dis/ability', *European Journal of Disability Research*, 12 (2018), p. 69; Tom Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited* (London, Routledge, 2013), p. 12.
[13] Synder, *Cultural Locations*, pp. 100-132.
[14] Michael Oliver and Colin Barnes, *The New Politics of Disablement* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012); Michael Oliver, 'The Social Model of Disability: Thirty Years On', *Disability & Society*, 28, 7 (2013), pp. 1024-1026; Michael Oliver, *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009); Angharad E. Beckett and Tom Campbell, 'The Social Model of Disability as an Oppositional Device', *Disability & Society*, 30, 2 (2015), pp. 270-283; Anastasiou, 'Dichotomy between Impairment and Disability', pp. 441-459.
[15] Oliver, *Understanding Disability*, p. 43.

> normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers.'[16]

If disability was simply the existence of 'social barriers', then the removal of such obstacles would theoretically allow for greater participation in society. The social model of disability proved initially to be extremely successful for people with disabilities. In becoming a 'vehicle for developing a collective disability consciousness', it had the dual impact of reinforcing the disabled people's movement and began the widespread process of removing societal barriers which prevented individuals with disabilities from engaging with societal services.[17]

However, recent studies have sought to critique the dominant social model. One of the major criticisms revolved around the distinction between impairment and disability. Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell stated that 'by ignoring impairment, the social model leaves intact the power/knowledge nexus that defines and interprets impairment.'[18] Tom Shakespeare also contributed to such criticism and questioned the skewed dichotomy of the medical and social models, stating that 'from seeing disability as entirely caused by biological defects, the radical analysis shifted to seeing disability as nothing whatsoever to do with individual bodies or brains.'[19] Likewise, the social model has received further criticism for its assumption that all people with disabilities are oppressed by society. Janine Owens stated that such generalisations are not representative of the experiences of all people with disabilities and that 'more complexity… arises because disability is diverse and there has been a lack of appreciation of the mechanisms of producing disability.'[20]

Consequently, the criticisms of the social model have led to the formation of alternative models. One such alternative is the cultural model of disability, which seeks analyse the experiences and representations of people with disabilities in cultural spaces, predominantly in the art, theatre and

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[16] Anastasiou, 'Dichotomy between Impairment and Disability', p. 442.
[17] Janine Owens, 'Exploring the Critiques of the Social Model of Disability: The Transformative Possibility of Arendt's Notion of Power', *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 37, 3 (2015), p. 385; Oliver, 'The Social Model of Disability', pp. 1024-1025.
[18] Synder, *Cultural Locations*, pp. 10-11.
[19] Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs*, p. 17.
[20] Owens, 'Exploring the Critiques of the Social Model', p. 389.

literature.[21] It challenges the social model definition of impairment, seeking instead to define impairment 'both [as] human variation encountering environmental obstacles *and* socially mediated differences that lends group identity and phenomenological perspective.'[22] The cultural model has been utilised as mechanism for disabled individuals to reclaim their own definitions from previously dominant stereotypes of incapacity and defectiveness through cultural exhibitions. The thesis will examine the usage of the different models of disability within a Soviet context, where the use of the medical and social models were adopted throughout the first half of the Soviet period.

With the utilization of various models, it is important to emphasize the differences between various forms of disabilities, especially with multi-disabilities such as deafblindness. Deafblindness is a combination of sight and hearing loss, and its consequences have often been misunderstood. Even the term itself has provoked criticism.[23] Previous spellings of deafblindness, such as 'deaf/blind' or 'deaf-blind', failed to describe the uniqueness of the multi-sensory disability. In addition, 'deafblindness cannot be defined by simply adding deafness to blindness.'[24] While individuals with deafness or blindness may experience the loss of vision or hearing in a similar fashion, individuals with deafblindness encounter a different set of barriers in comparison. The differing circumstances of deafblind people isolate them from others who can see or hear but they retain the shared experiences of individuals with similar sensory disabilities.

Any individual with any degree of hearing or visual loss is defined as deafblind.[25] This is highly dependent on a variety of interrelating factors. The timing of their sensory disabilities is fundamental. Whether the hearing or vision

[21] Synder, *Cultural Locations*; Waldschmidt, 'Strengths and Weaknesses of a Cultural Model of Dis/ability', p. 70; Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs*, pp. 47-50.
[22] Snyder, *Cultural Locations*, p. 10.
[23] Stuart Aitken, 'Understanding Deafblindness', in *Teaching Children who are Deafblind*, eds., Stuart Aitken, Marianna Buultjens, Catherine Clark, Jane T. Eyre and Laure Pease (David Fulton Publishers, London, 2000), pp. 1-34; Harry Knoors and Mathijs P. J. Vervloed, 'Educational Programming for Deaf Children with Multiple Disabilities', in *Deaf Studies, Language, and Education*, eds., Marc Marschark and Patrica E. Spencer (Oxford University Press, London, 2005), p. 83.
[24] Catherine Nelson and Susan M. Bruce, 'Critical Issues in the Lives of Children and Youth who are Deafblind', *American Annals of the Deaf*, 161, 4 (2016), p. 406.
[25] Knoors, 'Educational Programming', p. 83.

loss of the deafblind individual was congenital or acquired has a significant effect on their formative years. Individuals with deafblindness experience their multi-sensory disabilities in distinct ways, which have been categorized depending on the onset of their disabilities: children with congenital deafblindness; those with congenital hearing loss and acquired vision impairment (and vice versa); and older individuals with acquired deafblindness later in life.[26] Many children become deafblind due to one of two distinct conditions which causes deafblindness; Usher's syndrome and meningitis. Meningitis targets the spinal cord and, if left untreated in young children, can lead to permanent vision and hearing loss.

Children with multi-sensory disabilities, unlike those with single-sensory disabilities, face unique experiences which dictate their propensity for communication with others, their spatial awareness and their ability to learn. However, the experience of each deafblind children is unique due to the onset of their hearing and visual disabilities. The 'two sensory impairments multiply and intensify the impact of each other, creating a severe disability, which is unique.'[27] In addition, the deafblind child's disabilities can be misdiagnosed, especially with deafness being an 'invisible' disability in comparison with blindness. When deafblind children are asked questions in a verbal format, their lack of response can be interpreted not as deafness, but as an intellectual disability. Consequently, misdiagnosis had a severe impact upon their further education as they were often placed within institutional environment which did not cater for their needs, such Skorokhodova's experiences at the Odessa School for the Blind.[28]

Such Western approaches to disability studies contrasted with the tsarist and Soviet cases. Tsarist attitudes towards disability ranged from complete marginalisation in the early-to-mid period to more progressive approaches in the late tsarist period.[29] With the use of terms of *defekt* and

[26] Ibid., pp. 83-4.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] For further information on the lives of people with disabilities in the Imperial period, see also Susan Burch, 'Transcending Revolutions: The Tsars, The Soviets and Deaf Culture', *Journal of Social History*, 34, 2 (2000), pp. 393-401; Julie V. Brown, 'Societal Responses to Mental Disorders in Prerevolutionary Russia', in *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory and Practice*, eds., McCagg and Siegelbaum (University

invalid, it reflected much of the ingrained prejudicial attitudes towards people with disabilities seemingly throughout the Soviet period. Such views were reinforced when a Soviet official was asked at the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow whether the USSR intended to send a team to the Paralympics, he replied with the infamous claim that 'there are no invalids in the USSR!'[30] Such rejection underlined their position, or lack of, within late Soviet society. However, the regime's approach towards disability was not always so unashamedly dismissive. Bolshevik attitudes towards people with disabilities became linked with the transformative nature of early Soviet utopian thought. With the success of the October Revolution, the new Bolshevik leaders promised to remake the state, society and the individual. The old, decadent tsarist institutions would burn in the fires of Soviet enlightenment to be rebuilt in a new socialist civilisation. To reconstruct society anew, a class of revolutionary citizenry, would be required.

Such an idealized view of the populace was based upon the New Soviet Person; an artificially constructed state archetype which the regime hoped other individuals could aspire towards.[31] The creation of the New Soviet Person was a

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of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1989), pp. 13-37; Julie V. Brown, 'Peasant Survival Strategies in Late Imperial Russia: The Social Uses of the Mental Hospital', *Social Problems*, 34, 4 (1987), pp. 311-329; Kirill Maslov, 'The Lives of the Blind in a Historical Whirlpool: Russian and Soviet Research Traditions Reconsidered', *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, 45, 5 (2010), pp. 36-53; Keith Rosenthal, 'Disability and the Russian Revolution', *International Socialist Review*, 102 (2016), pp. 1-21; Keith Rosenthal, 'Disability and the Soviet Union: Advances and Retreats', *International Socialist Review*, 103 (2016), pp. 1-17; Nicholas Sauer, *Disability in Late Imperial Russia: Pathological Metaphors and Medical Orientalism* (Unpublished MA thesis, Youngstown State University, 2016).

[30] Valerii Fefelov, 'V SSSR Invalidov Net!' (Overseas Publication Interchange, London, 1986) cited in Sarah Phillips, '"There are no Invalids in the USSR!": A Missing Soviet Chapter in the New Disability History', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 29, 3 (2009), p. 1.

[31] For further information on the New Soviet Person, see also David L. Hoffman, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939* (Cornell University Press, London, 2011); David L. Hoffman, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941* (Cornell University Press, London, 2003); Daniel Beer, *Renovating Russia: The Human Sciences and the Fate of Liberal Modernity, 1880–1930* (Cornell University Press, London, 2008); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995), pp. 197-237; Jochen Hellbeck, 'Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931–1939', in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed., Shiela Fitzpatrick (Routledge, New York, 2000), pp. 77-116; Raymond A. Bauer, *The New Man in Soviet Psychology* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1951); Yordanka Valkanova, 'The Passion for Educating the "New Man": Debates about Preschooling in Soviet Russia, 1917–1925', *History of Education Quarterly*, 49, 2 (2009), pp. 211–221.

Soviet humanising project, where the regime redefined the characteristics of a Soviet person. But what did it mean to be human in the Soviet Union? The new socialist citizenry was expected to become industrious, erudite, healthy, collective workers of a Soviet tomorrow.[32] The cultivation of such specific traits served practical purposes. The regime wanted the population to be physically capable of rebuilding the state in the aftermath of the destruction caused by the First World War and the Civil War, while also being able to understand the teachings of Marxism-Leninism and put such theory into practice. Concurrently, individuals were to work to become the best versions of humanity to achieve the highest form of human society; where muscular, healthy and virile workers formed together to turn the dream of a utopia into reality.

Labour was a main tenet of this humanisation project, where individuals legitimized their position within Soviet society through participating in socially useful work, often idealized and visualized within industrial or agricultural settings in the early Soviet period. Being industrious was one aspect of the New Soviet Person but being able to contribute to the (often literal) construction of a socialist utopia solidified one's dedication to the process. In capitalist societies, one's labour was exploited by others, but in a socialist society, the individual participated in labour willingly, understanding that their work led to the formation of a better society. Furthermore, the participation in socially useful work was seem as a humanising mechanism for the individual. The process would shape and mould the individual, leading to formation of 'human behaviour and [individual] thought'.[33] Sokolianskii himself stated that as 'the complexity of his labour increases, his consciousness becomes more

[32] For further information on early Soviet healthcare and physical culture, see also Tricia Starks, *The Body Soviet: Propaganda, Hygiene, and the Revolutionary State* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2008); Susan Grant, *Physical Culture and Sport in Soviet Society: Propaganda, Acculturation, and Transformation in the 1920s and 1930s* (Routledge, London, 2013); Frances L. Bernstein, Christopher Burton and Dan Healey, eds., *Soviet Medicine: Culture, Practice, and Science* (Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, 2010); John Hutchinson, *Politics and Public Health in Revolutionary Russia: 1890-1918* (John Hopkins University Press, London, 1990); Susan Gross Solomon and John F. Hutchinson, eds., *Health and Society in Revolutionary Russia* (Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1990); Frederick L. G. Clark and Noel Brinton, *Men, Medicine and Food in the USSR* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1936); Arthur Newsholme and John Adams Kingsbury, *Red Medicine: Socialized Health in Soviet Russia* (Doran Company, New York, 1933).

[33] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 85.

complicated.'[34] Through labour, the individual would become both industrious, hard-working and achieve consciousness in a Marxist context. It was described as the 'work that raises a person to the top of human morality.'[35]

Most importantly, the will to labour, rather the actual act of labouring, remained the essential element of the entire process. It mattered little if the individual understood the purpose of humanising process of the New Soviet Person if he or she did not feel the urge to participate. Sokolianskii explained that 'the labour of the Soviet person is his need. Therefore, the overall aim of labour education is the education of the need for labour, the will to labour.'[36] The will to engage and the act of participating in labour would humanise the individual, turning them into a hard-working, class conscious part of the collective. The will to labour would turn the tsarist population into Soviet citizens, legitimised as vital members of a Soviet community.

Questions remained about the loyalty of the existing populace, where it was suspected that centuries of adhering to tsarist autocracy, orthodoxy and capitalism had impacted their ability to truly become devoted Soviet citizens. The New Soviet Person was also a means of establishing a class of trustworthy cadres who would provide the backbone for the regime in the post-revolutionary era. Unlike their parents, children were viewed as ideal candidates for the formation of a revolutionary citizenship of a future classless utopia.[37] Seen as a 'blank slate', they were mouldable to efforts to engineer the ideal Soviet being.[38] While their parents' lives had been exposed to non-socialist ideals, children could be trained to embody the very ideals of the New Soviet Person. By engaging them in productive work, they were to be 'humanised' in a very Soviet way. By becoming the new Soviet vanguard, they would serve as the

[34] So-edinenie. Fond Podderzhki Slepoglukhikh (hereafter S-FPS), f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 31, l. 21.
[35] Ibid., op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 79.
[36] Ibid., op. 3.2, d. 31, l. 15.
[37] For further information on childhood in the Soviet Union, see also Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890–1991* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2007); Lisa Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades: Revolutionising Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917–1932* (Routledge, London, 2001); Julie K. de Graffenried, *Sacrificing Childhood: Children and the Soviet State in the Great Patriotic War* (Kansas University Press, Lawrence, 2014); Margaret Peacock, *Innocent Weapons: The Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2014).
[38] Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades*, p. 162**.**

enforcers of Soviet discipline, ideological rigour and steadfastness throughout the state. In being literal personifications of the New Soviet Person, they would serve as inspirations to others in the Soviet Union.

However, such idealistic concepts were based upon romanticised notions of Soviet childhood, especially espoused in expressions of Soviet culture in the 'Thank you Comrade Stalin for our Happy Childhood' posters of the 1930s.[39] These children are represented as beaming, healthy children, all gazing at (and presumably talking with) Stalin himself. Such images stood in stark contrast to other children who did not adhere to the regime's unrealistic perceptions of childhood. By placing children with perceived 'normal' bodies on pedestals for public consumption, it reinforced the image of the 'perfect' child, free of any aberrations, thus excluding those with physical, intellectual or even moral 'defects'. What would happen to children with physical or intellectual disabilities who did not fit this supposed norm? Could deafblind children aspire to become part of the new industrious, collective revolutionary vanguard or would the state exclude them for their 'abnormal' bodies and 'defective' behaviour? Would the Soviet Union consider such individuals with disabilities as human beings? While the Bolsheviks fought a brutal civil war precisely to eliminate those who deviated from the established ideological dogma, the early years of Soviet power was awash with attempts to integrate 'defective' children into the Soviet collective.

The need to assimilate 'defective' children remained at the forefront of the regime's thinking.[40] The *besprizorniki* crisis, in which millions of abandoned children were left free to wander around the roads of the urbanised Soviet Union, forced the Bolshevik authorities to try to integrate them back into society.[41] Such children were living an adventurous, often miserable, existence

[39] Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000).
[40] GARF, a. 2306, op. 70, d. 1704, ll. 68-69.
[41] For further information on the *besprizorniki* and displaced children in the late tsarist period and the Soviet Union, see also Alan Ball, *And Now My Soul is Hardened: Abandoned Children in Soviet Russia, 1918-1930* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994); Anne E. Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians and Delinquents* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2000); Olga Kucherenko, *Soviet Street Children and the Second World War: Welfare and Social Control under Stalin* (Bloomsbury, London, 2016); Julianne Fürst., *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford University Press, New York,

on the street. Some were forced, while others willingly participated in prostitution, gambling and criminal activities. Such escapades from the apparent future of the party mocked the regime's message for a better future. Consequently, the attempts to reform such individuals took on special importance. Their experience within distinctly non-Soviet subcultures segregated them from the Bolshevik visions of a socialised future. However, if they could be converted, then it proved that anyone could become the New Soviet Person. While the regime had been forced to deal with the *besprizorniki* crisis, the utopian drive of rehabilitation struck a note.

However, its application created problems. Perhaps most infamously, Anton Makarenko's work at the Gorkii colony and the Dzerzhinskii labour commune in Soviet Ukraine are flawed examples of the attempted rehabilitation of morally 'defective' children. Using punitive measures to instil a collective spirit of Soviet *élan*, Makarenko claimed success due to the children's engagement in socially useful work.[42] At the Dzerzhinskii commune, there was a 'real furniture factory and later an optical and precision instrument works. The latter were financially more remunerative and pupils learnt technically more skills types of labour.'[43] Nevertheless, his corrective approach was heavily criticised: James Bowen explained that Makarenko was 'unable to understand a philosophical treatment of what to him were pressing educational problems, he became derisive of any attempt to analyse educational problems theoretically and instead took an increasing pride in his own "practicality".'[44] Despite some misguided rehabilitative attempts, the regime's reformative attitude extended

2010); Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg*, *1900–1914* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993); Cathy A. Frierson, *Silence was Salvation: Child Survivors of Stalin's Terror and World War II in the Soviet Union* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2015); Rosario Franco, *Social Order and Social Policies toward Disabled Children: The Soviet Case (1917-1953)* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 2006); Tatiana M. Smirnova, '"Beloved Children of the Soviet Republic": The History of Foster Care in Soviet Russia, 1918-1930', *Russian Studies in History*, 48, 4 (2010), pp. 9-25; Sergei V. Zhuralev, 'Children on the Margins in Soviet Russia', *Russian Studies in History*, 48, 4 (2010), pp. 3-8; Michael Kaznelson, 'Remembering the Soviet State: Kulak Children and Dekulakisation', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59, 7 (2007), pp. 1163-1177.

[42] Anton Makarenko, *Road to Life*, trans. Stephen Garry (Drummond Ltd, London, 1943), pp. 5-16.

[43] E. Koutaissoff, 'Soviet Education and the New Man', *Soviet Studies*, 5, 2 (1953), p. 133

[44] James Bowen, *Soviet Education: Anton Makarenko and the Years of Experiment* (The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1965), p. 58.

to those with sensory disabilities. It led to the expansion of the field of defectology within the early Soviet period.

Defectology or the study of children with physical and intellectual disabilities, became the main discipline for such transformative change.[45] With its origins from the incursion of the medical profession into the process of *vospitanie* in the late tsarist period, it was predominantly based on a medical model ethos towards people with disabilities, seeking the 'correction' of individuals seen as 'defective'.[46] Boris Gindis defined the various fields of defectology, which included '*surdopedagogika* (education of the hard of hearing and the deaf); *tiflopedagogika* (education of the visually impaired and blind); and *oligophrenopedagogika* (education of children with intellectual disabilities).'[47] While deafblind education is not mentioned in this definition, the discipline itself was formed through a combination of '*surdo*' and '*tiflo*' to form *surdotiflopedagogika*. The field of defectology contained a rehabilitative spirit, where defectologists sought to provide individuals with disabilities with the same educational opportunities as others without disabilities (this will be expanded upon in further detail in the first chapter). Such attitudes were expressed by Soviet defectologists and psychologists, such as Vygotskii and Aleksandr Luriia.[48]

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[45] For further information on defectology and pedagogical attempts to educate children with disabilities in the late tsarist and early Soviet period, see also Andy Byford, '*Lechebnaia Pedagogika*: The Concept and Practice of Therapy in Russian Defectology, c. 1880-1936', *Medical History*, 62, 1 (2018), pp. 67-90; Andy Byford, 'The Imperfect Child in Early Twentieth-Century Russia', *Journal of the History of Education Society*, 46, 5 (2017), pp. 595-617; Jane E. Knox, 'The Changing Face of Soviet Defectology: A Study of Rehabilitating the Handicapped', *Studies in Soviet Thought*, 37, 3 (1989), pp. 217-236; Elena Minkova, 'Pedology as a Complex Science Devoted to the Study of Children in Russia: The History of its Origin and Elimination', *Psychological Thought*, 5, 2 (2012), pp. 83-98; Andrew Sutton, 'Special Education for Handicapped Pupils', in *Soviet Education: The Gifted and the Handicapped*, ed., Jim Riordan (Routledge, New York, 1988), pp. 70-94; Ivan Holowinsky, 'Research and Exceptional Children in the Ukrainian SSR', *Journal of Special Education*, 15, 1 (1981), pp. 91-96.

[46] Andy Byford, 'V. M. Bekhterev in Russian Child Science, 1900s-1920s: "Objective Psychology"/"Reflexology" as a Scientific Movement', *The History of Behavioural Sciences*, 52, 2 (2016), pp. 99-123; Andy Byford, 'Turning Pedagogy into a Science: Teachers and Psychologists in Late Imperial Russia (1897–1917)', *Osiris*, 23, 1 (2008), pp. 50-81.

[47] Boris Gindis, 'The Social/Cultural Implication of Disability: Vygotsky's Paradigm for Special Education', *Educational Psychologist*, 30, 2 (1996), p. 77.

[48] For further information on Vygotskii's work, see also Lev. S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, trans. and eds. Michael Cole, Vera John-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner and Ellen Souberman (Harvard University Press, Harvard,

Vygotskii revolutionised the field of defectology through the development of his own social model of disability during the mid-1920s, and well before similar advances in the Western countries. His social model included both an awareness of the limitations of the disabled individual's impairment and the acknowledgement that social environments disable individuals. Vygotskii stipulated that the physically disabled child is fully capable of intellectual progress, in which their disability does not prevent their development. People with disabilities had been previously branded as uneducable due to their inability to learn the necessary skills associated with human behaviour, such as self-care skills, language or even independence. The lack of educational development meant that many disabled individuals did not enter employment and remained dependent on others for their subsistence. Gindis explains that while a disabled child may not be able to learn the use of lower (natural) and higher (cultural) functions through mainstream teaching methods, they could still be taught this through alternative methods.[49] In addition, Vygotskii applied the compensation theory, in which 'it was believed that the defect could be compensated by a heightened sensitivity of intact organs, like tactile sense in the blind and vision in the deaf.'[50] Vygotskii emphasized the role of the pedagogue in the disabled child's education, stating

> 'the educator must deal not so much with these factors themselves, as much as with their social consequences. When we have before us a blind boy as the object of education, then it is necessary to deal not so much with blindness by itself, as with those conflicts which arise for a blind child upon entering life.'[51]

1978); Galina Zaitseva, Michael Pursglove and Susan Gregory, 'Vygotsky, Sign Language and the Education of Deaf Pupils', *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 4, 1 (1999), pp. 9-15; Alex Kozulin, *Psychology in America: Toward a Social History of Soviet Psychology* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge, 1984), pp. 104-105, 117; Peter Smagorinsky, 'Vygotsky, "Defectology", and the Inclusion of People of Difference in the Broader Cultural Stream', *Journal of Language and Literary Education*, 8, 1 (2012), pp. 1-25.

[49] Lower functions include 'elementary perception, memory, attention' while higher functions consist of 'abstract reasoning, logical memory, language, voluntary attention, planning, decision making' etc. Gindis, 'The Social/Cultural Implication', p. 78.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Lev S. Vygotskii, *Osnovy Defektologii* (Pedagogika, Moskva, 1983), p. 102 cited in Jane E. Knox and Alex Kozulin, 'The Vygotskian Tradition in Soviet Psychological Study of Deaf

If given the necessary training in their existing sensors and provided with alternative techniques to learn the necessary skills, Vygotskii posited that the child could 'transcend' their disability. This became the fundamental basis for his approach towards the education of children with disabilities. Hence, the Vygotskian method, based upon the social model of disability, fit into the Bolshevik ethos of transformation and change. Andy Byford explained that 'the Bolsheviks invested keenly in child science, seeing it as one of a number of exciting new strands of the human sciences that could be harnessed for the purposes of accelerated modernization and revolutionary social engineering.'[52] If disabled children could 'transcend' their disability, it established a legitimate process for disabled individuals to aspire to be New Soviet People. While previous paths had labelled the disabled as uneducable because of their disabilities, Vygotskii's theories paved a potentially new way towards acceptance and integration in the Soviet Union. Children would be 'humanised' through educatory efforts, where their disabilities would be 'overcome' through compensation theory. Accessible forms of education would assimilate disabled children into the wider Soviet collective.

Soviet Disability Literature

In recent years, the academic interest in disability studies in the former USSR and Eastern Europe has grown substantially. Evidence of such interest was revealed at the recent roundtable on 'Disability and Bodily Transgressions: Before and After the Soviet Union' at the Association for Slavonic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) in November 2017. In a room packed with academics from fields such as sociology and anthropology to literature and linguistics, the constructive discussion which took place proved that the field is in a healthy state, with a plethora of high-quality, interdisciplinary research being published not only from American institutions, but across the globe. The roundtable led to the informal discussions for an official study group within

Children', in *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory and Practice*, eds., McCagg and Siegelbaum (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1989), p. 70.
[52] Byford, 'Bekhterev', p. 114.

ASEEES focused on the academic interest in disability studies in the former Soviet Union.

While the future of Soviet disability studies remains optimistic, its origins date back to the 1980s with the publication of the volume of Soviet disability history edited by Lewis Siegelbaum and William McCagg.[53] The book, based upon a collection of academic papers given at a conference on 'The Handicapped in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe' in 1985, is split between two subject areas. The first section examines the complex historical relationship between the regime, disability and the field of defectology. This includes Jane Knox and Alex Kozulin's exploration of Lev Vygotskii's substantial role in defining defectology as a discipline. They highlight his dominant role in establishing the social model of disability within the field of defectology, in which 'he rightly called attention to the fact that these children are handicapped only in the eyes of others and do not perceive themselves as defective.'[54] The second section focuses on the disabled individual's fluctuating relationship with the regime. While the authors Stephen and Ethel Dunn detail how the regime expected individuals to engage in socially productive work, this clashed with disabled people's own demands for recognition as equal citizens.[55] Paul Raymond explores how such requests manifested itself through the formation of the Action Group to Defend the Rights of the Disabled in the USSR.[56]

However, despite the promising beginnings of Soviet disability studies, the field stumbled into an unintended hiatus. It took another twenty-five years before a definitive multi-disciplinary body of work emerged. Michael Rasell and Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova's edited volume covers substantial geographical and disciplinary ground, with the extensive use of archival material (which proved lacking in McCagg and Siegelbaum's edited volume). Disability is established as

[53] William O. McCagg and Lewis Siegelbaum, 'Introduction' in *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory and Practice* eds., McCagg and Siegelbaum (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1989) p. 3.
[54] Knox, 'The Vygotskian Tradition', p. 81.
[55] Stephen P. Dunn and Ethel Dunn, 'Everyday Life of the Disabled in the USSR', in *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory and Practice* eds., McCagg and Siegelbaum (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1989), pp. 199-234.
[56] Paul D. Raymond, 'Disability as Dissidence: The Action Group to Defend the Rights of the Disabled in the USSR', in *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory and Practice*, eds., McCagg and Siegelbaum (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1989), pp. 235-252.

a lens to view society through, in which it is 'a highly useful frame for interrogating how societies relate to and 'manage' alterity and otherness.'[57] Within a Soviet context, Iarskaia-Smirnova and Pavel Romanov's chapter on Soviet iconography of disability, drawn from posters and films from the 1920s to the 1980s, provides an elucidating analysis of how the visual representations of the disabled reinforced their continued exclusion.[58] Likewise, Frances Bernstein focuses on symbolic and practical importance of state-made prosthetic aids for individuals without limbs.[59] The regime made assurances to the recipients about the quality of the prosthetic limbs, but such promises were routinely broken through their poor condition and erratic distribution. The field-defining volume represents the first attempt since the late 1980s to extend our understanding and knowledge of the livelihoods of people with a wide range of disabilities in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

The volume's wide-ranging examination of the livelihoods of people with disabilities means that it suffers from a lack of focus on a specific disability. In the past few years, several nuanced histories of the livelihoods of people with sensory disabilities have emerged. The study of deafness in the Soviet Union is identified in Claire Shaw's recent book on the formation of a Soviet Deaf identity.[60] With their marginalized social position in the late tsarist era, she posits that deaf individuals sought to establish themselves as equal citizens within the new Soviet project. Utilising the ideological framework of the New Soviet Person, it explores how deaf individuals were expected to remodel themselves during the construction of socialism. Seeking to become independent citizens within Soviet society, they sought to 'overcome' their disability through their participation in the workforce, to become valued, equal

[57] Michael Rasell and Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova, 'Conceptualising Disability in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union', in *Disability in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union: History, Policy and Everyday Life*, eds., Michael Rasell and Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova (Routledge, New York, 2014), p. 3.

[58] Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova and Pavel Romanov, 'Heroes and Spongers: The Iconography of Disability in Soviet Posters and Film', in *Disability in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union: History, Policy and Everyday Life*, eds., Rasell and Iarskaia-Smirnova (Routledge, New York, 2014), pp. 67-96.

[59] Frances L. Bernstein, 'Prosthetic Promise and Potemkin Limbs in late-Stalinist Russia', in *Disability in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union: History, Policy and Everyday Life*, eds., Rasell and Iarskaia-Smirnova (Routledge, New York, 2014), pp. 42-66.

[60] Claire Shaw, *Deaf in the USSR: Marginality, Community and Soviet Identity, 1917-1991* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2017).

members of Soviet society. In addition, the All-Russian Society of the Deaf (VOG) acted as a catalyst for expressions of Deaf identity, collectiveness and culture. Shaw explores how deaf actors fashioned their own selfhood through demonstrations of Deaf culture in the 1950s, specifically through the establishment of the Moscow Theatre of Sign and Gesture in 1957.[61] Performing for hearing and deaf audiences, they were facilitators for Deaf cultural production and helped establish a renaissance of Deaf culture in the post-Stalin period. Shaw successfully traces the ever-changing position of deaf people within the Soviet Union, through the establishment of VOG in the 1920s, which eventually led to the establishment of an engaged, included deaf community in the post-Stalin era.

Much like deafness, the study of blindness has also received attention from the academic community. Maria Galmarini focuses on the rehabilitation of Soviet blind veterans of the Second World War, or the Great Patriotic War, into the workforce. Despite the regime's rehabilitative ethos of '*trudovoi put'*' ('the road to labour'), she examines how many of the veterans experienced disenfranchisement and marginalisation.[62] Unaccustomed to their post-disability isolation, they were employed within jobs they believed were beneath their status as war veterans. Galmarini juxtaposes their experiences with the oral and written testimonies of a minority of blind veterans who thrived in the post-war period. Drawing upon the autobiographies of two blind veterans of the Second World War, Aleksandr Malyshev and Arkadii Shan'gin, she explores how they both refused to associate themselves with the negative connotations of disability and sought to recast themselves as citizens at the first ranks of society. Despite the positive intentions of such veterans, Galmarini correctly identifies that the '*trudovoi put''* model simply 'did not challenge deep-rooted

[61] For further information on Soviet Deaf culture, see also Claire Shaw, '"We Have No Need to Lock Ourselves Away": Space, Marginality, and the Negotiation of Deaf Identity in Late Soviet Moscow', *Slavic Review*, 71, 1 (2015), pp. 57-78; Claire Shaw, ''Speaking in the Language of Art': Soviet Deaf Theatre and the Politics during Khrushchev's Thaw', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 91, 4 (2013), pp. 759-786; Anastasia Kayiatos, 'Sooner Speaking than Silent, Sooner Silent than Mute: Soviet Deaf Theatre and Pantomime after Stalin', *Theatre Survey*, 51, 1 (2010), pp. 5-31; Burch, 'Transcending Revolutions', pp. 393-401; Tamar Makharoblidze, 'The Georgian Dactyl Alphabet', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 33, 3 (2013), pp. 1 – 17.

[62] Maria C. Galmarini, 'Turning Defects to Advantages: The Discourse of Labour in the Autobiographies of Soviet Blinded Second World War Veterans', *European History Quarterly*, 44, 4 (2014), pp. 651-677.

conceptualizations of disability as a marginalizing or disciplining category.'[63] Nevertheless, Galmarini does not assess whether such marginalisation was expressed by other disabled veterans with other forms of sensory disabilities, or whether it differed for blind veterans.

The study of disabled veterans of the Second World War has proven to be a fruitful source of scholarly investigation.[64] Robert Dale focuses on repudiating ingrained myths about the fate of disabled veterans in Leningrad after the Second World War. Prevalent Soviet myth had suggested that after a mass-round up, thousands of disabled veterans, many of whom were vagrants and beggars, were institutionalised at the labour colony on the Valaam archipelago. However, Dale rejects the Valaam myth, arguing that not only were these veterans not rounded up in large numbers, but the Valaam *dom* (home) only contained a small proportion of disabled veterans. He posits that not only did disabled veterans struggle to integrate themselves into post-war Soviet society, but the 'Valaam myth has served as a convenient shorthand for the exclusion of Great Patriotic War invalids.'[65]

Despite their apparent elevated status in the post-war period as 'invalids of the Great Patriotic War', Mark Edele identifies the wildly different circumstances many disabled veterans found themselves in the immediate post-war period. While a few disabled veterans rose within Soviet society to become some of its valued, productive members, many more were left resentful towards the regime for its inconsistent distribution of state pensions.[66] In a similar vein, Beate Fieseler analyses how the state provided little or no help to most veterans for their reintegration efforts. This was despite the regime's obligation in assisting disabled veterans attempts to assimilate into post-war society through

[63] Ibid., p. 669.
[64] For further information of Soviet visual culture and disabled veterans, see also Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity* (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 2008); Claire E. McCallum, 'Scorched by the Fire of War: Masculinity, War Wounds and Disability in Soviet Visual Culture, 1941-1965', *The Slavic and East European Review*, 93, 2 (2015), pp. 251-285; Alexandre Sumpf, 'War Disabled on Screen: Remembering and Forgetting the Great War in the Russian and Soviet Cinema, 1914-1940', *First World War Studies*, 6, 1 (2015), pp. 57-79.
[65] Robert Dale, 'The Valaam Myth and the Fate of Leningrad's Disabled Veterans', *Russian Review*, 72, 2 (2013), p. 277.
[66] Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008), pp. 81-101.

training schemes and qualification programmes. The demands of the regime on Soviet industry during the post-war reconstruction process trumped the needs of the disabled veterans, in which 'it was no longer important that they had become disabled while defending their homeland.'[67] With a clearly expanding body of literature on disabled veterans, future studies should consider the current gaps in veterans with intellectual disabilities or mental health issues, often brought on by the trauma experienced during their service.

Explorations of the experiences of deafblind individuals in the Soviet period have been limited to a few studies conducted by Western and Russian scholars. Irina Sandomirskaia has provided several assessments of *surdotiflopedagogika* through the medium of language. In her book *Blokada v Slove* (A Blockade of Language), she focuses on the experiences of two deafblind women, Ol'ga Skorokhodova and Varia (last name unknown) in the pre- and post-war periods. Varia's 'humanisation' process is observed by Skorokhodova, where Varia moves from 'a state of "savagery" to a more normal, meaningful way of life with a clear understanding of what was happening to her.'[68] She focused on the similar relationship between language and Soviet deafblind education in her article from 2008, focusing specifically on the relationship between Skorokhodova and the famous Soviet writer, Maksim Gorkii.[69] However, Sandomirskaia's approach fails to highlight the significance of self-care skills as a foundation for further educational development for all deafblind children nor does it identify whether language proficiency led to future employment, the primary aim of Sokolianskii's method.

Tat'iana Basilova's concise book on the history of deafblind education in the Soviet Union remains the primary text on the subject.[70] She traces the emerging field of *surdotiflopedagogika* from its early origins in the 1920s, through Sokolianskii's work at the Khar'kov orphanage for the deafblind and the

[67] Beate Fieseler, 'The Bitter Legacy of the 'Great Patriotic War': Red Army Disabled Soldiers under Late Stalinism', in *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, ed., Juliane Fürst (Routledge, Abingdon, 2006), p. 58.
[68] Irina Sandomirskaia, *Blokada v Slove: Ocherki kriticheskoi teorii i biopolitiki iazyka* (Moskva, Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2013), p. 420.
[69] Irina Sandomirskaia, 'Skin to Skin: Language in the Soviet Education of Deaf-Blind Children, the 1920s and 1930s', *Studies in Eastern European Thought*, 60, 4 (2008), pp. 321-337.
[70] Tat'iana A. Basilova, *Istoriia Obucheniia Slepoglukhikh Detei v Rossii* (Eksmo, Moskva, 2015).

work of his protégé, Aleksandr Meshcheriakov, at the School for the Deafblind at Zagorsk. Utilising some of Sokolianskii's personal letters, the book provides an excellent narrative of Sokolianskii's application of his *ochelovechenie* theory within successive learning environments. While Basilova's book work will be referred throughout the thesis, it remains a basic history of the discipline. It does not attempt to place Sokolianskii's method within the wider academic discussions of Soviet disability nor does it situate *surdotiflopedagogika* amongst other approaches in deafblind education in other countries.

The thesis attempts to situate itself amongst the historical studies into Russian and Soviet disability studies in several ways. With previous Soviet studies focusing on the experiences of individuals with single disabilities, the thesis will provide a comprehensive analysis of individuals with multiple disabilities and consider how their experiences differed in comparison. Furthermore, previous studies have tended to revolve around the experiences of a specific demographic, such as disabled veterans of the Great Patriotic War or Soviet workers with blindness. This thesis will turn the attention to children, linking their experiences within the Soviet conceptions of childhood and Sokolianskii's own attempts to educate and bring up such children. Finally, this thesis utilises a series of case studies to demonstrate the nature and impact of Sokolianskii's work within *surdotiflopedagogika.* In utilising the experiences of the students at Khar'kov children's home in the 1920s and 1930s and Iuliia Vinogradova's education in Moscow during the 1950s, it assesses the practical application of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* theory amongst multiple individuals with deafblindness within the former Soviet Union. Amidst fluctuating definitions of humanity in the 1920s and 1950s, the thesis will examine the validity of the 'humanisation' process of Soviet deafblind children under Sokolianskii's care and whether such children were fully assimilated into wider Soviet society.

Chapter Layout

In this spirit of revolutionary change, Soviet pedagogues employed the Vygotskian approach during their forays into defectology. Sokolianskii's own *ochelovechenie* method was based precisely on this theory of transcendence.

Sokolianskii explained that 'a characteristic feature of the deafblind child is that despite being quite normal, he is incapable of full mental development. Under normal circumstances, he is unable to achieve even the most primitive mental development and will remain disabled for life.'[71] Sokolianskii's approach to *surdotiflopedagogika* was an acknowledgement that the combination of both deafness and blindness made it practically impossible for such children to be educated on their own. Without the child's immersion in the *ochelovechenie* method, Sokolianskii believed that deafblind children would be unable to communicate, form relationships or even take care of their most basic needs. Without such skills, the deafblind children would be become illiterate, uneducated individuals and uninvolved with socially useful labour. Children with deafblindness needed an alternative, accessible path for their education, which utilised their primary sense; touch.

Through touch, deafblind children would be able to learn the necessary skills of self-care, literacy and language to be able to assimilate themselves into wider Soviet society. Their experiences through this education process would be their 'humanisation' into the Soviet collective, as espoused by Sokolianskii. The thesis will focus on the theoretical basis and practical application of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method within specific case studies at the Khar'kov children's home during the 1920s and 1930s and Iuliia Vinogradova's experiences at the Moscow Institute of Defectology in the mid-1950s. It will examine how the blend of psychology, pedagogy and use of sensory technology were all tools employed by Sokolianskii to achieve his vision of a 'humanized' deafblind child; one capable of being able to live as an equal Soviet citizen without the assistance of others.

The thesis follows a chronological format. The first chapter identifies the origins of *surdotiflopedagogika* in the last years of the Russian Empire and the fledgling Bolshevik state. Sokolianskii's pedagogical career began with his graduation from the St. Petersburg Institute for Neuro-Psychiatry, where he spent extensive periods working with deaf and deafblind children. Using his fervent Marxist leanings in the aftermath of the October Revolution, Sokolianskii sought to apply his newly-established theories of deafblind education into the

[71] GARF, f. 10049, op. 2, d. 339, l. 3.

establishment of a research centre, school and orphanage in the Soviet Union. With the foundation of the institution for deafblind education in Khar'kov in 1923, the second chapter discusses its inner workings. An eclectic mixture of psychologists, pedagogues and educationalists combined to facilitate Sokolianskii's practical application of his *ochelovechenie* method. The thesis will explore the trial-and-error approach to deafblind education employed at the orphanage; nine deafblind students, including Ol'ga Skorokhodova, were initiated into an intensive educational curriculum. The thesis will evaluate whether the use of self-care training and the development of literacy skills, through newly-built sensory technology such as the 'reading machine', was successful in creating independent, industrious and literate individuals during the 1920s and 1930s.

The latter half of the thesis analyses Sokolianskii's fall and rise in immediate pre- and post-war Soviet period. With the destruction of the Khar'kov orphanage after his arrest at the height of the Great Terror in 1937, Sokolianskii unexpected release from prison more than a year later signalled his return to *surdotiflopedagogika*. With his *de facto* rehabilitation confirmed with the founding of a small research laboratory for the deafblind at the Moscow Institute of Defectology in 1950, he honoured the legacy of the Khar'kov orphanage through the education of a new cohort of deafblind children. Sokolianskii's personal tutelage of a young teenage girl with deafblindness, Iuliia Vinogradova, is explored in the final chapters.

In the third chapter, Iuliia's experiences within her family home in the village of Boroshovo will be examined. Her highly developed spatial awareness, memory and cognition skills combined with her rudimentary knowledge of gesticulation placed her as an ideal pupil for further education at the research laboratory. Iuliia's induction into the Moscow Institute of Defectology in January 1955 forms the basis for the fourth and final chapter. The death of Stalin had initiated a series of state-wide discussions about the definitions of Soviet humanity and citizenship. With its roots in the rehabilitative ethos of the 1920s, Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method faced questions about its application in a post-Stalinist context. The chapter will assess Iuliia's education under Sokolianskii and compare her experiences with the former students of the Khar'kov children's home, including Skorokhodova.

Finally, the conclusion assesses the impact of Sokololianskii's teachings on the livelihoods of deafblind children. His work with Skorokhodova, Iuliia and many other deafblind children gave them the freedom to make choices in the post-Stalinist era. Without his pedagogical intervention, these children would have never had the opportunities to write, work, socialise and communicate with others. While most of his former students did struggle to integrate themselves into Soviet society, the tools they had learnt under Sokolianskii's tutelage made their previously unattainable attempts at integration possible. With the formation of the deafblind school in Zagorsk in 1963, Sokolianskii lay the foundation for all future explorations of deafblind education and pedagogy in Soviet Union.

1 The Origins of *Surdotiflopedagogika*

'Those who hear sounds

Those who see the sun, stars and the moon,

How does she describe beauty without beauty?

How will she understand without hearing sounds and spring?...

Words without sound – feelings of trepidation –

I catch and hear with a quick hand. And for the mind, for the heart,

I'm ready for love. So, like the smell of a gentle flower…

I will see with my mind, I will hear with my feelings

And I will dream the dream, but how?

Will everyone describe the beauty of beauty?

Will it smile clearly to me like a bright light?'[1]

This poem was included in Ol'ga Skorokhodova's last book, *How I Perceive, Imagine and Understand the World Around Me*, which was published in 1972. It represents her thoughts about her education within Sokolianskii's 'humanisation' process. Her childhood experiences of isolation and rejection are expressed in the opening stanza of the poem, where she explains that others have doubted her ability to fully understand a world that she cannot see or hear. More significantly, it engages with the inherent doubt expressed by others

[1] Ol'ga I. Skorokhodova, *Kak ia vosprinimaiu, predstavliaiu i ponimaiu okruzhaiushchii mir* (Moskva, Pedagogika, 1972), p. 621.

about Skorokhodova's humanity; can she truly be considered 'human' if she cannot fully interact with the world? Her doubts are encapsulated with her initial feelings of anxiety in the opening of the second stanza.

However, such reservations are quashed through her involvement in the *ochelovechenie* method. In learning sign language by being able to 'catch and hear with a quick hand', Skorokhodova utilised one of her existing primary senses as a foundation for education. In utilizing touch, she learnt how to write and read, which eventually led to her publication of several autobiographies and this very poem. However, the poem strikes a forlorn tone in its final stanza. While emphasizing that her education has allowed her to see and hear in a different way, she remained dependent on others. While Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method may have provided the necessary tools for the deafblind to be able to live in Soviet society, it poses questions about whether they could achieve full independence which will be addressed throughout the thesis.

This chapter explores the origins of *surdotiflopedagogika* in the late tsarist and early Soviet periods. It will place Russian attempts at deafblind education within the wider Western context. Previous efforts in the discipline had been attempted in France, Spain and the United Kingdom, but it was in Boston, in the United States of America, where the first successful attempt at deafblind education took place. Samuel Howe's formation of a teaching method for the education of the deafblind teenager, Laura Bridgman, with its emphasis on language acquisition, became the model for future attempts in deafblind education. This included the education of the most well-known person with deafblindness, Helen Keller.

Concurrently, the chapter will examine the Russian tradition of disability education, in which the formation of medical-pedagogical institutions in the late 1880s and 1890s led to a renaissance in the field. Many of the recurrent themes of rehabilitation and integration lay the foundation for the recurrence of similar concepts several decades later, but under the guise of socialism. Their work, which remained relatively free from state influences from the late tsarist to the early Soviet period, led to the formation of defectology as a discipline for the study and education of children with physical and intellectual disabilities. One such institution, known as the St. Petersburg Shelter, catered for the needs of

deafblind children and its approach influenced the establishment of Sokolianskii's own method.

Finally, the chapter will examine the intricacies of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method, in which he emphasized the importance of the formation of self-care skills over literacy. His criticism of Western attempts at deafblind education focused on a flawed emphasis on the acquisition of literacy skills, the relegation of the importance of self-care skills and, what he deemed, an unnecessary role of religion in their upbringing. In addition, Sokolianskii also condemned the pedagogues at the St. Petersburg Shelter for their preference for the oral method over sign language, which had severe consequences for both deaf and deafblind individuals in Russia and further abroad. Sokolianskii's construction of his own unique method for deafblind education merged with established Bolshevik thought on religion and anti-Western sentiment. It fit into the wider attempts by a Soviet state which emphasized rehabilitation and assimilation for people with disabilities. Sokolianskii sought to provide the necessary tools for the deafblind child to be able to integrate themselves into Soviet society. Through their mastery of self-care, language and literacy, they would be able to forge their own independent lives.

Deafblind Education before the October Revolution

Individuals with deafblindness remained largely ignored in written accounts from commentators in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was only through the medium of disability education that such individuals, most of them children, became of interest. It was in the late eighteenth century when the French educator, l'Abbé Deschamps, established a basic framework for deafblind education. The formation of an accessible form of communication between the teacher and the deafblind individual was deemed necessary.[2] Likewise in 1795, a Spanish philologist, Lorenzo y Panduro identified touch as the main vehicle for communication. He even explained how to utilise raised script to teach the deafblind, stating 'I would have the blind-deaf-mute touch [raised letters]… then I would present him with the word 'bread' in raised

[2] Catherine Nelson and Susan M. Bruce, 'Critical Issues in the Lives of Children and Youth who are Deafblind', *American Annals of the Deaf*, 161, 4 (2016), p. 407.

letters; I would have him take a piece of bread and taste it, and in this way, I would make him understand what the word 'bread' meant.'[3] Despite previous experiences in teaching deaf children, neither Deschamps and Panduro worked with deafblind children. In this period, deafblind education remained theoretical rather than practical.

One of the first detailed accounts of a deafblind child was written by James Wardrop, a Scottish ophthalmologist. While in London in 1810, he attempted to remove cataracts from the eyes of a congenitally deaf child, James Mitchell. While Wardrops's short book does not go into specific detail on deafblind education in the period, it provided a nuanced examination of Mitchell's behaviour. Wardrop observed the child's excellent spatial awareness, use of his teeth to examine objects and willingness to explore unknown environments.[4] In addition, Mitchell had developed his own form of gesture-based communication with his father. When Mitchell's eyes were examined by Wardrop, he 'signified to his father, by touching his eye-lids with the fingers of both hands, and imitating the examination of his eyes.'[5] Wardrop's surgery did not go as planned and the boy remained visually impaired. According to Nelson and Bruce, 'several British scholars concluded that nothing could be done for him and went on to state that deafblindness was the most crippling of disabilities.'[6]

Despite these previous observations, prevalent Western thought in the early nineteenth century concurred that deafblind education was theoretically impossible. Ernest Freeberg explained that contemporary thinkers applied John Locke's concept of the blank slate (or *tabula rasa*) to establish that an individual's mind is built through their experience of the material world.[7] They speculated that the multi-sensory disabilities prevented them from formulating such understanding. Freeberg encapsulated their thought, stating 'in a sense, a deaf and blind person would be soulless, doomed to remain in the vacant state

[3] Gabriel Farrell, *The Children of the Silent Night* (Perkins Publications, Watertown, 1956), pp. 7-8.
[4] James Wardrop, *History of James Mitchell: A Boy Born Blind and Deaf* (John Murray, London, 1813), pp. 7, 10-14.
[5] Ibid., p. 18.
[6] Nelson, 'Critical Issues', p. 407.
[7] Ernest Freeberg, ''An Object of Peculiar Interest': The Education of Laura Bridgman', *Church History*, 61, 2 (1992), p. 195.

of *tabula rasa* in which Locke had supposedly suggested all babies are born.'[8] He also cited William Blackstone's statement on the deafblind in common English law, in which '[they are] in the same stage as an idiot; he being supposed incapable of any understanding, as wanting all those senses which furnish the human mind with ideas.'[9] Such attitudes relegated deafblind individuals to the lowest of the low, unable to learn or exist within the confines of modern society. It neglected their existing senses of touch and smell, in which previous writers had suggested legitimate techniques for successful deafblind education.

However, this changed with the education of Laura Bridgman at the Perkins School for the Blind in the United States of America.[10] Founded in 1829, the school was established as the primary residence for the education of blind pupils in Watertown, Massachusetts. One of the founders of the school was the abolitionist, Dr. Samuel Howe, who played a fundamental role in the school's continued growth into the main centre for blind education in the United States. Howe, who was also involved with the abolition movement, sought out expertise from other schools focused on disability education. He visited the American Asylum for the Deaf (now the American School for the Deaf) in Hartford, Connecticut, to observe teaching techniques. While he was there, he observed and met Julia Brace, a deafblind woman living amongst other deaf students.[11]

Despite being deafblind, she had been enrolled into the school due to the lack of facilities for individuals with auditory and visual disabilities. Before her enrolment, Brace had developed her own form of tactile gesticulation with her family. This tactile gesticulation, also known as naturalised or organic gestures, was a common amongst deaf and deafblind individuals who lacked the knowledge of formalised sign language, such as American Sign Language. Naturalised gestures formed through the individual's familiarity with their

[8] Ibid.
[9] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Philadelphia, 1771), p. 304 cited in Freeberg, 'An Object of Peculiar Interest', p. 195.
[10] For further information on Laura Bridgman's education, see also Elisabeth Gitter, *The Imprisoned Guest: Samuel Howe and Laura Bridgman, the Original Deaf-Blind Girl* (Farrar and Strauss, New York, 2001); Ernest Freeberg, ''More Important than a Rabble of Common Kings': Dr. Howe's Education of Laura Bridgman', *History of Education Quarterly*, 34, 3 (1994), pp. 305-327; Freeberg, 'An Object of Peculiar Interest', pp. 191-205.
[11] Freeberg, 'An Object of Peculiar Interest', p. 195.

immediate environment, specifically their examination of the objects within the environment. The person's relationship with such objects and the environment defined the types of gestures used and created. Consequently, naturalised gestures are almost entirely unique to each individual child. Most significantly, Brace's acquisition of the naturalised gestures punctured the previously asserted claims that deafblind education was an impossibility. If Brace could learn her own, unique forms of tactile gestures, Howe speculated that other deafblind individuals could be taught ASL. However, Brace's transition from her naturalised gestures to a more formalised language system proved to be unsuccessful. The teachers at the school only managed to expand upon her knowledge of naturalised gestures and attempts to teach her ASL and even the English language did not come to fruition.[12]

It was in 1837 in which Howe met Laura Bridgman. She had survived a bout of scarlet fever which had removed her sight, hearing, taste and smell, leaving her with touch as her only remaining sensory organ. She lived with her parents, who realised that she needed specialised assistance. They were 'finding it harder to control their child, relying increasingly on physical force to check her rebelliousness.'[13] Hence, they placed her education into Howe's hands at the Perkins School.

[12] Freeberg, 'Dr. Howe's Education of Laura Bridgman', p. 308; Freeberg, 'An Object of Peculiar Interest', p. 194.
[13] Ibid.

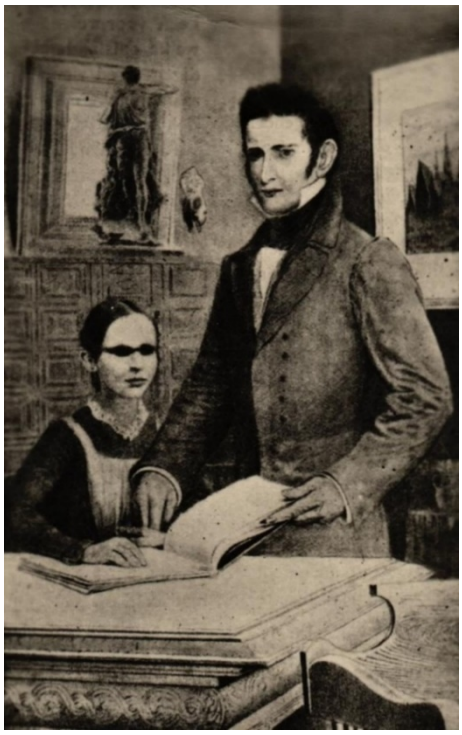

Figure 1.

Laura Bridgman and Samuel Howe, c. 1841[14]

Drawing upon Denis Diderot's treatise titled the 'The Letter on the Blind', Howe adopted the need for tactile experiences during the teaching process.[15] The learning process began through the attachment of notes with raised Braille cells onto different objects; eventually she would realise that the objects were denoted with a different pattern of Braille cells.[16] This process, which took several months of repeated exercises, came into fruition when Bridgman learnt to distinguish between the names of the objects. Once Bridgman had established the connection between language and her surrounding environment, she advanced to the formation of the words through letter assortments.[17] Within five years at the Institute, her knowledge of the

[14] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 8, d. 192, l. 22.
[15] Denis Diderot, *Diderot's Early Philosophical Works*, trans. and ed. Margaret Jourdain, (The Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago, 1916), p. 78.
[16] Braille itself had been developed by its creator, the French teenager Louis Braille, whom devised his own form of alphabet to aid his own blindness. This eventually became the modern form of binary writing and was eventually taught to the visually impaired, blind and deafblind across the world.
[17] Freeberg, 'Dr. Howe's Education of Laura Bridgman', p. 309.

Braille, known as the Braille script, had blossomed, she had learnt American Sign Language and had begun to write, a process in which 'her pencil [was] guided by specially grooved paper.'[18] In addition, Howe utilised pedagogical approaches which encouraged Bridgman to experience the world through touch.

> '[He] filled his cabinets with many wooden models and specimens of flora and fauna, feeding his students' tactile understanding of the natural world. Likewise, he devised and printed raised maps, mathematical diagrams and musical scores to reveal to her a world that was not only dominated by sights and noises but defined by its tactile feel.'[19]

She had successfully become the first deafblind child educated in the use of a tactile-based script, sign language and the dactyl alphabet. Unlike Julia Brace, Bridgman became extremely well-read and pursued literary projects.

While Bridgman did become a literate, engaged individual through her education under Howe, there were questions about her true independence at the Perkins School. Even though she had received a formal education in Braille and sign language, Bridgman remained largely dependent on the resources at the Perkins School. She supplemented her living with sewing but did not achieve a level of independence that was envisioned by later pedagogues, such as Sokolianskii. While Howe's aims were only to show that deafblind individuals could be educated, much was revealed of Howe's views of Bridgman's status at the school, where 'Howe compared her skills at that point to those of "a very knowing dog" who was eager to perform tricks only in order to win her teacher's approval.'[20] Despite realising that deafblind children were capable of education, Howe perpetuated beliefs that such children were not to be considered fully human. In nineteenth-century America, it seemed that the difference between a human and a 'knowing dog' was the independence displayed by the deafblind child. Such independence was established through a specialised learning curriculum. The views expressed by Howe and others in nineteenth-century America were comparable to the attitudes stated within Soviet

[18] Ibid., p. 310.
[19] Ibid., p. 312.
[20] Freeberg, 'An Object of Peculiar Interest', p. 197.

surdotiflopedagogika. Within both nineteenth-century American and early Soviet deafblind education, the children deemed to be not fully human and only through a 'humanising' process (accessible education in this case) would they achieve the level of humanity acceptable for the rest of the society.

While Howe did not overtly refer to his education framework as a 'humanising' process, it was lauded by social commentators, journalists and even famous authors, including Charles Dickens. He visited the Perkins School to meet Bridgman and Howe in 1842. His recounting of the meeting in his travelogue *American Notes*, pushed Bridgman, Howe and the Perkins School into international fame and recognition.[21] More than forty years later, it was through this book that Kate Adams, the mother of Helen Keller, contacted the Perkins School to admit her daughter as a student in 1886. Helen Keller, perhaps the most well-known deafblind person to the present day, began her education at the Perkins School in 1888 under the tutelage of Ann Sullivan, a teacher with existing vision loss, who worked at the school.[22] Her initial education followed Bridgman's, with the first step of the method focusing on language acquisition. She was shown objects which had attached Braille embossed labels, which helped her learn Braille script. In addition, Keller learnt American Sign Language, the dactyl alphabet and verbal speech, which led to her enrolment into mainstream schooling at the Cambridge School for Young Ladies.

By 1904, she became the first deafblind person to receive a university degree. Keller's post-education livelihood contrasted with Bridgman's. While Keller became an internationally renowned author and speaker on contemporary issues of the period, Bridgman remained at the Perkins School in relative poverty, in which she assisted in the education of other blind and deafblind children. While Keller held an exalted status as the most well-known deafblind individual in contemporary society, Bridgman's initial fame from Dickens' writings faded and she remained an isolated, frustrated figure at the Perkins School. Nevertheless, the educational methods of Howe and Sullivan,

[21] For further information on Dickens' meeting with Bridgman, see also Charles Dickens, *American Notes* [first published in 1842] (Cambridge Schools Project, Cambridge, 2008), p. 32.
[22] Keller, *Story of My Life*, pp. 296-384.

cultivated at the Perkins School, were validated through the education of other deafblind children in the United States.

Keller's adulated status in international society attracted both praise and criticism. While she was heralded as an example of the wonders of science, she received scorn from an equally well-known Russian writer, Maksim Gorkii. He criticised her not from his position as a writer, but as a Marxist revolutionary, disparaging her religious affiliations and her exploitative practices. He recounted his meeting with Keller to Sokolianskii on 25th August 1933:

> 'I saw Helen Keller in 1906 in New York, it was none other than William James, in Harvard, Boston, who advised me to 'acquaint myself' with this 'wonder'… Helen Keller made an unpleasant, even grim impression on me: she appeared to be an affected, very temperamental and extremely spoilt girl. She talked about God and how God disapproved of the revolution. In general, she reminded me of those 'blessed' and 'holy' nuns and 'pilgrim women' whom I have seen in our villages and convents. She was surrounded by a collection of old maids, who flustered around her as if she was some kind of parrot, whom they had trained to talk… It was obvious, that Keller was a business operation for her retinue.'[23]

Much of the criticism aimed at Keller focused on her education. While Howe had introduced a strictly non-religious emphasis into Bridgman's education, Keller's teachers, including Sullivan, fully incorporated religion into the teaching, much to Gorkii's obvious annoyance. In addition, his observation of Keller's personality traits was also a subject for further criticism by Sokolianskii himself (which shall be discussed in further detail later in the chapter). Despite Gorkii's tepid opinion of Keller, the meeting was fundamental to his own interest in deafblind education, which led to his growing sponsorship of Sokolianskii's research and his patronage of the Khar'kov orphanage for the deafblind.

In tandem with advances in Western special education, similar forays were made in Imperial Russia during the 1880s to 1900s. However, in previous

[23] Letter, Maksim A. Gorkii to Ivan A. Sokolianskii (25th August 1933) cited in Aleksandr I. Meshcheriakov, *Awakening to Life* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979), p. 37.

decades, the experiences of children with disabilities had been wrought with stigma. They were perceived to be amongst the 'defective' elements of society, in which they were grouped together with criminals, waifs, hooligans and other perceived 'undesirables' of Russian society.[24] Such attitudes were echoed by Vladimir Lenin himself, who formed a list of individuals unfit for labour in 1898, 'people undergoing correction, Mahommedan girls, non-Russians belonging… to small nationalities, members of fanatical sects, the blind, deaf and dumb, chronic inebriates, the diseased, and the criminals.'[25] If labour was a legitimising mechanism for Soviet citizens, especially those who were considered 'deviant' members of society, then Lenin's views on the capabilities of such individuals raises concern about the validity of work as a legitimising process. While the approach was widely adopted in the 1920s as part of a reformative attitude, it is nevertheless intriguing that the very leader of socialist project deemed that such people with sensory disabilities were incapable for labour. In addition, 'defective' members of society were seen not simply as suffering from a temporary ailment, but from a permanent, hereditary condition. The concept was espoused within the theory of degeneration (*vyrozhdenie*), a dubious amalgamation of theories of Lamarckian inheritance and fears of Western civilizational decline, which placed the blame on 'tainted' members of society, which included those with disabilities.[26] It was debated whether such individuals were permanently 'defective' or whether they could be reformed.

It was through the field of defectology, in its tsarist incarnation, that some of the Russian medical profession believed that children with 'defects' could be transformed. This led to the formation of educational-medical facilities which catered for the upbringing of children with physical and intellectual

[24] Liya Kalinnikova and Sven Trygged, 'A Retrospective on Care and Denial of Children with Disabilities in Russia', *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 16, 3 (2014), p. 234.

[25] Vladimir I. Lenin, 'Gems of Narodnik Project-Mongering', *Collected Works*, trans. George Hanna (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972), pp. 476-477.

[26] Degeneration theory had been discussed in Russia since the 1860s, in which Vasilii M. Florinskii, a professor in obstretrics, was the first person to discuss the theory within academic circles. For further information on degeneration theory, see also Bénédict Morel, *Traité des dégénérescences physiques intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives* (Imperial Academic Library of Medicine, London, 1857); Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848–1919* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989); David Horn, *The Criminal Body: Lombroso and the Anatomy of Deviance* (Routledge, New York, 2003); Beer, *Renovating Russia*, pp. 39-43.

disabilities. The institutions were administrated within different bodies; either as small private facilities, managed by the medical professionals themselves or as part of a wider body of institutions underneath religious-philanthropic organisations.[27] The smaller institutions focused on the specific desires of the medical-educators but often lacked the funding needed for truly transformative change. In contrast, the religious-philanthropic foundations received substantial donations from the Russian nobility and middle-class, which led to a higher intake of pupils. Such patronage tapped into the humanistic tradition established in the Enlightenment and a uniquely Russian spirit of compassionate philanthropy, known as *metsenatstvo*.[28]

One of the first private establishments built was the Medico-Educational Establishment (*vrachebno-vospitatel'noie uchrezhdenie*) in 1882 in St. Petersburg.[29] The institution, run by the doctor-educator Ivan Maliarevskii, educated children with perceived 'defects', a category which included juvenile offenders and those with physical, intellectual or learning disabilities. He adopted a similar approach shown by juvenile correctional facilities (an approach utilised by Makarenko and others in the early Soviet period), which utilised labour to transform perceived 'defective' children into socially productive citizens.[30] Labour was the humanising mechanism, where the individual's defect would be 'cured' through proving their usefulness to modern society through the participation in labour.

Another similar institution was the School Sanatorium for Defective Children established in 1908 in Moscow. Vsevolod Kashchenko, the school's founder, defined 'defect' not within a degenerative sense with its links to heredity, but by the 'harmful influence of the children's homes and schools.'[31] Most significantly, Kashchenko viewed disabled, or defective, individuals as humans capable of reformative change. In contrast to Maliarevskii's labour-

[27] Andy Byford, '*Lechebnaia Pedagogika*: The Concept and Practice of Therapy in Russian Defectology, c. 1880-1936', *Medical History*, 62, 1 (2018), pp. 72-73.
[28] For further information on charitable institutions in the late tsarist period, see also Adele Lindenmeyr, *Poverty is not a Vice: Charity, Society, and the State in Imperial Russia* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996); Phillips, 'No Invalids in the USSR', p. 5.
[29] Byford, '*Lechebnaia Pedagogika*', p. 76; Kalinnikova, 'Care and Denial of Children', p. 232.
[30] Byford, '*Lechebnaia Pedagogika*', p. 76.
[31] Ibid., p. 79.

intensive method, Kashchenko adopted a strict emphasis on 're-upbringing' (*perevospitanie*), which included a melody of physical exercises, mandatory silence while eating meals, strict dietary requirements and daily routine.[32] While aspects of Kashchenko's method may have proved to be dubious, it was still an attempt to provide children with disabilities with the skills needed to integrate into wider Soviet society. Kashchenko's attempts at integrating 'defective' children led to the development of defectology as a unique Russian (and eventually Soviet) discipline, which focused on the education and upbringing of children with disabilities.[33]

Deafblind education took place for the first time at one of the publicly funded institutions in St. Petersburg during the late tsarist period. The institution, an educational shelter specifically for children with disabilities, existed within the charity, 'The Shelter of the Brotherhood in the Name of the Queen of Heaven' (*Priiut Bratstva vo imia Tsaritsy Nebesnoi*).[34] The first shelter was established in St. Petersburg in 1894, before other such institutions were established in Kursk (1902), Moscow (1905) and Viatka (1907). The St. Petersburg Shelter was run by the pedagogue-defectologist Ekaterina Gracheva and she focused initially on the upbringing of both children with physical or intellectual disabilities. The aim of her educational method was to provide a 'holistic view of children's needs' and the 'training of children in literacy and productive labour, [and the] schooling of religious rites.'[35]

In the first year of the shelter, they took in only two students with physical and intellectual disabilities (this would later increase to 134 by 1907). One of the deafblind students admitted into the Shelter was a seven-year old girl named Shura. Gracheva described her first encounter with her on 8th October 1894:

> 'It was about 2 o'clock when Shura was brought [to the shelter] … what a wretched creature! Her hands were

[32] Ibid., p. 80.
[33] Kashchenko is seen as one of the founders of the discipline. For further information, see also William O. McCagg, 'The Origins of Defectology', in *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory and Practice* eds., William O. McCagg and Lewis Siegelbaum (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1989), pp. 40-42, 49-51.
[34] Kalinnikova, 'Care and Denial of Children', p. 232.
[35] Ibid., pp. 232, 234.

> broken; her legs shrivelled. She is blind, deaf and dumb. While the nurse filled the bath, I tried to feed Shura with milk, but it ran out of her mouth. Shura's mother took out a… rather dirty cloth, chewed on some black bread, wrapped it on the cloth and put it in her mouth. We were advised to buy a horn – for a seven-year old girl. While we bathed Shura, she moaned piteously, but when she was put into a warm bed and covered with a cotton blanket and a white coverlet and I gave her the horn with the warm milk, she soon fell asleep. Her mother bowed down to her feet, then sat down beside the bed and wept; the first time I saw true tears of joy.'[36]

Gracheva understood that children with multi-sensory disabilities needed unique pedagogical assistance if they were to be fully educated. For nearly ten years, the shelter remained the sole institution which catered for the specific requirements of the deafblind children. While only a few children with multi-sensory disabilities were admitted into the school, Gracheva utilised her experience with children with intellectual disabilities to establish educational systems. She also enlisted the help of other educationalists and pedagogues to assist with the process, who 'found it convenient to base part-time clinics at such shelters.'[37] This included the assistance of the neurologist Vladimir Bekhterev (founder of the St. Petersburg Psycho-Neurological Institute), the psychiatrist Viktor Opisov and the educationalist Mikhail Bogdanov-Berezovskii.[38]

Bogdanov-Berezovskii's role in deafblind pedagogy was not only educational. He penned an article on 24th December 1908 in the Russian newspaper *New Times* (*Novoe vremia*). The article, titled 'The Soul in Prison' (*Dusha v temnitse*), described the lives of deafblind children at the St. Petersburg shelter.[39] Not only did the article explain to an unknowing public the multi-

[36] Ekaterina Gracheva, '"Dnevnik: 36 let sredi bol'nykh detei" cited in Khananii S. Zamskii, *Umstvenno otstalye deti: Istoriia ikh izucheniia, vospitaniia i obucheniia s drevnikh vremen do srediny XX veka* (Moscow: NPO Obrazovanie, 1995), p. 357.
[37] Byford, ''*Lechebnaia Pedagogika*', p. 73.
[38] Andy Byford, 'V. M. Bekhterev in Russian Child Science, 1900s-1920s: "Objective Psychology"/"Reflexology" as a Scientific Movement"', *The History of Behavioural Sciences*, 52, 2 (2016), pp. 99-101; Tat'iana A. Basilova, *Istoriia Obucheniia Slepoglukhikh detei v Rossii* (Eksmo, Moskva, 2015), p. 22.
[39] Tat'iana A. Basilova, '100 let obucheniia slepoglukhikh v Rossii: nekotoryie i perspektivi', *Drugoie detstvo*, 1 (2009), pp. 227-228.

disability aspect of deafblind children, it was a deliberate ploy to elicit philanthropic handouts from the Russian aristocracy. Not only did the St. Petersburg shelter receive a large influx of donations from wealthy members of tsarist society, there were calls for the establishment of a single charity dedicated to care, upbringing and education of deafblind children and adults. Such an organisation, titled 'The Charitable Organization for the Deafblind' (*Obshchestvo popecheniia o slepoglukhonemykh*), was formed on 15th May 1909, with Bogdanov-Berezovskii as the deputy-chairman.[40] Initially, unlike the 'Queen of Heaven' network of shelters, the 'Charitable Organization for the Deafblind' did not establish its own medical-educational institutions. Instead, it provided the funds to the 'Queen of Heaven' foundation for the education of deafblind children within the St. Petersburg Shelter.

However, by August 1910, they had established the Deafblind Care Home in St. Petersburg. The charity enlisted the aid of Mariia Zakharova, a pedagogue, to run the kindergarten section for the deafblind in the care home.[41] She was tasked with the education of the seven pupils with deafblindness within the home.[42] The aims of the school matched the reformative ethos of similar institutions at the time and foreshadowed Bolshevik attempts a decade later. It stated that 'a) the Society opens schools, care homes, and havens for deafblind minors, and provides benefits to families that have deafblind children. b) The Society sets up workshops, cheap apartments, hospices, and the like for adult deafblind people that can work.'[43] Apart from the use of 'oral method' (which will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter), little information remains on the actual educational techniques or methods utilised by Zakharova. Despite the public and pedagogical desire to create a centre for deafblind education, the entry of the Russian Empire into the First World War proved disastrous to such efforts. The military draft drained away many pedagogues, educational assistants and orderlies to the frontlines, while the donations which had supported the institution were used to support the war effort. While the

[40] Ibid., p. 228.
[41] Irina Sandomirskaia, 'Skin to Skin: Language in the Soviet Education of Deaf-Blind Children, the 1920s and 1930s', *Studies in Eastern European Thought*, 60, 4 (2008), p. 323.
[42] Tat'iana A. Basilova, '100 let obucheniia slepoglukhikh v Rossii: nekotoryie i perspektivi', *Drugoie detstvo*, 1 (2009), p. 228.
[43] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 22.

Deafblind Care Home continued to exist until October 1917, it was closed after the new Bolshevik government put into place a state-wide ban on charities.[44]

Ivan Sokolianskii

The origins of the methodology behind Russian attempts at deafblind education lay within the work conducted within Gracheva's shelter and the society for the care of deafblind children and adults. The culminative pedagogical work of Gracheva, Bogdanov-Berezovskii and Zakharova, formed the basis of deafblind education in the pre-Soviet period and its first incarnation on Russian soil. While their pedagogical advances had been halted due to the chaos caused by the October Revolution and the following Russian Civil War, their work laid the foundation for Sokolianskii's own intervention into the field of *surdotiflopedagogika* in the Soviet period. However, much like the examination of the pre-Soviet pedagogues of deafblind education, it is equally important to understand Sokolianskii's own background, education and personal history to place him within the wider context of disability education. Such experiences led to him becoming the leading pedagogue within the field of *surdotiflopedagogika*.

Ivan Sokolianskii was born on 25th March 1889 into a family of Kuban Cossacks, in the village of Dinskaia in the Krasnodar *krai*.[45] While he had been born in Russia into a Cossack family, he identified with his family's strong Ukrainian roots. It has been suggested that he was deaf in his right ear, but whether this was congenital or acquired is unknown.[46] His first experience with individuals with sensory disabilities was with his nanny, who was deaf. Through her, he learnt basic sign language, which he used in conversations with his nanny and her deaf parents, who lived next door.[47] His experiences with members of

[44] Basilova, '100 let', p. 228; Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 28.
[45] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 1, d. 1, l. 2**.**
[46] Tat'iana A. Basilova, 'O Sokolianskom i yego metodakh obucheniia glukhikh i slepoglukhikh detei, tak interesovavshikh Vygotskogo' *Kul'turno-Istoricheskaia Psikhologiia*, 3 (2008), p. 9.
[47] The term 'Russian Sign Language' was not formally used until 1991, in which the terms used for sign language varied from 'mimed speech' to 'signed mime'. Michael Pursglove, 'The Silent Minority: Deaf People in Russia since 1991' in *The New Russia*, ed., Michael Pursglove (Intellect Books, Oxford, 1995), pp. 57-58.

the deaf community served as a motivation for extended work with people with sensory disabilities.

After his eighteenth birthday, he enrolled at the St. Petersburg Psycho-Neurological Institute from 1908 to 1910. While he studied under Bekhterev, he was offered the opportunity to work with deafblind children at Gracheva's shelter. While it is unclear what specific role he had or whether he worked with the deafblind, we know that he observed the children weaving baskets of bark.[48] It may have influenced his own method, in which children with sensory disabilities could engage in productive labour. The experience at the shelter had a profound effect on him:

> 'his words were filled with the love and warmth of the deaf and blind people. I began to dream of working with deaf and blind people. I imagined myself as a happy husband if my wife was Helen Keller. I kept repeating that I loved these people, and I was horribly offended by the savageness of society and nature.'[49]

Sokolianskii's wish to have a deafblind wife raises questions about his relationship with his deafblind students. With several of his students being young women, Sokolianskii may have enjoyed the position of power over the young women with multiple sensory disabilities. Furthermore, it fit into the relationship between gender and disability. Disability has often been feminised, with disabled individuals being considered dependent and helpless, while the able-bodied individual is associated with masculinity, often associated with autonomy and power.[50] While Sokolianskii's comments were expressed at the very beginning of his career in deafblind education, his desire for a deafblind wife may have linked in a need to be in a position of authority over young, female students with deafblindness.

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[48] Tat'iana A. Basilova, 'Izuchenie sostava uchrezhdenii dlia slepoglukhikh detei', *Differentsirovannyi podkhod pri obuchenii i vospitanii slepoglukhikh detei* (APN SSSR, 1989), p. 7.

[49] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 7.

[50] Russell Shuttleworth, Nikki Wedgewood and Nathan J. Wilson, 'The Dilemma of Disabled Masculinity', *Men and Masculinities*, 15, 2 (2012), p. 174.

After the completion of his studies at the Institute in St. Petersburg, he was invited to work at a school for deaf education in the city Alexandrovsk of the Ekaterinoslavskaia *gubernii* in 1910. The school was run by its patron, Feliks Movchanovskii, who, with its primary pedagogue Nikita Lagovskii, turned it into an internationally renowned institution known for its progressive attitudes towards deaf education.[51] He reserved high praise for the Alexandrovsk school for the deaf, in which he stated that 'I started working in this school in its period of prosperity, when it was not only the Russian pearl of deaf education, but also an internationally renowned school… in this school, there were floral sundials in the flower gardens, there were Moorish lawns in school… All this impressed the foreigners.'[52] The school itself adopted a labour-intensive work curriculum, which emphasized the teaching of skills in agricultural and workshop-based settings. The children held partial responsibility over the maintenance of 120 hectares of farms run by the school itself. The school had its own 'farm machinery factory and typography' in which it inducted the children into specialised training courses to operate specialised machinery.[53]

Despite only being twenty-one years of age, Sokolianskii managed to procure placements at several prestigious conferences and visits which revolved around disability pedagogy. His successful work at the Alexandrovsk school encouraged Movchanovskii to pay for his trip to Moscow to attend the All-Russian Congress for the Education of Deaf and Mute People in late 1910.[54] He presented a paper on deaf education and Ukrainian vernacular, in which he insisted on the importance of teaching deaf students their native tongue.[55] His conclusions were drawn from his own expressions of Ukrainian identity and language. Such beliefs eventually drew him into conflict with tsarist (and eventually Soviet) attempts to limit expressions of Ukrainian nationalism and self-determination.

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[51] Alexandrovsk was the name of the city until it changed in 1921 to Zaporozh'e.
[52] Letter, Ivan A. Sokolianskii to Bronislav B. Smirnov (28th August 1960) cited in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 69.
[53] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 69.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ivan A. Sokolianskii, 'Ob obuchenii ukrainskikh glukhonemykh detei rodnomu iazyku'. *Trudy Vserossiiskogo s"ezda deiatelei po vospitaniiu, obucheniiu i prizreniiu glukhonemykh* (Sostoiavshegosia v Moskve s 27 do 31 dekabria 1910 g. M., 1911), ll. 303-306 cited in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 69.

In the early 1910s, he defined his relationship with his colleagues depending on their opinion on Ukrainian sovereignty, explaining that he asked 'did they accept the right of Ukrainians to be called a nation, did they accept their right for their own language, etc. If they did not accept it, then these people were idiots, fools and bastards to me.'[56] He even reserved such scorn for Bogdanov-Berezovskii, a close associate of the St. Petersburg shelter, in which he stated that he 'was a bright man, but mean and cold-hearted… he did not like Ukrainians and did not recognise them as a separate nation.'[57] While his quest for self-determination for Ukraine drew him many friends amongst the Ukrainian intelligentsia during his work in Khar'kov, it was used repeatedly by the Soviet authorities as a reason for his arrests and imprisonment throughout the 1930s.

Despite his own nationalist views of Ukrainian statehood and language, this did not impact upon his wish to enter the field of disability education. The culmination of his upbringing amongst deaf individuals, his educational training at the St. Petersburg Psycho-Neurological Institute and his placement at the Aleksandrovsk school helped establish Sokolianskii's desire to help individuals with disabilities. He stated that 'I began to develop an interest in compensating for the lost senses first in the form of an improvement of the methods of teaching and upbringing [of disabled children].'[58] Sokolianskii's immersion into the field of disability education continued throughout the early 1910s. In 1913, he travelled across northern Europe with other pedagogues, psychologists and educationalists to visit European institutions for the education of deafblind children. This included the well-known state funded orphanage for deafblind children in Potsdam in Germany, in which Sokolianskii met the deafblind women, Gertrude Schutlz. She had struggled to become literate during her education in the 1880s and 1890s, and it was only in 1903 in which she was transferred to the newly established school under the remit of Pastor Gustav Reimann.[59] Not only did she learn the dactyl alphabet through similar methods utilised during Bridgman and Keller's education, she 'learnt to articulate all

[56] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 5.
[57] Ibid.
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[59] For further information on the school, see also Gustav Riemann, *Taubstumm und Blind zugleich* (Verlag von Wiegandt and Grieben, Berlin, 1895).

speech sounds with the help of the vibration method, and, although her diction remained monotonous, she was able to keep up a conversation.'[60]

Sokolianskii continued to tap into the vast network of European pedagogy, which had adopted its own approaches towards deafblind education. This included the religious education of Marie Huertin, a deafblind girl, at the La Sagesse Nunnery at Larnay during the 1890s.[61] The research trip was understood as a means of examining the then current Western approaches to deafblind education, to see if such attempts could be applied in Russian cases. Consequently, Sokolianskii returned from the trip with his own opinions about the state of tsarist deafblind education and how it could be improved.

The beginning of the First World War prevented his return into the discipline. While Sokolianskii avoided the initial enrolment because of his deafness, he was still drafted into the army in 1915. He served in a series of military convoys which travelled through the Caucasus, Turkey and Afghanistan during the war. According to Basilova, he established a rapport with the deaf individuals amongst the local populations, who served as guides for the convoy.[62] While he continued to serve in the army during the February Revolution, he was elected to revolutionary military commissions immediately after the October Revolution in 1917.[63] His election to the Regional Council of Workers and Peasant Deputies in Tbilisi in 1918 led to his forced exile from the army and he was placed under surveillance in Alexandrovsk.[64]

It was only after he moved to Uman, which was taken by the Red Army in 1919, that he was free to pursue his educational pursuits. While he may have been relatively young, Sokolianskii's experience in the field and socialist leanings placed him in a valued position within the early Bolshevik attempts at rehabilitative education. Byford explained that 'the Bolsheviks were keen to mobilise all expertise available to them, including, prominently, that of medical professionals already working in this domain.'[65] With the *besprizorniki* situation

[60] Anita D. Utzinger, *A Contribution to the History of the Education of Deaf-Blind Children in Europe* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Boston University, 1957), p. 49.
[61] Ibid., p. 59.
[62] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 70.
[63] Ibid., p. 71.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Byford, ''*Lechebnaia Pedagogika*', p. 77.

reaching its peak in the early 1920s, they needed experienced pedagogues to combat the crisis. While he remained a pedagogue in sensory disabilities, he gained a plethora of experience within the Ukrainian People's Commissariat of Education (hereafter Narkomos) within the newly formed Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (*Ukrainskaia Sovetskaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika*, hereafter UkrSSR).[66]

After the city of Uman was taken by the Red Army in 1919, Sokolianskii helped establish a school for deaf children within the city. He was also appointed the head of the Department of Education in the city until September 1920.[67] He was made the head of all higher education institutions in the city of Kiev and became a member of the Provincial Education Body (Gubnarobraz). His joined the Bolshevik party in 1920, which came in tandem with his rise through the state apparatus. His specialist work with children with sensory disabilities continued to reap institutional positions within the Bolshevik educational hierarchy.

In July 1920, he was elected *in absentia* to the All-Russian Congress for the Struggle against Child Defectiveness, Delinquency and Homelessness (*Vserossiiskii s''ezd po bor'be s detskoi defektivnost'iu*, *prestupnost'iu i besprizornost'iu*) for his 'outstanding specialism in physical defectiveness'.[68] It went in tandem with his newly elected position to the All-Russian Congress on Children's Defectiveness from Ukraine (*Tsentral'noe biuro vserossiiskikh s"ezdov po detskoi defektivnosti ot Ukrainy*).[69] He was tasked, like many other Soviet pedagogues at the time, with dealing with the *besprizorniki* crisis. He worked extensively with Makarenko (who became a close friend and supporter of his methods) predominantly in Khar'kov, which had become the new capital of the UkrSSR. Sokolianskii assisted Makarenko's work with the Cheka to address the

[66] Matthew D. Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923-1934* (University of Toronto Press, London, 2014), p. 4.
[67] Basilova, 'O Sokolianskom', p. 10.
[68] The congress had been formed under the leadership of Anatolii Lunacharskii, the head of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (hereafter Narkompros), Feliks Dzerzhinskii, the director of the All-Russia Extraordinary Commission (*Vserossiiskaia Chrezvychainaia Komissaia*, hereafter Cheka) and Gorkii. *Detskaia defekivnost' prestupnost', i besprizornost'. Po materialam 1-go vserossiiskogo s"ezda 1920 g.* (Gosizdat, Moskva, 1920) cited in McCagg, 'Origins of Defectology', p. 41; Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 72.
[69] Basilova, 'O Sokolianskom', p. 10.

besprizorniki crisis between 1921-1922, in which they worked to establish the state-funded Poltava Colony for delinquent and homeless children.[70]

In addition to his roles with Narkomos, Sokolianskii was elected as a member of the Central Committee of the Komsomol in Ukraine in 1923.[71] His attendance at Komsomol events had a striking impact on the formation of his eventual methodology on deafblind education; he stated that

> 'infant emotions modernity and organization on the base of these emotions of positive knowledge must be a starting point for the construction of the methodology. Infant emotion is the beginning of "knowledge", the source of the "interest", "activity". Through the formation of infant emotion, it is necessary to move towards inculcation of knowledge.'[72]

In this context, Sokolianskii highlighted the importance of the child's sentiments towards their environment, which formed the basis for their involvement, or interest, in activities within that environment. This was expressed through the child's fulfilment of their basic needs. For example, if a child cries due to being hungry, the child learns to react to the situation if their desires are satiated. Once the child understood that their basic needs could be satisfied, it formed the basis for the child's induction into the educational process. Basilova explained that 'he saw infant emotionality as a fundamental component in the educational process of children.'[73]

In addition to his growing list of roles within the regime's educational apparatus and the Komsomol, he continued to rise within traditional academic channels. He was appointed the Professor of Defectology at the Khar'kov Institute of People's Education (*Khar'kovskii Institut Narodnogo Obrazovaniia*,

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[70] The colony was named after Gorkii in 1923 and became the basis for Makarenko's book, *The Road to Life*. Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 73.

[71] For further information on the activities of the Komsomol, see also Matthias Neumann, *The Communist Youth League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1917-1932* (Routledge, London, 2011).

[72] Ivan A. Sokolianskii, *Organizatsiia pedagogicheskogo protsessa po kompleksnoi sisteme, metodika i metodicheskaia tekhnika* (Igra, skazka i romantika v rabote s det'mi, Khar'kov, 1927), p. 51 cited in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 74.

[73] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 74.

hereafter Khar'kov Institute) in 1923.[74] In his newly appointed role, he was instrumental in efforts to reform the faculty of defectology at the Khar'kov Institute. Through the establishment of Medical Pedagogical Cabinets (*Vrachebho-pedagogicheskie-kabinety*), he organised the department into separate sections; pedagogy and research.[75] While he headed the pedagogy and reflexology section, his colleague, V. Protopopov oversaw research. Within the pedagogy and reflexology department, he split it into separate sections which focused on a specific disability; blindness, deafness, intellectual disabilities and deafblindness. It also included boarding facilities for homeless children, orphans and those away from home. Sokolianskii's reorganization of the Khar'kov Institute's department for children with disabilities received both support and funding from the Ukrainian Commissariat of Education.[76] The department for deafblind education within the Khar'kov Institute emerged as the primary location for *surdotiflopedagogika* in the Soviet Union. It was the start of a new era of Soviet deafblind pedagogy; where the first generation of Soviet deafblind children would be educated under Sokolianskii's tutelage within the framework of the *ochelovechenie* method.

The *Ochelovechenie* Method

The key motivations for Sokolianskii's interest in deafblind education remained his ironclad sense of equality. His immersion within the field of deaf and deafblind education, his interactions with individuals with sensory disabilities and his own political beliefs led him to conclude that

> 'there are no special brains… or geniuses or talented people. There are normal brains, which means that every one of us has this 'genius' brain, every mediocre person has the same kind of brain capable of genius creations.'[77]

To Sokolianskii, it was the societal conditions, not the individual, which impacted on their ability to utilise their mind. He adopted the Vygotskian social model as

[74] Ibid., p. 72.
[75] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 2, d. 12, ll. 2-6.
[76] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 74.
[77] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 56.

the basis for his method. He explained that 'give me the brain of a normal, ordinary man and define the perfect conditions, I would make him a genius.'[78] If societal conditions were changed, then the child would no longer be considered disabled.

Within such thinking, he twinned the impact of societal conditions on disability with the Bolshevik attempts to form a new society. Science would be the guiding hand of the revolution, to be practised free of the archaic practices of the tsarist era. No longer inhibited, it would now be unleashed on society to cure its ills, reshape its citizens and overcome nature itself. In one of Sokolianskii's written documents, he discusses the impact of various disciplines of physiology and psychology on the deafblind and criticizes the specific forces which have held back such disciplines. In doing so, he launched an attack on nature itself, personifying nature as 'not a rational mother'.[79] He continued his criticism, stating that '[nature] is a relentless, pointless prostitute and long ago ceased to be a mother for humanity.'[80] Sokolianskii believed that nature was working against the best interests of socialist society, specifically the deafblind child. He criticized nature's targeting of children who acquired hearing or vision loss through random selection. However, science, through its various disciplines, would provide the means for education. He stated that 'physiology has brought the deafblind child… knowledge.'[81] The conditions of the pre-revolutionary society had proved unsuitable for deafblind children. Such social circumstances only excluded deafblind children, while Soviet society would seek to assimilate individuals with disabilities.

Concurrently, tsarist society, with its veneration of religion, market forces and indentured servitude of the masses, formed precisely the very conditions which disabled such children. Only through successful class struggle would the ideal perfect societal conditions for the disabled child be created, and he stated that

> 'Soviet science, armed with true science of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin… does not and cannot know the obstacles in its

[78] Ibid., l. 59.
[79] Ibid., l. 8.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

> path, penetrating the deepest laws of human society, nature and the human mind, studying these laws and subordinating them to the interests of communist society.'[82]

He identified science as an unstoppable force which would cleanse the world of the vestiges of the old order. The predictability of science would overcome the uncertainty of nature. In this new world, children with disabilities would be able to lead their own independent lives, free of the constrictive barriers of the previous epoch.

Essential to this socialist ethos was labour. Labour, or more specifically the engagement in socially useful work, was the unifying mechanism for the entire Soviet project.[83] Sokolianskii placed the importance of work within Soviet society by stating that 'in a socialist society… the worker is working for society which means he works for himself. His labour is conscious.'[84] In contrast, he pointed out the flaws of the worker in tsarist society, explaining that 'because the exploited worker within capitalist society hates labour, he is averse to labour, labour is pointless for him, his work is robbed, and that is why he is adverse to it.'[85] However, it was not simply physical exertion which made it so fundamental to the utopian drive. It was an example of social humanism (*obshchestvennyi gumanizm*).[86] Individuals would be shaped and moulded by their participation in the workforce as it was hoped that they would become

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[82] Ibid., op. 3.1, d. 31, l. 12.

[83] Within the Soviet Union, the disabled individual was defined by their capability to work. Through the establishment of *Vrachebno-Trudovye Eskpertnye Komissii* (Medical-Labour Expert Commissions, hereafter VTEKs) in 1932, they established a three-tier system for defining disability. Class I was for individuals whom had 'lost all capability for work' and needed daily care, Class II catered for people who had lost some capability but could still participate in the workforce within accessible conditions and Class III was for individuals who were unable to engage in full-time employment because of their existing disabilities but could still pursue part-time or casual work. Most deafblind children were placed within Class I, with a few individuals, depending on the extent of their sensory disabilities, were included in Class II. The three-tier labour-orientated system is still in use in the present-day Russian Federation as the primary classification process for defining disability. Bernice Madison, 'Programs for the Disabled in the USSR', in *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory and Practice*, eds., McCagg and Siegelbaum (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1989), pp. 167-174; Bernice Madison, *Social Welfare in the Soviet Union* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1968), p. 190.

[84] S-FPS, f. op. 3.1, d. 31, l. 15.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid., d. 26, l. 4.

more industrious.[87] More importantly, it was both willingness to engage in labour and the process of labour itself which legitimised the individual. By being willing and able to participate in the process, individuals, including those with disabilities, could aspire to be equal members of the Soviet community. Sokolianskii reiterated that it created 'human dignity for the deafblind. Labour is… the salvation for the deafblind.'[88] Labour would serve as part of the 'humanisation' process for the deafblind.

Sokolianskii's identification of labour, specifically socially productive work, as a socialising tool for the deafblind meant very little if they could not participate in the workforce. A child with sensory disabilities, especially multi-sensory disabilities, struggles to approach work in the same manner as a child without sensory disabilities. Consequently, a deafblind child would find it almost impossible to be educated in the exact same method as a seeing and hearing child. The dual-nature of their sensory disabilities require the use of alternative methods for their education. This involved the use of their existing senses to 'compensate' for their loss of vision and hearing, which was successfully utilised in the tactile-based education of Bridgman, Keller and other deafblind children.

In the formation of his own method for deafblind education, Sokolianskii incorporated and rejected techniques from previous attempts. While Western deafblind education focused predominantly on language, Sokolianskii's aims were much more ambitious. He intended to provide the necessary tools for deafblind children to define their own lives. It was not simply enough for them to learn tactile-based communication methods. He wanted them to become literate, socialised, conscious and most importantly, equal members of Soviet society. In the analysis of his method, this section will utilise not only Sokolianskii's writings, but also the works of his protégé, Aleksandr Meshcheriakov, who continued to apply Sokolianskii's method well after his death. To assess his method, it is necessary to start with the pre-literate stage of the deafblind child, known as the 'initial state'.

[87] For further information on the Soviet attempts to socialise their workforce, see also Jochen Hellbeck, 'Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi, 1931 – 1939' in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed., Shiela Fitzpatrick (Routledge, New York, 2000), pp. 77-116.
[88] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 47.

A deafblind child, before they begin any form of education or pedagogical training, remains within the 'initial state'.[89] For nearly all deafblind children in the initial state, they remain unaware of their surroundings and are reliant on the assistance of others for their subsistence and self-care needs. Augusta Iarmolenko, a Soviet deafblind pedagogue based in Leningrad, explained the initial state in her own blunt terms:

> 'As they appear to the outside observer, [they] are shut out from ordinary life by the absence of aural and visual impressions. Passive and immobile, they would sit on the same spot for hours at a stretch, sometimes even in the same pose. They do not use the faculty of touch to investigate spatial relationships or to familiarise themselves with new objects: even the process of eating, dressing, and undressing and the satisfaction of their most basic psychological needs are only carried out after external stimulus, without which the processes concerned might be postponed in time until an extreme degree of need be reached, which in its turn would produce an outbreak of fury. They do not manifest even the most elementary urge for contact with other people.'[90]

During this 'state', the child has minimal spatial knowledge, is largely reluctant to explore unknown environments and remains at the 'lowest stage of [their] educational development.'[91] They exist within what is defined as an 'internal world' of their own.[92] Extended periods within their 'internal world' meant that the pre-literate deafblind child experienced a passiveness which inhibited their

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[89] David Bakhurst and Carol Padden, 'The Meshcheryakov Experiment: Soviet Work on the Education of Blind-Deaf Children', *Learning and Instruction*, 1 (1991), p. 203; Ivan A. Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie slepoglukhonemykh detei', *Defektologiia*, 2 (1989), pp. 4, 12; S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 118, ll. 87-88.

[90] Iarmolenko worked within the Department of Psychology at the Oto-Phonetic Institute in Leningrad, in which she focused on the education of deaf and deafblind pupils within Leningrad. Deafblind pupils were only given specialised training away from other children with disabilities at the Institute in 1934. However, the school was closed after the ban on pedology in 1936 and nearly all the deafblind children died during the siege of Leningrad. For further information on her work, see also Avgusta V. Iarmolenko, *Ocherki Psikhologii Slepoglukhonemykh* (Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1967); Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, pp. 45-66.

[91] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 5.

[92] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, p. 3.

desire to act upon their basic needs. They lacked the agency to explore new areas, investigate objects or to interact with other people. Passiveness remained a significant barrier to Sokolianskii's attempts to establish independence within the personality of the deafblind child.

Through the combination of both blindness and deafness, the deafblind child's 'initial state' prevented them from being able to learn at all. If a child had been deafblind from birth, then he or she would have no conception of language, literacy or even the world itself. Meshcheriakov asked 'can such a being be moulded into a real person, be taught to work and to think?'[93] While individuals such as Sokolianskii and Meshcheriakov eventually provided theoretical frameworks in response, previous pedagogues did not have answers to such questions. The seemingly unalterable nature of the 'initial state' led to the belief that deafblind children were incapable of education and thus, incapable of truly being 'human'. Iarmolenko's observation confirmed that the deafblind children in the 'initial state' were unable to function without the help of others. Moreover, they remained passive to such events, including the fulfilment of their basic needs to eat, drink and go to the toilet. Sokolianskii's method of 'humanisation' responded to deafblind children within the 'initial state', where they were isolated, passive and dependent on others.

With the additional needs of the deafblind within the 'initial state', Sokolianskii emphasized that they must be treated differently to all other disabled children. He explained that 'deafblindness, as the intellectual starting point for children, is such an exceptional identity that it cannot be attributed to any other category of the so-called "defective" children.'[94] Sokolianskii perceived deafblindness to be more debilitative than both blindness and deafness. In his comparison of both blindness and deafness, Sokolianskii stated that while vision loss prevented the blind individual from processing visual images of their surroundings, they still could communicate and establish relationships with others through their existing sense of hearing. On the contrary, he believed that 'deafness is measurably more difficult than blindness… the deafmute can visualize a world of images that is exceptionally

[93] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 33.
[94] S-FPS, f. 1, op, 4.1, d. 131, l. 2.

rich and strictly systematic. But he does not have the means of expressing this world and they themselves do not form themselves.'[95] He highlighted the importance of the sensory receptor for hearing as fundamental for the formation for relationships between individuals. Yet, the deafblind child has a combination of both hearing and vision loss which prevents them from such actions.

Unlike deaf or blind individuals, the deafblind child is unable to pursue their own educational development independently. Their multi-sensory disabilities made it practically impossible for them to pursue their education, develop their literacy and engage in socially productive labour in the 'initial state'. The *ochelovechenie* process could not happen independently, but with the assistance of others. They needed assistance from others, most often their family members and pedagogues, to truly teach them the necessary skills required for their development. Deafblind education was a collective endeavour, in which the child required the need of the pedagogue and other individuals for their learning. Despite the need for assistance, the deafblind child was not considered helpless within Sokolianskii's method. While the child needed assistance in their educational development, the 'deafblind is that, being in all aspects normal (in neuro-cerebral terms), it has the potential for full mental development.'[96] It was the known capabilities of the deafblind child which drove Sokolianskii to establish his method for their education. They could pursue independent, industrious lives within Soviet society, but Sokolianskii lamented that the existing societal conditions had perpetuated their exclusion. However, under socialism, the deafblind child would reside in the perfect environmental and societal conditions for their integration. His adoption of a Vygotskian framework of 'transcendence', stipulated that, in the correct conditions, the deafblind child could overcome their sensory disabilities through the training of their existing senses.

Language and literacy acquisition remained the key process within Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* process. It had remained the sole aspect of previously successful attempts at deafblind education, such as the Howe and

[95] Ibid., d. 117, ll. 60-61.
[96] Ibid., op. 3.1, d. 36, l. 3.

Sullivan methods. The formation of language was a 'humanising' mechanism for the deafblind, where the process helped developed both an inner consciousness and a unique personality within the deafblind child. Meshcheriakov explained that 'a child's mind takes shape and develops as a result of its interaction with the world of things and the world of people.'[97] However, it proved more difficult to implement in practice. A deafblind child within the 'initial state' does not understand the role that language plays in their development. They do not even understand that objects or people have names which distinguish between them. Once the deafblind child makes the discovery that objects have names which denote that specific object, it serves a fundamental moment of realisation. Meshcheriakov explained such process:

> 'The image of the blind-deaf child as a dormant mind or "soul"… asleep for want of things to think, leads naturally to a compelling idea of the education of blind-deaf child as a process of the *awakening* of a mind imprisoned in the body. Interestingly, it is language once again that is presented as key to this process. The child's mind awakens at the moment it grasps the idea of *meaning*, that some configuration of physical movements may serve as a sign which *represents*. Since this awakening is precipitated by a single leap on the child's part – the grasping of the idea of *reference* – it is taken to occur not gradually, but in a moment of revelation, a sudden dawning which, as it were, casts light across the whole terrain of the child's mind. Thus, on this 'classical' picture, the crucial moment in the development of the blind-deaf child is the *awakening* of the child's mind through the *revelation of language*.'[98]

Language was a window which allowed the deafblind child to communicate with other people. It allowed them to enter previously inaccessible parts of the world which had remained closed off. Meshcheriakov continued his explanation, stating that the 'blind-deaf individuals' development

[97] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 86.
[98] Ibid., pp. 206-207.

potential crucially depends on the extent to which they can master a spoken language, for only through such a language can they appropriate the legacy of "world culture" and become participating members of society.'[99] Language provided a means of expressing their own thoughts and feelings. It facilitated the growth of ideas, allowing them to convey them and learn from others. Communication would stimulate the child's intellectual development. Their relationship with others would help form their own unique personality. The ability to read and write would accelerate such changes through different mediums, allowing them to advance their learning at their own pace. Writing would establish their own agency, which would be vital to the formation of a unique identity. Through language and literacy, these would be vital steps in the quest to become New Soviet People; engaged, literate and erudite.

While Sokolianskii titled the process *ochelovechenie*, his protégé Meshecheriakov used the term *probuzhdenie*, or 'awakening'.[100] While it is not fully explained why Meshcheriakov used a different term to his predecessor, the term 'humanisation' carries obvious connotations which contain prejudices towards people with disabilities. In representing a viewpoint in line with the medical model of disability, it overtly refers to the rehabilitative lens of disability, where the impairment is to be 'cured' through restorative methods. In the case of Soviet deafblind education, the 'humanisation' method was based upon two assumptions; that deafblind children need to be 'humanised' and that 'humanisation' was a process that would ultimately benefit the deafblind, allowing them to be considered equal citizens in the Soviet Union.

Sokolianskii's used of the term 'humanisation' was primarily because of the detrimental consequences of deafblindness. Unlike other single sensory disabilities, the combination of both hearing and sight loss impacted not on their ability to communicate and form relationships with others, but it affected their intellectual development. If a deafblind child remained within the 'initial state' for too long without any education, training or stimulation, it often led to the development of intellectual disabilities. Meshcheriakov explained that

[99] Ibid., p. 210.
[100] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 131, l. 5; Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 207.

> 'the deafblind child is shut off from normal human contact, and this isolation is the reason for his mental under-development or degradation. This means that the deafblind child is a being as yet bereft of a human mind, while possessing the capacity for full mental development.'[101]

Both Sokolianskii and Meshcheriakov referred to 'humanisation' process from the perspective of a deafblind child within the 'initial state'. Within such a state, the deafblind child is unable to pursue their education or advance their educational development on their own accord. The circumstances of the deafblind child in the 'initial state' were so debilitating that they threatened to leave the deafblind child within a permanent state of isolation. Sokolianskii's 'humanisation' method provided a pathway away from the seclusion of the 'initial state' and towards full integration in the Soviet project.

A key aspect of the Soviet project revolved around the individual's engagement in work, specifically their involvement in 'socially productive labour'. However, Sokolianskii remained frustratingly vague about the process itself. He does not attempt to ascertain what he means by 'productive' or what was considered useful, only that it led to the integration of the deafblind individual into wider Soviet society. It tapped into the same romanticised notions of Soviet labour, which were utilised by Sokolianskii and other defectologists to justify their own theoretical approach. Yet, there was a genuine, utopian streak within Sokolianskii's desire to encourage children to pursue such endeavours. While he would eventually become disenchanted with the regime's attempts at establishing a socialist society, Sokolianskii's desire to provide the necessary tools for deafblind individuals to form their own identity never waned. His use of the labour/legitimacy dichotomy may have underpinned his own method, but he expressed sincere beliefs in the rehabilitative and assimilative ethos of his method.

Sokolianskii understood the importance of language for the formation of personality and identity within the deafblind child as a key part of the 'humanisation' process. It held a significant place within Soviet society. Language served a different purpose. It was a legitimising mechanism for the

[101] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 11.

regime, through its use as a vehicle for a distinct Soviet identity in the 1920s and 1930s. Stephen Kotkin's term, 'Speaking Bolshevik', emphasized the use of a daily vernacular of Soviet terminology which formed and reinforced class identity within the Stalinist period.[102] However, what about the men, women and children who could not participate in this oral display of Soviet inclusivity, or were unable to express their shared values towards a Soviet collective identity through the written word? Would a deafblind child's lack of language exclude him or her from being able to enter a largely audible Soviet society because of their inability to hear, read or write? Anastasia Kayiatos put forth a theory that attempts to address this flawed paradigm.[103] If all citizens needed to learn how to properly use Soviet terms, then all citizens were, to some extent, 'defective'. Since such 'defectiveness' was widespread amongst the collective, it required all such individuals to subsequently change their language, to remodel themselves into Soviet citizens with ascribed identities. People with hearing disabilities, particularly the deafblind, were, like the rest of the populace, considered 'defective' in that respect, but required the necessary clinical and educational assistance to do so.

Sokolianskii identified gesticulation, or sign language, as the most accessible form of communication for the deafblind child's initial education.[104] Sign language has had a varied history, where its uses have been heralded and unfairly lambasted over the past two hundred and fifty years. Sign language was created and utilised by different deaf communities throughout the world, with the unique sign languages becoming the basis for the formation of local and national sign languages. It was during a signed conversation between two deaf sisters in France during the 1760s when the French cleric, Abbé Charles-Michel de l'Épée, sought to create his own version of sign language.[105] Known as the 'methodical sign' language, l'Épée wanted to recreate spoken French through sign language which would be accessible to both the deaf and hearing. His method also became the basis for the manual alphabet. Épée's method for

[102] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995), pp. 198-238.
[103] Anastasia Kayiatos, 'Sooner Speaking than Silent, Sooner Silent than Mute: Soviet Deaf Theatre and Pantomime after Stalin', *Theatre Survey*, 51, 1 (2010), pp. 20-22.
[104] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.1, d. 39, l. 11.
[105] Sophia Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2001), p. 92.

teaching sign language was the foundation for future methods, shown through Bridgman and Keller's experiences in the United States. Deaf individuals were

> 'taught the meaning of conventional signs that designated concrete objects or events by making the sign, at the same time, displaying the referent or a picture… of it. Once the sing was learned by paring with its referent, it was paired with the written French word.'[106]

The success of Épée's 'methodical signs' led to the formation of the first school for the deaf in 1760 and regular demonstrations of the deaf students' versatility with sign language. Such demonstrations drew hundreds of individuals, dozens of the key intellectuals at the time and royal households, which included a visit by Joseph II of Austria in 1774.[107]

During the late eighteenth century, much of Épée's work with the deaf and the formation of sign language took upon similar narratives of rehabilitation and 'humanisation' to Sokolianskii's work in the Soviet Union. Épée identified sign language as a 'humanising' mechanism and to 'form new citizens and Christians' out of deaf individuals.[108] Within the same context of bettering society, he wanted to 'repair the errors of Nature make useful citizens out of those who would otherwise be a burden to society.'[109] Such views were also present in early Soviet thinking during the 1920s. Épée utilised education as a mechanism for further language development. Épée himself saw several benefits from the creation of sign language, with applications not necessarily with those with deafness. Sign language was identified as a potentially universal language. It was even touted by Épée as a replacement for conventional spoken language due to the accessibility, tangibility and preciseness of his 'methodical signs'.[110]

While such ideals were never widely adopted, the use of sign language took upon further importance during the French revolutionary period. Épée's

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[106] Harlan Lane, *The Wild Boy of Aveyron* (George Allen Ltd, London, 1977), p. 80.
[107] Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language*, p. 93.
[108] Sophia Rosenfeld, 'The Political Uses of Sign Language: The Case of the French Revolution', *Sign Language Studies*, 6, 1 (2005), p. 17.
[109] Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language*, p. 95
[110] Ibid., p. 25.

work was continued by his successor, Abbé Roch-Ambroise Cucurron Sicard. In the revolutionary period, Sophia Rosenfeld notes that the role of sign language and the lives of deaf individuals were very much incorporated into French revolutionary culture.[111] Within the spirit of social constructivism, deaf individuals were considered 'new men of the revolution' because of their use of sign language. The use of sign 'disengaged them from the current linguistic and ideological power struggles' that plagued the period and transformed them into 'perfect patriots and republicans'.[112] Such attempts at social engineering, specifically in the creation of a revolutionary class of citizens, were equally valid during the early years of Soviet power.

Épée's 'methodical signs' method became the basis for deaf education not only in France, but for Western deaf education throughout the late-eighteenth and up to the mid-to-late-nineteenth century. His methods were also adopted in Russian schools during this same period. This period has been characterized positively for its extensive sign language usage and cultural development amongst the deaf community.[113] Sign proved to an effective, efficient form of communication for hard-of-hearing or deaf individuals. Not only was it a straightforward language to learn, it proved to be uniquely accessible for both the hearing and deaf population. Furthermore, the use of sign language played a fundamental role in the formation of a unique Deaf culture. With the establishment of schools for the deaf in Russia, they served as bastions of Deaf culture and expression, where former students were retained as teachers for the next generation of students.[114]

However, the use of sign language provoked tension from the predominantly hearing educational establishment. While sign language was viewed by the Deaf community as being an accessible form of communication which was intrinsic to their own Deaf identity, its usage was criticized extensively by various educational specialists in the period. They asserted that the deaf individual's lack of knowledge of the verbal speech inhibited their mental

[111] Ibid., p. 19.
[112] Rosenfeld, 'The Political Uses of Sign Language', pp. 28-30.
[113] Claire Shaw, *Deaf in the USSR: Marginality, Community, and Soviet Identity, 1917-1991* (Cornell University Press, London, 2017), pp. 123-124.
[114] Susan Burch, 'Transcending Revolutions: The Tsars, The Soviets and Deaf Culture', *Journal of Social History*, 34, 2 (2000), p. 394.

development and isolated them from the rest of society. To address such apparent problems, an alternative educational method was utilised. The method, known as the 'oral method', originated in Germany, emphasized the use of verbal speech and lip-reading and the complete rejection of sign language usage.[115] Assisted by well-known educationalists such as Alexander Graham Bell and Samuel Howe, they wanted deaf individuals to be assimilated into contemporary society through verbal speech instead of forming their own communities. In a similar vein of thought associated with disability education, they hoped to create an integrated deaf person. They identified sign, not oralism, as preventing the creation of such individuals.

Such rehabilitative, but ultimately destructive, endeavours came to a head at the Congress of Milan in 1880, where a group of international educators decreed that sign language was to be replaced with oralism at all European schools for the deaf. In Russia, Galina Zaitseva stated that most Russian schools made the transition from sign to oralism.[116] However, Susan Burch also suggested that while most deaf schools in urban areas made the transition, deaf individuals responded by maintaining the use of sign at home and in their own communities.[117] While oralism was adopted as the official language of deaf education, sign language was preserved as both a language and an essential element of Deaf culture outside formal institutions.

The transition from sign to oralism proved to be an act of 'silencing and disablement' and had huge ramifications for lives of deaf students across the globe.[118] Its predominance in mainstream Western deaf education continued until the 1960s. The reliance on just verbal speech and lip-reading proved to be wholly inadequate as a method of deaf education. It forced deaf children to imitate sounds of words, phrases and other such expressions. The rejection of sign language, the preferred form of communication amongst deaf students, prevented them from being able to fully express themselves in their best medium. In some schools, the use of gesticulation amongst the student body

[115] Galina L. Zaitseva, 'Problems of Sign Language in Soviet Deaf Education', in *Sign and School: Using Signs in Deaf Children's Education*, ed., J. Kyle, (Multilingual Matters, Philadelphia, 1987), p. 101.
[116] Zaitseva, 'Problems of Sign Language', pp. 101-102.
[117] Burch, 'Transcending Revolutions', pp. 394-395.
[118] Shaw, *Deaf in the USSR*, p. 24.

was banned (which only served to increase the clandestine usage of sign language by the deaf students anyway).[119]

Oralism remained the dominant language model within deaf education in both the late tsarist and early Soviet periods.[120] However, the application of oralism received strong criticism from the Soviet deaf community. While the Soviet state did not recognise sign language as a language, Claire Shaw stated that 'deaf representatives argued strongly against the use of the oral method in schools, suggesting that it took far too long (six to seven years) to teach speech, time that could be better spent imparting basic literacy and labor skills through the medium of sign language.'[121] Criticism of the failings of the oral method to provide a pathway towards moulding New Soviet People was common. Zaitseva continued such criticism, stating that

> '[an] analysis of school practice brought an understanding that the new goals (i.e. the developing of a rounded person with a broad outlook, high moral standards, a person ready for active participation in social and labour activity integrated with the hearing society) were impossible to achieve using [the] "pure oral method".'[122]

This was despite the original aim of the oral method was to help with the integration of deaf individuals into the hearing community.

Vygotskii himself understood the need for oralism, predominantly for its benefits of the integration process. While the process of oral speech was difficult for deaf individuals, it was seen as 'significantly more valuable'.[123]

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[119] For further information on the oral method and its impact on deaf and deafblind education, see also Rod G. Beattie, 'The Oral Methods and Spoken Language Acquisition', in *Advances in the Spoken Language Development of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children*, eds., Patricia Elizabeth Spencer and Marc Marschark (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006), pp. 103-135; Hannah Anglin-Jaffe, 'Signs of Resistance: Peer Learning of Sign Languages within 'Oral' Schools for the Deaf', *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 32, 3 (2013), pp. 261-273; Galina Zaitseva, Michael Pursglove and Susan Gregory, 'Vygotsky, Sign Language and the Education of Deaf Pupils', *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 4, 1 (1999), pp. 7-9; Kayiatos, 'Soviet Deaf Theatre', pp. 12-13.

[120] Burch, 'Transcending Revolutions', pp. 395-396.

[121] Shaw, *Deaf in the USSR*, p. 39.

[122] Zaitseva, 'Problems of Sign Language', p. 101.

[123] Shaw, *Deaf in the USSR*, p. 32.

Nevertheless, Vygotskii understood that sign language was the 'natural language' of deaf people and opposed the Milan Congress ban on sign language.[124] He also criticised the role, or lack of, of verbal speech in the educational development of the deaf individual, stating that [spoken language played] almost no part in their development and it is not a tool they can use to accumulate cultural experience or to participate in social life.'[125] In addition, he was also one of the first pedagogues to identify sign language as a 'specific linguistic system', with its place amongst verbal and written mediums of language.[126] Vygotskii himself advocated the need for a well-rounded education for the deaf individual, with the child's development of oral speech, written and sign language. This would allow the deaf person to be able to access two separate communities; the deaf and hearing communities, without being segregated from either.

Sokolianskii held similar beliefs on sign language, believing it to be an efficient, expressive language which allowed deafblind children to communicate through their existing sense of touch.[127] Such conclusions were based upon his experiences with the oral method at Gracheva's shelter, where the pedagogue Zakharova employed it in her education of the shelter's deafblind students. Sokolianskii described Zakharova's unhealthy interest in the method, which was representative of the school's wider approach to deafblind education. He explained that

> 'there was a different approach to the work with the deafblind, especially, in the part of the formation of verbal speech… There was a close contact between us but there was not a mutual understanding because of… [Zakharova's] fanatic admiration of the pure oral methodology. The fanatics of the pure oral methodology were D. V. Feldberg and M. V. Bogdanov-Berezovskii.'[128]

[124] Ibid.
[125] Lev S. Vygotskii, *Osnovy Defektologii* (Pedagogika, Moskva, 1983), p. 323.
[126] Zaitseva, 'Problems of Sign Language', p. 102.
[127] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.1, d. 39, l. 11.
[128] Ivan A. Sokolianskii, *Dnevnikovia zapis' ot* 13.08.1958 cited in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 78.

Sokolianskii disagreed with the use of the oral method as the predominant form of communication between children with sensory disabilities. While he was unimpressed with its application at the Gracheva's shelter, Sokolianskii understood that a combined education in multiple language mediums was a useful educational approach. A combination of gesticulation, dactylology, Braille and verbal speech would only complement each other. In addition, it would serve as preparation for the deafblind child for environments involving hearing, deaf and deafblind individuals.

Language remained a fundamental pillar of deafblind education not only within Sokolianskii's method, but in the approaches adopted by Russian and Western pedagogues. However, they both placed different emphasis on the importance of language. Bridgman's and Keller's education had focused on solely language acquisition, while neglecting the other skills which Sokolianskii had deemed essential for their development. His observations of children with sensory disabilities had revealed the importance of independence. Independence was created through the child's completion of meaningful activity, which was through the development of their self-care skills.[129] Self-care skills involved the process of feeding, cleaning and washing themselves. In addition to being able to move and operate within new environments, they needed to be able to take care of themselves independently of others.

One of Sokolianskii's pedagogues, Anna Osterova, explained the importance of self-care skills in her notes in January 1950:

> 'more important than reading and writing. It will be good, agile, accurate, stable, independent and every day it will be even better in reading and writing. And vice versa, if the child is not within a home, if she is not independent, then she becomes inaccurate, lazy, spoilt. None of the literacy will work… Before, I believed that that whole secret was within the reading and writing method. It was wrong. The diploma is a consequence of the previously established high degree of independence of the child within a home life.'[130]

[129] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 68.
[130] Ibid., d. 116, ll. 166-167.

The formation of self-care skills was the first major stage of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method. It provided the foundation for the teaching of new skills, such as language. However, it was vital that the deafblind child mastered the self-care skills before they began their literacy education. The child needed to become independently minded. Independence was established through the experience of the conditions of everyday life. Meshcheriakov explains that 'to encourage a child's sensorimotor development before he has mastered the elementary skills of self-care is not only futile but harmful because the child will become profoundly hostile to the very process of instruction.'[131] By being able to eat, dress and wash by themselves, the very acts immersed the deafblind child within the basic motions of human behaviour. Moreover, the processes themselves helped establish a unique personality within the deafblind child, based upon their satisfaction of their most basic needs. With the formation of an identity, it provided the basis for language acquisition in the latter stages of the *ochelovechenie* method. While language would eventually serve as a 'humanising' tool within Sokolianskii's *surdotiflopedagogika*, the development of self-care skills was necessary for such steps to be successful.

Sokolianskii's criticism of the Western educational methods utilised in Bridgman's and Keller's upbringing revealed his concerns with preference of language acquisition over self-care skills. For both of their educations, Howe and Sullivan had begun with language acquisition. They were introduced to objects with attached notes which carried Braille script. This technique led to their eventual realisation that each individual object was categorized within a wider array of classification, represented by Braille. Consequently, this served as their moment of 'awakening'. Despite the well-documented educational efforts which led to Bridgman's and Keller's successful mastery of the language, Sokolianskii stated that their self-care needs had been neglected, which impacted negatively on their behaviour. Without the development of these necessary attributes, Sokolianskii stipulated that the deafblind child cannot take care of themselves. They become reliant on others to feed, clothe and wash them. Consequently, Sokolianskii explained that both Bridgman and Keller were largely co-dependent on their teachers for assistance.[132] In his letter to

[131] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 93.
[132] Gitter, *The Imprisoned Guest*, p. 175.

Sokolianskii, Gorkii's description of Keller as heavily reliant on her educational aides confirmed the flaws with Western deafblind education.

To Sokolianskii, Western pedagogues did not prepare deafblind children to live independent lives in society. In addition, he railed at what he deemed the unnecessary incorporation of religion into the early stages of the educational method. He deemed it counterproductive for the deafblind child's educational efforts if they were introduced to the concept of a divine being when they had not even mastered how to properly clothe themselves or put on their shoes.[133] Many deafblind children in the past had been placed within religious institutions, such as monasteries and convents, which led to an emphasis of religion in their upbringing. He reserved criticism for Keller in this regard, in which he lamented her response to questions she did not know the answer, which was 'Only God knows.'[134] Furthermore, Sokolianskii continued

> 'Why was care for deafblind children given to the mercy of priests, monks, tsarinas, landlords, political speculators and others, while scientists were not interested in this important endeavour of human help?'[135]

His criticism of a flawed emphasis on the oral method, a lack of focus on self-care skills and the introduction of religion into their curriculum provoked undisguised scorn towards the Perkins School. Although he was amazed at their accomplishments in deafblind pedagogy, he claimed that Keller's educational success had only been achieved through 'sheer luck'. [136]

Sokolianskii's approach was based upon the scientific method, in which his observations of deafblind children at the St. Petersburg Shelter and the European institutions led to the formation of his method. Only through a rational, evidence-based method could the deafblind truly be able to lead independent, active livelihoods. He understood that self-care skills had been neglected, which affected the quality of the education. The disregard of self-care activities remained even more pertinent due to the sheer length of time it

[133] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 121, l. 57.
[134] Ibid., op. 3.1, d. 39, l. 9.
[135] Ibid., d. 31, ll. 9-10.
[136] Ibid., op. 2, d. 13, l. 195.

took for the deafblind child to develop their skills. The process of 'humanisation' took place over an extremely long period of time, with some actions takings months or even years to master completely. Sokolianskii explained that it took up to a year for a pre-literate deafblind child to learn how to put a spoon to their mouth during the eating process.[137] The child needed to be taught the motion, understand that it was a combination of a series of smaller actions and finally comprehend how it satisfied their basic need for sustenance. However, it was the process which solidified the entire learning process within the psyche of the deafblind child. Most importantly, it laid a foundation for further development in literacy. Sokolianskii noted that while the process of eating with a utensil may have taken up to a year, learning an aspect of grammar was expected to take less than a week.[138] He even stated that the process of learning mathematical operations, such as multiplication or division, took as little as an hour to fully master in the correct educational conditions.[139] Self-care was vital not only for their immediate learning needs, but for their post-education livelihoods. The *ochelovechenie* method laid down an educational framework which facilitated their transition from the 'initial state' to their participation in socially useful labour.[140] It would provide them with the subject knowledge of mathematics, reading, writing, gesticulation and other such skills which were vital for their employment opportunities upon adulthood. Sokolianskii explained that in Western schools, they treated people with deafblindness as 'invalids', to be constantly cared for within institutions.[141] However, in the Soviet Union, he treated people with sensory disabilities as 'members of society.'[142]

Conclusion

Sokolianskii divided his *ochelovechenie* method into three sections; pre-literacy (*dobukvarnyi*), literacy (*bukvarnyi*) and post-literacy (*poslebukvarnyi*) stages.[143] It followed the same stages of education for children without special

[137] Ibid., op. 3.1, d. 39, l. 9.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., op. 4.1, d. 124, l. 1.
[140] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 1.
[141] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 2, d. 13, l. 197.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', pp. 4, 12.

educational needs. Despite Sokolianskii's criticism of Western attempts at deafblind education, both his own method and the method utilised in the Perkins School revolved around the principles of literacy. Both pedagogues saw language as a 'humanising' mechanism for the pre-literate deafblind child. However, Sokolianskii identification of an essential flaw within the Perkins approach which undermined their attempt at deafblind education. Literacy and language acquisition only worked after the establishment of self-care skills as a foundational layer for development. Literacy was only a part of the *ochelovchenie* method, unlike in the United States where it was the entire method.

Consequently, it put substantial pressure on the deafblind children to achieve a level of language competence, which included both sign language and verbal speech. If such children at the Perkins school did not achieve such levels, they were regarded 'as uneducable and expelled.'[144] While the education of Bridgman and Keller were heralded as successes to the wider public, the emphasis on language over self-care impeded the development of other deafblind children at the Perkins school. Meshcheriakov explained that 'it is quite wrong to rate a deafblind child as educable or quite the opposite on the basis of his [or her] capacity for mastering oral speech.'[145] True integration into society would be achieved through both self-care and literacy. Sokolianskii stated that deafblindness 'is a physical disability which does not deprive the person the opportunity to be socially useful. The essence of the problem of upbringing and educating the deafblind person is to organise them into the appropriate environment.'[146] Sokolianskii followed a legacy of deafblind education which had experienced its own share of successes and failures. While Bridgman's and Keller's educations had propelled Western deafblind education into the public eye, Sokolianskii's identification of its failings propelled him to establish, what he deemed, a superior educational framework within a socialist environment.

His observation of deafblind children at the St. Petersburg Shelter influenced his establishment of a deafblind method based upon the practical

[144] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 76.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 1.

needs and desires of the children themselves. With Imperial Russia's drastic societal transition from autocracy to revolution, Sokolianskii's desire to rehabilitate children with multi-sensory disabilities melded with the increasingly rehabilitative discipline of defectology and allowed him to pursue his ambitions without significant intervention from the regime. With his funding support from Narkomos, he established an educational institution for deafblind children at the Kha'kov Institute in 1923. The next chapter will examine the practical application of the *ochelovechenie* method within the confines of the Khar'kov orphanage during the 1920s and 1930s. The education and upbringing of nine deafblind children, including the teenager Ol'ga Skorokhodova, will be explored in detail.

2 The Khar'kov Orphanage for Deafblind Children

Figure 2.

Ol'ga Skorokhodova learning sign language, Kharkov, c. 1926[1]

The photo above shows Ol'ga Skorokhodova learning how to communicate through sign language. Gesticulation proved to be an accessible, touch-based form of communication for deafblind individuals. To initiate communication through gesticulation, the deafblind individual feels the gesture

[1] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 8, d. 190, l. 10.

with their left hand while conveying their own gestures with their right hand into the left hand of the opposing person. In the figure 2., Skorokhodova's hands are exploring the hands of the pedagogue. Upon entry into the Khar'kov orphanage, Skorokhodova was inducted into an intensive learning curriculum which stimulated her educational development. The development of self-care and language skills were essential to Sokolianskii's aim to integrate deafblind children into society. Skorokhodova joined eight other students at the Khar'kov children's home. While their lives before their entry into the school were often marked with personal suffering and the traumatic loss of their primary senses, Sokolianskii sought to prepare them for their assimilation into Soviet society.

This chapter will explore in detail the application of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method within the Khar'kov orphanage from 1925 to 1936. While his previous experiences of deaf and deafblind education had taken place at other institutions, Sokolianskii's centre for deafblind research and education at the Khar'kov Institute was his first undertaking as the primary *surdotiflopedagog* in the Soviet Union. With institutional funding from Narkomos, he established the institutional conditions to deliver the *ochelovechenie* method within an environment accessible for his students. The chapter will explore how the child's initial orientation of the environment had a substantial impact not only on their transition out of the 'initial state' (*nachal'noe sostoianie*) but their further development within the Khar'kov orphanage. Sokolianskii's use of the 'direct adjustment' (*priamaia ustanovka*) method facilitated the furthered immersion of their immediate settings. Combined with the use of 'chain of actions' (*tsepochka deistvii*) method, the student's increased spatial awareness led to the development of their self-care needs through strict routines.

In addition, it will examine the impact of Sokolianskii's pedagogical methods, specifically in the deafblind children's burgeoning independence. Such independence lay the foundation for language development through gesticulation. They proved able to communicate to others and were no longer limited to their isolated 'internal worlds'. It also served as a basis for additional language mediums such as dactylology, the flat-text alphabet and verbal speech. The student's increased proficiency in different forms of communication allowed for their transition into basic literacy. Sokolianskii employed the use of

sensory technology as classroom aids; the 'reading machine' and the Braille typewriter. While the reading machine let the deafblind child read non-Braille based text, the typewriter raised the possibility for their self-learning and being able to express themselves in a written format. They soon gained control of their own lives, leading to the establishment of their unique personalities. Ol'ga Skorokhodova's dialogue with the famous author, Maksim Gorkii, through the mid-1930s helped place her education within Sokolianskii's wider attempts to provide the tools for deafblind individuals to integrate into Soviet society.

The Students of Khar'kov

After Sokolianskii received his professorship at the Khar'kov Institute in 1923, he was in a prime position to establish a dedicated department to deafblind research and education at the Khar'kov Institute. Before the formation of the centre in 1925, he had worked for nearly two years on the education of deaf children at the Khar'kov Institute. During this period, Sokolianskii developed an approach which focused on preparing the children for the completion of tasks or actions through verbal or gestured commands. Despite this, previous teaching processes had struggled to teach certain prolonged tasks due to their inherent complexity. To make the tasks simpler, he broke the entire process into a series of smaller actions. He utilised a previously established system which was known as the 'chain combinational motor reaction' method (*tsepnye sochetatel'nye-dvigatel'nye reaktsii*).[2] The process eventually came to be known as the 'chain method'.[3]

In the first stage of the 'chain method', Sokolianskii told the deaf child to watch his lips while he repeated specific commands. He verbally stated an instruction which was followed by the equivalent gesture of the command. For example, Sokolianskii intended to teach the deaf child how to rise out of their seats and sit in adjacent chairs. To simplify the activity, he broke down the task

[2] Tat'iana A. Basilova, *Istoriia Obucheniia Slepoglukhikh detei v Rossii* (Eksmo, Moskva, 2015), p. 75.
[3] The method was deemed the 'chain method', or more specifically the 'Ukrainian chain method', by the American educationalist, Lucy Wilson. She had visited the Khar'kov orphanage in 1927 and discussed the use of the technique with Sokolianskii. Lucy Wilson, *The New Schools of New Russia* (Vanguard Press, New York, 1928), p. 88.

into separate actions. He began with the first action, in which he gave a verbal command, 'stand up', and followed it with the relevant gesture of the action.[4] The process was replicated for the different stages of the overall activity, in which the child was instructed to move to the next chair, to sit in the adjacent chair, to rise again and to repeat the activity once more. Each action constituted a small part of a larger chain of actions. The process of each action was internalized by the deaf child through repeated use. In addition, they would associate both the verbal and gestured command with a specific action, which combined a physical action with their language development. It was useful as a method for deaf education for it allowed the pedagogue to successfully teach a complex action within an accessible medium for the deaf child. Sokolianskii's application of the chain method was also heavily utilised in the early stages of self-care acquisition during the *ochelovechenie* method.

The Khar'kov institution was officially called the 'Experimental Children's Home for the Deafblind' (*Opytnyi detskii dom dlia slepoglukhonemykh*).[5] As a children's home, it served as a school, institution and an orphanage for the deafblind students without immediate family members, such as Ol'ga Skorokhodova. Sokolianskii had received his mandate directly from Narkomos, which instructed him to develop a method for the education of deafblind children. While he received institutional support from Narkomos, he received very little direction from the state organ. The use of the term "Experimental" revealed the state's ambiguity towards Sokolianskii's work. While they were content to provide him with the necessary funds to offer education for deafblind students, it was not guaranteed to be a success.[6] Despite his experience within educational and civil administration in the first seven years of the Soviet Union, Narkomos saw fit to only allocate enough funding for the induction of a total of ten deafblind pupils.[7]

Furthermore, Sokolianskii also encountered severe staffing problems. While deafblind education had progressed relatively well in the late tsarist period, there was a dearth of pedagogues and teachers who had experience

[4] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 75.
[5] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 77.
[6] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 2, d. 13, l. 195.
[7] Ibid., l. 194.

working with deafblind children in the early Soviet period.[8] Much of this was due to the labour shortages caused by the Civil War. Sokolianskii expressed his frustration at the quality of the available pedagogues needed for the orphanage. He complained that many of the teachers had 'no experience' with children with sensory disabilities and struggled to see 'how he would work with them'.[9] Eventually, Sokolianskii reluctantly hired the medical doctors E. Tumalevich, Lidiia Ulanova and a teacher, O. Prokhorova.[10] Despite Sokolianskii criticizing his staff, all the teachers had relevant experience within previous fields of disability education. The combination of Sokolianskii's expertise in *surdotiflopedagogika* and the teachers' previous experience in disability education proved essential for putting the *ochelovechenie* method into practice.

Before the school was established, Sokolianskii commissioned a census to establish the true number of deafblind individuals in the Soviet Union. [11] However, archival materials only reveal that a census was commissioned. It is unclear whether the census was carried out solely within the UkrSSR or whether it was carried out across the whole USSR. In addition, the timing of the census raises questions. The process would have taken months, if not years, for an entire survey of the Soviet population.[12] A previous census had been commissioned by the Charity for the Deafblind in 1909, which took nearly two years to complete. It revealed that out of a total of 761 deafblind individuals (it is unclear how they defined deafblindness), 226 individuals were between the ages of one and twenty.[13] For the Khar'kov orphanage, it is likely that Sokolianskii enquired at Ukrainian institutions for disabled children to identify any individuals with multi-sensory disabilities.

The first group of students who entered the Khar'kov orphanage in 1926 were Anton Nosachev, Ol'ga Skorokhodova, Anton Mel'nik, Varia Shamli and Vasilii Kirii.[14] In addition, four more students were enrolled in 1935; Mariia

[8] Iarmolenko's work at the Oto-Phonetic Institute was the exception.
[9] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 2, d. 13, l. 194.
[10] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 76.
[11] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 2, d. 13, l. 193.
[12] The first Soviet census had been completed by December 1926.
[13] *Otchet Obshchestva Popecheniia o Slepoglukhonemykh v Rossii za 1909 i 1910 god. Spb., 1911* cited in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 24.
[14] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, pp. 80-81

Sokol, Petr Vlasov, Abram Tatievskii and Marat (last name unknown).[15] These nine students, six boys and three girls, became the focal point for deafblind education at Khar'kov. The orphanage was based within the same building as the Khar'kov school for blind students. It was split between two floors; the first floor for the pupil's residences and the second floor for the teaching facilities. On the first floor, each deafblind student was assigned their own room. In addition, they had a communal space where they ate their meals together, spent their free time and interacted with each other and their teachers. The walls of the communal space were adorned with pictures of Bridgman and Keller. Despite Sokolianskii's criticism of their education, they were still heralded as individuals to be emulated. While Sokolianskii heavily criticized their education, both Bridgman and Keller (especially) had managed to assimilate themselves into Western society through language acquisition.

The second floor was split into three separate sections; offices for the pedagogues, classrooms for the lessons, and laboratories. Two of the laboratories were equipped for sound tests. They were soundproofed and contained Soviet-built microphones (based on a German design), which were utilised for stimulating the auditory nerve of the deafblind child.[16] In addition, the second floor also housed a museum for deafblind education, where Sokolianskii filled the entire room with objects and pictures from deafblind education across the world. [17] He wished to situate his own educational attempts of the deafblind child within its wider context. The facilities at the orphanage were highly valued by Sokolianskii and his pedagogues. The proximity of both teaching and living facilities was praised as it proved essential for the *ochelovechenie* method. *Surdotiflopedagogika* was an intensive process, in which the deafblind child required nearly constant supervision and attention by the resident pedagogue. Hence, it was a necessary requirement to place the children's residences and the teaching facilities within easy access. The institution catered for the needs of the *surdotiflopedagog* and the deafblind child.

[15] Ibid., pp. 82-83.
[16] Wilson, *New Schools*, p. 87.
[17] Ibid., p. 88.

Figure 3.

Students and staff at the Khar'kov orphanage, c. 1926[18]

Figure 4.

Students and staff at the Khar'kov orphanage with Ol'ga Skorokhodova standing in the back row, second from the right, c. 1926[19]

[18] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 8, d. 193, l. 30.
[19] Ibid., l. 30.

Before their entry into the deafblind school at Khar'kov, the pedagogues established a complete history for each deafblind child. It comprised the total extent of their hearing and sight loss, their previous educational experiences and the quality of their home conditions. It was necessary for the pedagogue to fully understand the circumstances of their earlier lives if they were to further their educational development. A report was established for each child, which focused on whether their deafblindness was congenital or acquired, the severity of their combined hearing and vision loss and the age at which the child acquired their deafblindness. The report also examined the child's knowledge of self-care activities, literacy and language skills and whether the child was familiar with sign language, Braille or if the child had intellectual disabilities.[20] The child's experiences before their entry into the Khar'kov Institute defined the specific type of education they received. With a comprehensive plan for each child, the pedagogue would know which approach to take. While every student would be taught the same material, it would be accomplished through slightly different methods. It was representative of Sokolianskii's method towards *surdotiflopedagogika*. The use of the Vygotskian social model underpinned his approach, in which it relied on the pedagogue to provide the correct conditions for their education. Each child would be given a personal curriculum which incorporated their needs, strengths and weakness. It would prepare them for their stay at Khar'kov.

With the knowledge of each deafblind child's early lives, Sokolianskii devised a classification system for each student. All four categories were based predominantly on the experiences of their early childhoods. The first group was made up of deafblind children who were largely passive. Out of all the deafblind pupils, children in the first group had generally spent the longest period in the 'initial state', in which they only received some form of education much later than the other children. Such children also had intellectual disabilities, brought on from a long period of social isolation due to their sensory disabilities.[21] Children in the second group were also considered passive, but were able to

[20] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, pp. 83-84.
[21] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 131, l. 2; Ivan A. Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie slepoglukhonemykh detei', *Defektologiia*, 2 (1989), p. 5.

follow instructions from the pedagogues. While they struggled to complete tasks on their own initiative, they could complete tasks with assistance. These children had usually spent some time at a previous institution, where their familiarity with educational practices, pedagogues and routines had prepared them for their entry into the Khar'kov orphanage.

The third group were for children whom were considered the most intellectually developed. The experience in their home environments had facilitated their development. Children within the third group had exhibited some knowledge of self-care skills, showed advanced spatial awareness and had even developed pre-literacy forms of communication.[22] Sokolianskii was reluctantly supportive about the benefits of a home-based education for the deafblind, which may have led to some positive results, but was 'very unique and limited.'[23] While his attitude towards the advantages of non-institution teaching environments would eventually change by the 1950s, he remained sceptical of such efforts at Khar'kov.

The fourth and final group was for students who exhibited aggressive, or even violent, behaviour. Such children had endured extended periods of social isolation, even within their home environments. Without any form of educational stimulus, they had remained within the 'initial state'. Unlike the children in the first group who remained passively harmless, children in the fourth group often attacked anyone within the immediate vicinity. These children proved to be most difficult to educate, due to the need to reduce their propensity for destructive behaviour. Regardless of early childhood experiences of each child, the pedagogue's responsibility was to evaluate the needs of every child based upon combined educational, institutional and home experiences. After each child's history was assessed, Sokolianskii would devise a specific educational curriculum which would facilitate the child's requirements at the school for the deafblind.

Anton Nosachev was the first child with multi-sensory disabilities to be enrolled into the Khar'kov institution in 1925. At the age of one, he became deafblind after contracting meningitis. He was raised at home by his family until

[22] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 83.
[23] Ibid.

early adolescence. Nosachev had a generally positive experience at home. His family were invested in his educational development. He exhibited excellent self-care skills, walked on his own accord, and showed advanced spatial awareness. Basilova stated 'he loved to wander around his house and interact with objects at night when everyone was sleeping.'[24] Despite his willingness to explore his immediate surroundings, he did remain alone at home for extended periods. One such occasion had left him permanently scarred for life. Nosachev had almost burned to death after accidentally lighting a match at home, which had left him with severe burns, an ingrained fear of naked flames and wariness of objects emanating heat. While Nosachev initially struggled to interact with the other deafblind children at Khark'kov, Sokolianskii placed him within the third category.

Mariia Sokol, admitted into the school in the second enrolment in 1935, was also placed within the third category of deafblind pupils.[25] While she lost her sight and hearing after having contracted measles, her family, much like Nosachev's, facilitated her development. Not only did she previously complete domestic chores around her home, she displayed the most advanced sensorimotor skills out of all the deafblind children. Basilova explained that 'she ran on familiar footpaths, bathed in the river, made and turned down the bed by herself, ate at and cleared the table on her own.'[26] Unlike Nosachev, she was an extremely sociable child who willingly interacted with the other deafblind children. However, she was prone to anger when she was prevented from doing what she wanted. Nevertheless, her family had prepared Sokol for entry into the Khar'kov orphanage. Basilova stated that 'her new experiences, delicious food, and the abundance of experiences distracted her. Mariia stood out from other children, and her education progressed quickly.'[27]

Skorokhodova, Nosachev and Sokol were viewed by Sokolianskii as the easiest children to teach. All three children had lived within home environments which had proved to be beneficial for their own transition into the Khar'kov orphanage. Their initiation in self-care skills had led to independent, active

[24] Ibid., p. 80.
[25] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4., d. 113, ll. 1-5.
[26] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 82.
[27] Ibid.

behaviour, which laid the groundwork for their further development. Such activities, at least in Sokolianskii's mind, had 'humanised' them. However, the other deafblind children had not gone through the same experiences. Most of the remaining deafblind children were placed in the first or fourth group. Vasili Kirii, who had become deafblind at the age of two, was considered the most challenging of all the students.[28] While he lived at home with his mother, he was left at home while she went to work. To prevent him injuring himself, she tied him to a large cot with cloth ropes and taught him how to eat black bread and water, which was placed with him in the cot. However, he had endured extended periods of social isolation which had a debilitative effect on his behaviour. He was unable to walk without assistance, ate nothing but black bread and developed an unsavoury habit of eating his own faeces. In addition, he reacted violently towards any form of physical contact from others.[29] Kirii's social isolation and lack of any form of stimulated experience directly led to such behaviour. Anton Mel'nik's behaviour may have been less aggressive, but he exhibited similar attributes as Kirii. He was enrolled into the orphanage at the age of seven, after his family had been killed by typhus fever (which had led to his deafblindness). The lack of educational training had left him 'unable to walk, sleep in a bed and he did not let others undress him.'[30]

Varia Shamli, who entered the institution in 1926 with Mel'nik, retained some sight and hearing until she became fully deafblind at three years old. Like Mel'nik, she was an extremely aggressive child. Her early childhood life had affected her ability to interact with other individuals; she responded through biting anyone who touched her.[31] Petr Vlasov was another child who experienced difficulties during his upbringing. His contraction of spinal tuberculosis permanently affected his nervous system which led to his hearing and sight loss at the age of three. While he had not lived an isolated life, his upbringing by his family proved detrimental to his intellectual and educational development. He remained in bed while at home, where his younger brother was responsible for his care. However, it meant that he was unable to complete tasks independently. In a letter to Vlasov's parents, Sokolianskii explained that

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., p. 81.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

he had developed a habit of spitting at anyone who got close to him.[32] The only person who he did not spit at or attack was his own brother. He was enrolled into the school in 1934, along with Sokol.[33] The remaining two children, Abram Tatievskii and Marat, had been diagnosed with severe intellectual disabilities in addition to their sensory disabilities. Basilova stated that Tatievskii began his education at the school in 1935, but there is scant information available in the archival records about their pre-institutionalization lives.[34]

Self-Care

The entire *ochelovechenie* method was split into three sections based upon the deafblind child's language fluency: pre-literacy, literacy and post-literacy stages.[35] While literacy is emphasized as a key aspect of the 'humanisation' method, it is intriguing that Sokolianskii constructed the entire method based upon the stages of language proficiency. Even though self-care development was viewed as the most important stage of the deafblind child's education, the first part was labelled 'the pre-literate stage'. The importance of literacy to the education and eventual integration of Soviet deafblind children was underlined through its usage as a marker for progress within the curriculum. The pre-literate stage encompassed much of the initial teaching for the deafblind child. It was also the most important stage. Sokolianskii described it as 'the most difficult and complex… period in relation to the deafblind child. The difficulties lie in the peculiarities of the way in which the child accumulate their primary impressions and ideas and subsequently form a view on [the physical] reality.'[36] The purpose of the pre-literate stage was the successful transition of the deafblind child out of the 'initial state'. This was accomplished through the completion of a series of strict aims, which immersed the deafblind child into self-care and language acquisition.

For the first step, Sokolianskii emphasized that the 'main objective of the pre-literacy period is the formation of the deafblind child's means for

[32] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 2, d. 15, l. 62.
[33] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 81.
[34] Ibid., p. 83.
[35] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p, 4.
[36] Ibid., pp. 1-2.

primary contact, which leads to his ability to express his attitude about his environment directly.'[37] Self-care was the primary mechanism for the deafblind child's contact with their environment. Through their orientation towards their environment (which will be explored in detail later in the chapter), they could convey their thoughts of their immediate surroundings. The next stage focused on gesticulation, which the child needed to understand how it served as a 'future word counterpart.'[38] Once the child had learnt how to express their attitude about their immediate environment, they needed a gesture to provide the means for conveying their viewpoints. Finally, the last stage focused upon the acquisition of the various forms of communication; gesticulation, dactylology, the flat-text (or graphic) alphabet and verbal speech.[39] The completion of each stage formed the basis for the next process. Sokolianskii's method relied heavily on the acquisition of a certain technique which reinforced the student's understanding of previous actions and served as a foundation for future ones.

The entry of the deafblind child into the Khar'kov orphanage was often a traumatic, difficult ordeal for the new pupils. They had been moved, sometimes forcibly, from a known to an unknown environment. Deafblind children often reacted in different ways, which varied from passivity to aggressive behaviour. To assist with the upsetting process, Sokolianskii emphasized the importance of the teacher in the first few days of their schooling. The pedagogue needed to develop an immediate relationship with the child. This would ease their transition into the school environment if they could rely on the teacher for support. In addition, Sokolianskii encouraged parents to stay with the child for a period if possible to assist with this transition. The pedagogue often acted as a surrogate parent during this initial stage of the institutionalization of the child. Their role was to facilitate the child's development at the school. Basilova explained that they hoped to instigate the 'transformation of the defect into an advantage through the use of a teacher to act as a stimulus for the child to allow for their training to develop.'[40] They were tasked by Sokolianskii to ensure that the child interacted with their given environment, utilised their senses of touch, smell and taste to establish new

[37] Ibid., p. 4.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*., p. 86.

interactions and encouraged the development of the child's sensorimotor activities.

The first task for the teacher was to ensure that the child was adequately prepared for the self-care skills that followed the next stage of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method. In the forward to Meshcheriakov's book on deafblind education, the Soviet developmental psychologist, Aleksandr Zaporozhets, reiterated the importance of self-care to the education of the deafblind child, stating that

> 'The seeds of mental development in the deafblind child should be fostered by initiating him into the most elementary and common-place forms of day-to-day human activity, which is seen by the idealist psychologist as paltry, vulgar and unimportant in relation to the emergence of the human spirit, but which in actual fact plays a decisive part in the initial stages of man's development. A child has to learn to use correctly the simplest of products of human labour before he can learn to create these through his own work.'[41]

Through social interaction with other individuals, objects and their environment, it was believed that the process would have a 'humanising' effect upon the deafblind child. Self-care would act as the foundation for this 'humanising' impact. Through the deafblind child's completion of key tasks, they are initiated into the process of labour. Such actions prepared them for their participation in labour in the post-education lives.

Its importance was matched by the length of time it took for the child to master the self-care process. During the deafblind child's 'initial state', they remain unaware of the surrounding environment. While some children showed initiative to explore their home conditions through tactile examination, many of the students remained passive and uninterested in their surroundings. Likewise, the lack of language acquisition had inhibited their development. Such children

[41] Aleksandr I. Meshcheriakov, *Awakening to Life* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979), pp. 7-8.

even had to be taught how to smile.[42] The transition of the deafblind child out of the 'initial state' proved to be the most difficult, yet fundamental, part of the early stages of the *ochelovechenie* method. Some of the deafblind pupils, such as Mel'nik and Vlasov, had remained bedbound for nearly their entire lives. Vlasov even struggled to walk unaided on non-cushioned surfaces. Their families had taken on the responsibility for their children's welfare. However, this clashed with Sokolianskii's attempts to eventually encourage the children to become increasingly in control of their own lives. It was what made the entire process particularly problematic. Sokolianskii stated that 'the most difficult thing in the organization of the behaviour of the deafblind child… [is] the accustoming of themselves to self-care… it is the earliest and seemingly the most primitive skill, but their formation is the most difficult thing.'[43]

To overcome this problem, two aspects of the deafblind child's perception of their environment were addressed. The first aspect revolved around the utilisation of the child's basic wants for their education. Defined as an 'orientating-investigatory activity', the child's need to eat, drink and sleep was utilised as a mechanism to transition the child out of the 'initial state'.[44] Such examples included the placement of a spoon on the lower lip to signify the imminent arrival of food or the placement of food at a distance so that the deafblind child would respond to the smell. However, it was 'easier to teach the deafblind child algebra than to teach the child how to bring a spoon to his mouth.'[45] The second part focused on their orientation of the immediate environment. It was necessary for the deafblind child to form 'immediate and utterly accurate relationships with their material environment, to comprehend their environment, to master it, to conquer space.'[46] Much of the deafblind child's passivity was caused by their fear of the unknown. However, if they were provided with the tools to actively explore unfamiliar environments, they would begin to willingly do so. This, in turn, would encourage the deafblind child to

[42] Aleksandr Meshcheriakov, 'Poznie Mira bez Slukha i Zreniia', *Piroda*, 1 (1970), p. 80 cited David Bakhurst and Carol Padden, 'The Meshcheryakov Experiment: Soviet Work on the Education of Blind-Deaf Children', *Learning and Instruction*, 1 (1991), p. 204.
[43] Ivan A. Sokolianskii, 'K Probleme Organizatsii povedenia Ukrainskii Vestnik Eksperimental'noi Pedagogiki' (1926), p. 8 cited in Avgusta V. Iarmolenko, *Ocherki Psikhologii Slepoglukhonemykh* (Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1967), p. 97.
[44] Bakhurst, 'The Meshcheryakov Experiment', pp. 208-209.
[45] Iarmolenko, *Ocherki Psikhologii*, p. 104.
[46] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 86.

investigate, which would, according to Sokolianskii, lead to independent behaviour. To understand their local environments, they needed to appreciate their position within them.

In the first few days of the child's arrival at the orphanage, they were introduced to their new settings by their teacher. To facilitate the child's entry, the pedagogue explored their new bedroom with the child. The pedagogue stood directly behind the deafblind child and grasped the child's hands with their own. They explored the room with their hands together, running their hands across the walls and surfaces so that the child would have a deepened understanding of the dimensions of his or her room. If they encountered an object, it was placed within the child's hands. To overcome the passivity of the deafblind child, they were encouraged to feel the weight, size and shape of the object in their hands, to visualize it in their minds.[47] The entire room was tactilely examined by the deafblind child. This initial inspection of their immediate environment served them well for their orientation skills. In addition, it helped establish within the deafblind child's mind the proximity of each object in the room in relation to the other. The process was repeated every single day 'until the child could remember the location of every object in the room.'[48]

With the completion of the 'orientating-investigatory activity', the deafblind child was deemed ready for their initiation into self-care training. They were taught what was known as the 'direct adjustment' (*priamaia ustanovka*) technique.[49] The child learned the process of a single self-care activity through pedagogical assistance. The pedagogue stood directly behind the student, with their hands extended in front of the child. The child's hands would be held out as well, but with the back of their hands touching against the inside of the teacher's palms. In the first part of the technique, the child would be taken through a self-care activity which involved the use of certain objects within their bedroom. For example, if the child had woken up, the pedagogue would lead the activity in helping the child put on their own clothes in preparation for breakfast.

[47] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 119, l. 19.
[48] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 88.
[49] Basilova, 'O Sokolianskom', p. 13; Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 88.

In the beginning of the theory, the pedagogue remains the dominant person in the completion of the activity, in which the child, usually, passively accepts the process. However, even if the child is unresponsive during the initial steps, they are, subconsciously, processing the entire action. It was repeated until the child began to actively take a more significant role in the process. The second part of the 'direct adjustment' was established when the activity was completed with equal input from both child and pedagogue. For the third part, the position of the hands was switched; the student was expected to take a more dominant role in the completion of their self-care activities.[50] While the child would lead, the pedagogue would simply follow. By the fourth and final part, the pedagogue would no longer be in physical contact with the deafblind child during the process. The teacher would stand adjacent to the student while they completed the activity, in which they would be close enough to aid but distant enough to encourage the child's burgeoning independence.

The 'Direct adjustment' technique allowed deafblind to learn the activity for themselves. The process proved to be immediately useful; it could be used to teach every form of self-care activity. This process, while initially slow, served to ensure that the child was adequately trained to eat, dress, wash and clean themselves. They were shown how to use the toilet independently, explore new environments (such as going outside) and other such activities. It allowed these children, who were entirely dependent on others to take care of them, to have for the first time in their entire lives the freedom that came with independence. Independent behaviour was seen as 'humanised' behaviour. By making their own decisions, the deafblind child was able to transition out of the passive 'initial state'.

The completion of an activity was a series of smaller activities, or actions, which combined to form a collection, or chain, of actions. Sokolianskii lauded the 'the greatness of infinitely small' actions to create a larger chain.[51] He had already employed the 'chain method' in his previous work with deaf children. The chain of actions ensured that the deafblind child could follow one action to the other. With their understanding of the immediate environment

[50] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 86.

[51] Ivan A. Sokolianskii, 'Klassifikatsiia raszdrazhitelei', *Ukrainskii Vestnik Eksperimental'noi Pedagogiki* (1926), p. 7 cited in Iarmolenko, *Ocherki Psikhologii*, p. 83

and its objects, the process proved substantially easier. Sokolianskii went through the series of actions for the standard cleaning process for the child:

> '1) Go to the washroom. 2.1) Take the soap from the shelves. 2.2) Take a cup from the shelves. 2.3) Put the soap in the washbasin. 2.4) Put the mug on the wash basin. 3.1) Roll up sleeves to the elbows… 4.1) Take the cup to the wash basin. 4.2) Pour the water into the cup. 4.3) Rinse mouth with water from the cup. 4.4) Put the cup down. 5.1) Take the soap from the sink. 5.2) Wash your hands with the soap. 6.1) Put the soap on the shelf. 6.2) Put the cup on the shelf. 7.1) Remove the towel. 7.2) Wipe your hands. 7.3) Wipe your mouth. 7.4) Hang the towel in the correct place.'[52]

Their completion of the 'direct adjustment' method had taught them the steps for each activity. However, each activity existed in isolation. Sokolianskii utilised the ending chain of each activity as the catalyst for the next activity.[53] Once the child had completed their morning cleaning routine, the following sequence of the chain would indicate that breakfast was the next part of the process. It helped establish a routine for the deafblind child so that they rely on this as a basis for their entire daily structure. Every single part of the day was planned for them, allowing them to be constantly stipulated throughout the process. Through the repetition of each self-activity, their knowledge of the school environment and the activity itself vastly increased.

Nevertheless, the repetition of key tasks had the unintended consequence of encouraging passiveness within the deafblind child. Despite Sokolianskii's deliberate efforts to lift the child out of the 'initial state', his methods contributed to the continuation of passive behaviour within his students. Constant repetition of key tasks encouraged little engagement with the task itself. Once the task had been memorised, the deafblind child simply repeated it without any real engagement with the action itself. It left the student with very little room to experiment or adapt. Sokolianskii wanted the deafblind child to be both independent and conscientious. Both skills were established

[52] Sokolianskii, 'K Probleme Organizatsii', p. 8.
[53] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 90.

over a substantial period. During the deafblind child's pre-literacy stage, they would strictly adhere to Sokolianskii's routines, even if that led to passivity. However, their meticulous application would act as a foundation for the development of independent behaviour. Both such traits were fundamental to the entire 'humanisation' process.

To combat such passiveness, Sokolianskii tested the children by starting the actions in the wrong sequential order. To use the example above, he would start the washing process at 2.2 instead of 1. Initially, many of the children were unsure about the change in the process.[54] It ensured that they were prepared for eventualities that prevented the child from completing or beginning the chain. It also prevented the children from falling into the trap of mechanistic repetition of the activities, without any real understanding of their purpose. It was not simply about the completion of the action, but that the child understood why it was important for them to complete it.

Their mastery of self-care activities lay within the wider context of immersing the child within socially productive work. If the deafblind child could learn how to maintain their own cleanliness and hygiene, they could be taught how to engage in labour. At this stage, children were not ready for work within industrial or agricultural settings. However, they could be prepared for such work through the maintenance of their own environment. By cleaning the rooms within the Institute, the process would 'humanise' the deafblind child. Meshcheriakov confirmed that 'the whole of… [the deafblind child's] humanised environment is initially actualised for the child through certain action performed by others and is designed to satisfy his need.'[55] Basilova stated that Sokolianskii 'considered housekeeping to be the first special skill integrated into a child's daily life.'[56] He established a daily routine for each child which would incorporate the full detail of their self-care activities and domestic chores. In the morning, they rose from their bed, got dressed, had their breakfast with the other children in the dining room and washed themselves. After brushing their teeth and washing their face, they were ready for their domestic chores. Each child was assigned one room to clean for one week. On their first attempt, the

[54] Ibid.
[55] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 291.
[56] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 90.

pedagogue used the 'direct adjustment' method to induct the child into the process. They used cloths to clean the surfaces and dusters to clean the shelves.[57]

The process was repeated over a period of a month until the child could clean the entire room without any assistance. Once the child had successfully accomplished the task independently, the child was transferred to another room in the orphanage and the process was repeated. Basilova explained that 'every deafblind child individually mastered cleaning every room in the school – it took almost a year of teacher's work.'[58] While the process was lengthy, it proved to be an excellent method in merging together the developed self-care skills with domestic chores. They were actively engaged in meaningful activity, which had a direct impact upon their immediate environment. It was an early step towards the completion of labour activities in the primary stages of the *ochelovechenie* method.

The use of the initial exploration of their home conditions, the 'direct adjustment' method and the use of the chain method were all initial steps in the deafblind child's *dobukvarnyi* stage. Through the completion of self-care and housekeeping tasks, this facilitated independent behaviour. They had taken responsibility for their own independent needs. While each deafblind child approached the teaching with varying levels of initial success, all the children at the Khar'kov school progressed from the 'initial state' to the beginning of the literacy stage. Some of the children still had residual issues with passivity, which remained an issue throughout Sokolianskii's involvement in *surdotiflopedagogika.* The success of the method was observed by Lucy Wilson during her tour of the Khar'kov orphanage in 1927:

> 'five of the pupils are little children… in addition, there is a very beautiful intelligent girl of fifteen, with bright blue eyes that see nothing yet help to illuminate a radiantly happy face… None of the pupils hear, meaning that they can take care of themselves efficiently, making their own beds, eating

[57] Ibid., p. 92.
[58] Ibid.

like refined human beings, playing and working happily together.'[59]

Western deafblind education had de-emphasized the importance of self-care skills over language acquisition. While Sokolianskii fully understood the importance of language (he even labelled his method based upon the deafblind child's language proficiency), it relied primarily on their orientation skills, self-care levels and the formation of independent behaviour. Without the initial mastery of self-care skills, Sokolianskii insisted that deafblind children would be left without any means of independence.[60] With the completion of the first part of the *dobukvarnyi* stage, they were ready for their language training.

Language Acquisition

Gesticulation formed the next part of the *dobukvarnyi* stage. Sokolianskii's rejection of the oral method as a viable educational technique for teaching communication led to his adoption of gesticulation, specifically through gesticulation. Gesticulation is the use of hand-based gestures that signify the meaning or purpose of certain words, sentences or phrases through shaping of the hands into different positions.[61] While the use of sign language is to provide a visual cue for those unable to hear the spoken language, gesticulation is also equally as useful for the deafblind individual due to its tactility. Deafblind individuals, when they signed with each other, simply placed their hand over the other person's gestures and felt what was being conveyed through touch.

When the deafblind chid learned a gesture for an object, they were encouraged to touch the object. It allowed for a more tangible image of the object within the deafblind child's mind. It also influenced the deafblind child's association of the object with its gesture, in which 'gestures, as opposed to words, clearly, visibly represented an object or action denoted.'[62] Irina

[59] Wilson, *New Schools*, p. 86.
[60] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 121, l. 88.
[61] Ibid., op. 3.1, d. 36, ll. 4–5.
[62] Ol'ga I. Skorokhodova, *Kak ia vosprinimaiu, predstavliaiu i ponimaiu okruzhaiushchii mir* (Moskva, Pedagogika, 1972), p. 18.

Sandomirskaia described the act as 'creating a three-dimensional metaphor.'[63] The gesture has concrete physicality, with their previous tactile understanding of the object in question combined with the tangibility of the gesture itself. In contrast, the written word itself remained abstract and theoretical. The conveyance of the gesture brings up the physical feeling of the object within the mind of the deafblind child and its immediate feeling through the gesture, which emphasizes the tactile nature of the language.

There are two main types of gestures used within sign language; deictic and referential gestures. Deictic, also known as 'performative' gestures, are gestures that showcase verbs, in which they 'express only the child's communicative intention, to request or declare.'[64] Referential gestures refer to 'stable referents', in which 'their basic semantic context is not changed in different contexts.'[65] For example, the gesture for the word 'ball' does not change depending on whether the ball is in the air or on the ground. Gestures were initially utilised to express the child's desire to eat, drink and use the bathroom. Like the development of their self-care skills in the previous chapter, it served as a foundation for more complex aspects of the language. While gestures are analogous to the words they describe, it is important to emphasize the fluidity of gesticulation. New forms of gestures, based upon the context of the environment of the deafblind child or children, developed based upon the child's needs. These were known as naturalised gestures, much like the gestures developed by Julia Brace.[66] They were often uniquely formed gestures based upon the deafblind child's personal experience with their environment, which had no basis in any formal gesture-based language.

The initial aim of the pedagogue during the child's acquisition of gesticulation revolved predominantly around the creation for the need to actively use it. It is the practical application of gestures that acted as primary

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[63] Irina Sandomirskaia, 'Skin to Skin: Language in the Soviet Education of Deaf-Blind Children, the 1920s and 1930s', *Studies in Eastern European Thought*, 60, 4 (2008), p. 333.

[64] Virginia Volterra, 'Gestures, Signs and words at Two Years, or When Does Communication Become Language?', in Jim G. Kyle and Bernice Woll eds., *Language in Sign: An International Perspective on Sign Language* (Croom Helm Ltd, Beckenham, 1983), p. 110.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 83.

vehicle for educational development of the deafblind child. It is through sign that the deafblind children learnt how to express themselves, interact and learn from others. Aleksei Leont'ev, in his review of Skorokhodova's memoirs, explained how language benefited the education of the deafblind child:

> 'The path to humanisation is not through the formation of language or consciousness, but by building a real human relationship to reality and emerging on this basis, to communicate to the master of the human language and human consciousness.'[67]

The process of 'humanisation' only worked through the establishment of a relationship between the individual and their environment. This was only accomplished through the completion of self-care skills. While the formation of language skills would allow the deafblind child to be able to communicate with others, it was the relationship with the localised environment which proved to be most vital aspect of their 'humanisation'. Sokolianskii had highlighted that Western attempts at deafblind education had wrongly identified language as a 'humanising' medium and neglected the role of self-care and the environment.

Meshcheriakov expressed similar views to his predecessor, explaining that the need to communicate through language is only truly established through the development of their self-care skills. He stated that

> 'only as he starts to communicate with other people and begins to engage in joint activity with them, do his physical urges or requirements find their human objects and thus become transformed into elementary human material needs… Later, when the child is introduced to more complex satisfaction of his material needs, the first non-material needs arise, such as the need for communication with his fellow human beings. This is no longer a need for… strictly utilitarian communication, but for emotional and intellectual communication, that plays such an important part in man's

[67] Aleksei I. Leont'ev, 'Ol'ga I. Skorokhodova, *Kak ia vosprinimaiu okruzhaiuishii mir*', (Sovietskaia Pedagogika, 1948), p. 108.

> mental development and in the enrichment of the personality.'[68]

The process often took months, if not years, for the deafblind child to become fully competent. Through repeated use, language provided them with the opportunity to self-develop. Skorokhodova explained that 'through such method, the child gained access to all human knowledge, aesthetics and morality.'[69] Not only would it facilitate their own education, it would allow their advancement towards more complex aspects of Sokolianskii's method, such as dactylology and verbal speech. Sokolianskii himself saw gesticulation as synonymous with verbal speech, in which it was only the medium of communication that remained different. [70] His entire method was a series of steps that built upon each other, thus allowing for a slow, but solid, build-up of knowledge.

Gesticulation was valued as a necessary teaching technique for the deafblind child's language development. It was utilised as a medium for allowing the child to communicate their feelings about their immediate surroundings. Some of the children had already established their own method for doing so. It took the shape of naturalised, or organic, gestures.[71] Organic gestures are defined as unique gestures which had been formulated by the deafblind child through their early life experiences. Sokolianskii stated that '[natural] gestures arise through the form and acquirement of adequate expressions that function only under the influence of utilising the public environment.'[72] However, the formation of naturalised gestures depended on the child's circumstances and environment. Some deafblind children, such as Skorokhodova and Nosachev, had formed their own unique gestures, while others, such as Kirii, had not. Pedagogical assistance was needed to foster the creation of organic gestures for children such as Kirii.

Such actions were accomplished primarily through the child's basic needs. Over a sustained period, the pedagogue would establish a specific hand

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[68] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 10.
[69] Ol'ga I. Skorokhodova, *Kak ia vosprinimaiu okruzhaiushii mir* (Sovietskaia Pedagogika, Moskva, 1948), p. 20.
[70] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 4.
[71] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 117, ll. 36-38.
[72] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 6.

movement which was only associated with a type food, action or object within the child's environment. Over time, the deafblind student would associate the link between the object and gesture. The connection was reinforced by the child's exploration of the immediate environment through through the 'direct adjustment' technique. Gestures 'arise (are born) in the processes of living things and become familiar to the child in his everyday life.'[73] Sokolianskii goes into detail about these natural gestures:

> 'The gestures formed by the deafblind in the pre-literacy period are purely individual and serve as a primitive means of communication and are understandable only to those who are directly served by the child and who actually taught him such gestures.'[74]

Naturalised gestures are, by definition, individually unique to each deafblind child. Only the deafblind child and the individual would understand the meaning of each organic gesture. They existed in isolation to formal gesticulation and dactylology. While they served an immediate purpose of instigating the child's active association between an object and a word (represented by a gesture), it was not useful as a language. However, it would serve as a stepping stone for other types of accessible language for the deafblind.

With the child's use of naturalised gestures, the next stage was for their transition from naturalised gestures to formalised sign language. In the same process, the deafblind child learnt to associate an action or object with a specific gesture, which was a formal gesture within sign language. This transition applied predominantly to the students who had already established the child's own vocabulary of naturalised gestures. Unlike the difficulty of the acquisition of organic gestures, the pedagogue could rely on their knowledge of key words to speed up the learning process. By learning formal sign language, they learnt their first formal means of communication. Unlike naturalised gestures with their unique association to objects within the deafblind child's environment, formal sign language existed within a body of interlinked gestures which could form the basis of a dialogue between the deafblind child and others. Through

[73] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.1, d. 36, l. 5.
[74] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 6.

gesticulation, the deafblind child would be able to communicate for the first time through an organised, efficient language which would cater to their sensory needs. In addition, the process was conducive for the formation of active, inquisitive behaviour. Sokolianskii stated that 'it leads to the intellectual development of the deafblind child with the help of sign language in the long term… especially in the initial formation of its means of communication with others.'[75] Essential for communication was not only the formation of language, but the formation of the need for language. The desire to use language was a key aim of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method.

Once the deafblind child had mastered the basics of both formal and naturalised gesticulation, it prepared them for their acquisition of the alphabet. This was through the dactyl alphabet and the flat-text alphabet. The dactyl alphabet was comprised of a series of gestures which denoted the complete list of letters in their form.[76] For example, in the Russian dactyl alphabet, the letter 'a' was formed through a closed fist while the letter 'p' was gestured as the extension of the forefinger, ring and little finger, with the thumb enclosed over the middle finger on the palm of the hand. The child's induction in the dactyl alphabet was formed using their formal gestures. To facilitate learning, the pedagogue simply replaced the gesture with its counterpart in dactyl. For example, for the gesture '*papa*' (father), the word was replaced with its dactyl equivalent.[77] The pedagogue spelt out the word '*papa'* in a series of gestures, with the extension of the three fingers and a closed fist to signify the '*p*' and '*a*'. Through this method, the deafblind child was taught that both gestures, the formal gesture and the series of dactyl gestures, referred to the same word. Both gestures of the same object 'allowed for a more detailed image of the object within the child's cerebral cortex.'[78]

The flat-text, or graphic, alphabet is the standardised written alphabet, but in a three-dimensional format. It can be constructed as either raised or cut-out text, but its purpose was to provide a tactile representation of the alphabet. Sokolianskii stated that it relied on an internalized knowledge of the dactyl

[75] Ibid., p. 8.
[76] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.1, d. 26, ll. 42-43.
[77] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 8.
[78] Ibid., p. 12.

alphabet if the learning process was to be successful.[79] He also stipulated that any attempt to skip the learning process of dactylolgy had grave consequences for the language process, in which 'it was necessary to strictly observe the sequence of assimilation'.[80] Sokolianskii introduced two separate techniques for teaching the deafblind child how to learn the graphic alphabet. The first method involved the use of cutting out letters from a sheet of paper and encouraging the deafblind child to feel the shape of the individual letters. In addition, the pedagogue also traced out the letters onto their palms.[81] Once the child had established their knowledge of the dactyl alphabet, Sokolianskii explained that 'experience shows that the child learns a new alphabet rather quickly, and… it is not that difficult.'[82] Over a substantial period, the deafblind child's knowledge of the dactyl and flat-text alphabet expanded through the learning of new words in both formats. Through repeated use, the student replaced their naturalised gestures with the newly internalized alphabets and formal gestures. The learning of the dactyl and flat-text alphabet proved to be a substantial step in the *ochelovechenie* method.

With the formation of an increasing vocabulary of gestures by the deafblind child, Sokolianskii's next step focused on the development of facial expressions.[83] Such expressions are formed by seeing and hearing children primarily through visual examination of the facial expressions of others. In addition, this is reinforced through visual and audio cues, such as the association of joy with a smile or discomfort with a frown. However, the deafblind child is unable to process this information. Sokolianskii explained how this affected their facial expressions during their infancy, in which the

> 'mimicking of facial expressions for the deafblind is no different to normal facial expressions. But with age, the difference in facial expressions begins to affect them more and more, and, if the deafblind child is in favourable conditions… the facial expressions begin to 'stiffen'

[79] Ibid., p. 13.
[80] Ibid., p. 14.
[81] Ibid., p. 13.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 102.

> [*zastivat*], 'to be preserved' even at the stage of infancy… the deafblind child's face becomes immobile, masklike.'[84]

Without any knowledge of the specific types of facial expressions, the deafblind child is unable to form their own through mimicking others. Consequently, it resulted in a lack of cohesion between their movements, gesticulation and facial expressions. For example, if they expressed happiness through gesticulation, their facial expression was immobile, which only served to confuse other people Language was only one aspect of communication, in which it relied on facial expressions, body language, audio cues and other such actions to convey meaning.

Sokolianskii established a method to teach the deafblind child how to form facial expressions, which he titled 'demasking' (*demaskatsiia*).[85] For the first step, he encouraged the deafblind children to feel the facial expressions of their pedagogues.[86] They were shown how the face changed its structure depending on a specific emotion. During the action of smiling, they felt their pedagogue's eyes narrow, the widening of the mouth and the skin being pulled back. In addition, Sokolianskii had classical Greek-style plaster masks constructed for the deafblind children.[87] With their exaggerated expressions of happiness and sadness, they proved to be useful teaching aids for the deafblind children. If it was necessary, Sokolianskii gave them 'special instruction in pantomime.'[88]

Over a period of several weeks or months (depending on the child), the children would be encouraged to change their facial expressions depending on their relevant mood. The long process ensured that eventually, the pupil began to associate the emotion with its relevant facial expression. Such actions would have been impossible during the 'initial state' of the deafblind child. Their fluency in gesticulation and dactylology provided the foundation for detailed conversations about the 'demasking' process. The method served as an extension of the gesticulation method, in which the facial expression was

[84] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 4.
[85] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 102.
[86] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 5.
[87] Sandomirskaia, 'Skin to Skin', p. 334.
[88] Karl Levitin, *One is Not Born a Personality: A Biographical History of Soviet Psychology* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1982), p. 147.

another gesture to be internalized. Language was not simply a verbal form of communication, but an entire mix of facial, eye, hand and mouth movements that all work cohesively together to assign meaning and purpose to a word or phrase.

However, it also raised questions about the purpose of teaching facial expressions within the wider 'humanisation' process. While it may have been considered necessary for the deafblind child to learn facial expression as part of their language acquisition, it is unclear whether this was for the benefit of deafblind children or for the seeing and hearing populace. The students were encouraged to make associations between emotions and facial expressions, but it was an artificial connection. They had not established this through personal experience, only through mimicry of other people's actions. The memorization of facial expressions was not an organic process. While gesticulation was a method of communication which predominantly relied on tactility, facial expressions were not needed to convey meaning. Consequently, it only conveyed meaning to those able to see such facial expressions. The 'demasking' technique was adopted to ensure that deafblind children learnt to adopt the appropriate facial expressions during communication with seeing individuals. While not particularly useful during gesticulation, it ensured that deafblind children behaved in socially acceptable way. With deafblind children unable to learn and mimic other facial expressions, they had to be taught mechanically the processes of how to be and act as a human being. The process of 'demasking' was about transitioning the child from the 'initial state' and into an integrated individual whom behaved as society expected them to.

The basis for language acquisition relied on the child's previous experience of their environment. This knowledge acted as a reference point for the deafblind child, which was irrespective of whether the child was taught gesticulation, dactylology or even verbal speech. Without an understanding of the environment, 'speech, with no roots in a system of immediate images reflecting the child's environment, had no foundation and thus could not provide a basis for the child's mental development.'[89] After learning the various forms of gesticulation, verbal speech was the next step. However, it was a

[89] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 84.

different form of communication which relied not on the child's tactility. Instead, it relied on the child's ability to use their vocal cords for intonation, phenome usage and the shaping of the lips for articulation. The child's fluency in verbal speech depended to a certain extent on the onset of their hearing loss. Most of the children at the Khar'kov school had lost their hearing after the age of three to five. While their partial or total hearing loss may have prevented their further development of verbal speech, it could act, much like the naturalised gesture to the dactyl alphabet, as a foundation. Sokolianskii explained that 'for children who have lost their hearing during the initial period of speech formation… i.e. in the second or third year. Not only is it possible to restore, but it should be restored.'[90]

The process of teaching the child verbal speech firstly relied on intonation. The child was introduced to the method through their tactile experience of the process of speaking. They were encouraged to feel their pedagogue's neck, lips and face during the process. Much like the 'demasking' method, they felt the process with their own hands. They understood that the vocal cords reverberated in different ways depending on the phoneme and the lips changed shaped based upon different pronunciations. Their tactile examination of the action of speaking, combined with their previous experience of the process, reinforced the entire method. Sokolianskii emphasized the importance of intonation as the first step for verbal speech acquisition. He explained that 'children who had lost their hearing and ability to articulate (between the ages of two and five) retained intonation at a normal level for a long period… Not only can you keep intonation in the children, but you can restore speech based upon it.'[91] Deafblind children still retained the capability for intonated speech. However, without any form of reference, the deafblind child rarely uses their speech unless it is in reaction to their basic needs. Consequently, it also meant that the spoken pitch of their voices became varied. Often, the deafblind children spoke loudly, to the point where it was uncomfortable for other people. Sokolianskii endeavoured to 'carefully monitor and prevent the possibility of an unnaturally loud voice.'[92]

[90] S-FPS, f .1, op. 4.1, d. 120, l. 33.
[91] Ibid., l. 59.
[92] Ibid., l. 56.

Much like the 'demasking' technique, questions remain about the ultimate purpose of verbal speech, specifically whether it was a means of teaching the deafblind children to exhibit socially acceptable behaviour. While both Sokolianskii and Vygotskii expressed their desire for a combined educational approach of both gesticulation and verbal speech, the necessity of verbal speech acquisition tapped into the similar aims of oralism. Verbal speech was particularly useful for the deafblind child in their efforts to integrate into wider society. While it has been established that Soviet deaf citizens could lead integrated, connected lives within Soviet society, verbal speech was deemed a necessary aspect of the wider 'humanisation' process within Sokolianskii's method. Verbal speech would allow deafblind children to have the necessary skills to be able to communicate with hearing individuals.

Sokolianskii applied the process to Skorokhodova, in which 'in order to teach her verbal speech, Dr. Sokolianskii would insert his fingers into Ol'ga's mouth and show her the necessary movements to be made. For her turn, she would verify these moments in the doctor's mouth, trying to feel with her own fingers how the sounds were formed.'[93] All the Khar'kov children learnt how to construct their own verbal speech through their tactile examination of the process. Sokolianskii explained that the deafblind chid 'feels, not the voice in a hearing sense, but the vibrations of the voice.'[94] In addition, it was through their physical confirmation of the movements of the lips which developed the deafblind child's 'ability to articulate and read from lips for everyday speech in a classroom' environment.[95]

However, the process, much like most of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method, took place over an extended period. He emphasized the need for patience, decrying teachers who were 'hasty' in their approach.[96] It was a carefully constructed process which required both the deafblind child and pedagogue to exhibit substantial control. The deafblind child was expected to practice verbal speech both in and outside the classroom. To encourage the

[93] Anita D. Utzinger, *A Contribution to the History of the Education of Deaf-Blind Children in Europe* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Boston University, 1957), pp. 108-109.
[94] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 121, l. 7.
[95] Ibid., op. 3.1, d. 26, l. 38.
[96] Ibid., op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 47.

child to use verbal speech, he devised a list of words which had to be verbalised instead of gesticulated. The list included:

> '1. First names, patronymics and surnames of the student. 2. Brief biographical information of the student (names of parents, ages and addresses). 3. The names, patronymics, surnames and positions of the administrative, pedagogical and technical personnel of the [Khar'kov] school.'[97]

Not only did this speed up the learning process, but it also encouraged the child to use verbal speech over other forms of language.

Much of Sokolianskii's method relied on overcoming the child's ingrained passivity to facilitate the need to use language. The deafblind child often used gesticulation over verbal speech in the initial stages as they felt more comfortable using a familiar language.[98] It was not enough to simply learn verbal speech. It was only through repeated use of the verbal speech in their lessons and active use outside of lessons with other pedagogues in the Khar'kov orphanage did the deafblind children learn the basics of the language. Sokolianskii stated that 'the minimal verbal and phraseological material is only considered mastered if the students freely and arbitrarily call the words and expressions on their own initiative, use them in everyday speech and use them instead of gesticulation.'[99] With the child's acquisition of the basics of verbal speech, they had completed the *dobukvarnyi* stage of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method.

Braille and the Reading Machine

The child's mastery of formal sign language, dactylology, the flat-text alphabet and verbal speech had led to their completion of the pre-literate stage. It prepared them for the *bukvarnyi* stage. Their existing knowledge of the previous forms of communication would facilitate their induction into the

[97] Ibid., op. 3.1, d. 26, l. 41.
[98] Ibid., l. 38.
[99] Ibid., l. 41.

writing and reading method. Each step reinforced the next stage. Kirill Maslov provided a diagram for the learning process of the deafblind child;

> 'Action → Gesture → Denoting of the Gesture (Through Fingers [Dactyl alphabet]) → Gesture Separation to Letters (in Braille) → Writing (in Braille).'[100]

Literacy remained one of the fundamental objectives of the entire *ochelovechenie* method. While they had achieved fluency in tactile and oral communication, the deafblind child would be able to express their own attitudes through a printed medium. Literacy would be a 'humanising' mechanism, allowing the deafblind individuals to participate in the public sphere in their consumption of newspapers, literature and other such printed material. Braille was established as the primary form for establishing literacy.[101] Braille itself is a form of tactile based writing that takes the shape of raised, or convex, font. Each Braille cell is comprised of a series of up to six raised dots, which form a distinct pattern within an isolated cell. Each combination of one to six raised dots formed a cell, which corresponded to a specific letter, number, or punctuation mark. Braille operates as a tactile form of typed text, in which the blind or deafblind individual runs their finger across the raised dots from left to right. Due to the tactile nature of Braille, it serves as the primary means for reading for the blind and deafblind.

Sokolianskii's method for teaching the deafblind child how to read relied on the formation of a fifteen-point reading plan. The first step focused on the introduction of Braille texts to the deafblind child. Instead of its introduction as a classroom activity, he employed a subtler approach to encourage the child's curiosity in the process. The student was placed amongst other deafblind children who were reading texts in Braille. They were encouraged to feel the Braille texts, to follow along with the reading process and to analyse the different Braille cells. Basilova detailed Mariia Sokol's experience with Braille acquisition. Mariia, who had mastered the pre-literate stage by 1936, was told to observe the other deafblind children reading Braille texts. She 'began to feel

[100] Kirill Maslov, 'The Lives of the Blind in a Historical Whirlpool: Russian and Soviet Research Traditions Reconsidered', *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, 45, 5 (2010), pp. 74–75.
[101] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 53, l. 1.

their actions. Afterwards, she took the Braille book and began to examine it, open and close it and run her fingers along the dots.[102] The experience had garnered interest in the tactile script, in which it served as the ideal preparation for their participation in the reading process. With her newfound interest in Braille, Mariia was encouraged to feel the raised Braille cells, to move her hand across the different combinations of raised dots.

Once the child had tactilely examined the individual Braille dot, cell and entire text, the next step of the fifteen-point method focused on their knowledge of gesticulation. To assist with the process, Sokolianskii established the method known as the 'system of parallel text' (*sistema parallel'nykh tekstov*).[103] While both Braille and gesticulation shared a tactile similarity, they were two different systems. Sokolianskii utilised the deafblind child's existing knowledge of gestures to act as a teaching tool for Braille. After several basic steps of Sokolianskii's Braille method, which included feeling the Braille cells, the ninth step focused on the Braille alphabet. The deafblind child learnt the Braille alphabet through comparing it with his or her knowledge of the dactyl alphabet.[104] The pedagogue signed different dactyl letters, in which the child would provide the Braille equivalent. The process was repeated with letters and eventually in sign language.

For the twelfth step, the deafblind child composed short, familiar words in Braille, such as 'nose, mouth, ear, tooth, etc.'[105] The rest of the method focused on increasing their vocabulary of Braille words and punctuation. The process proved to be relatively straightforward. Sokolianskii explained that 'if the dactyl and flat-text alphabets are strongly internalized, then the assimilation of the convex-form [Braille] takes little time.'[106] Much of the extensive work had been accomplished in the deafblind child's *dobukvarnyi* stage. With an extensive foundation in place, the acquisition of future forms of language proved to be much easier.

[102] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 98.
[103] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, p. 18.
[104] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 100.
[105] Ibid., p. 100.
[106] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 14.

Despite advances in the Braille script, Sokolianskii understood that there were practical limitations to the process. Reading Braille was an intensive action, which put pressure on the attention span of the deafblind student. Consequently, Skorokhodova explained that any lapse in concentration during the reading process deeply affected their perception of the text:

> 'it is very important for the reader to be agile and have a flexible arm and it is not exhausted from other work. If the hand of the reader is tired and not flexible in the movement of their fingers, it is strongly reflected in their perception of the text… not all of my readers understand this and they blame me for a hard, unperceiving hand or my inattentive reading.'[107]

In addition, the limited number of Braille texts in the early Soviet period prevented the child's access to much of the available literature. Nevertheless, Sokolianskii hoped to overcome these issues. He wanted to construct a process which allowed the deafblind child to read easily accessible texts.

Sokolianskii achieved this through the construction of the 'reading machine' (*chitaiushchaia mashina*), a mechanical solution to a pedagogical problem.[108] Sokolianskii stated that the 'reading machine is an instrument for solving the problem for the blind… the blind man will be able to read any book printed for the sighted with the usual typographical font.'[109] The reading machine was an example of a mechanical aid for deafblind individuals. Similar to other aids for people with physical disabilities, Soviet advances had encountered a lukewarm response.[110] Perhaps the most well-known aid was a prosthetic which was an arm for below-the-elbow amputees constructed by Viktor Konovov, subsequently dubbed 'Konovov's arm.'[111] While the

[107] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, pp. 29-30.
[108] Sandomirskaia, 'Skin to Skin', p. 324.
[109] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 117.
[110] For further information on how the regime dealt with prosthetics, see also Frances L. Bernstein, 'Prosthetic Manhood in the Soviet Union at the End of World War II', *Osiris*, 30, 1 (2015), pp. 113-133; Frances L. Bernstein, 'Prosthetic Promise and Potemkin Limbs in late-Stalinist Russia', in *Disability in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union: History, Policy and Everyday Life*, eds., Michael Rasell and Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova (Routledge, New York, 2014), pp. 42-66; Sandomirskaia, 'Skin to Skin', pp. 324-325.
[111] Bernstein, 'Prosthetic Manhood', p. 121.

construction of the prosthetic arm began in the 1930s, it was only fully produced and distributed in the late Stalinist period. However, Frances Bernstein stated that the quality of prosthetic limbs in the late-Stalinist period was often dubious, and the amputee citizens, often war veterans, expressed their frustration with the questionable quality and efficiency of the aids.[112]

Both the 'reading machine' and 'Konovov's arm' were variations of the same thing; responses from Soviet practitioners to provide mechanical solutions to the limitations of a person's disability. Furthermore, the prosthetics addressed different aspects of the disabled person's integration into Soviet society. Konovov's arm provided both practical and aesthetic benefits, allowing limbless individuals to utilise a prosthetic arm in their daily lives. Likewise, the reading machine was aimed at improving literacy. Both aids were restorative, whether it be the increased tactility or more developed avenue for education. If a Soviet citizen was expected to be a literate, collective worker, it was necessary for them to be able to have the opportunities to do so. With language being the fundamental goal of the 'humanisation' of deafblind children, the reading machine would help assimilate deafblind children into Soviet society.

The construction of mechanical aids tapped into wider Soviet attempts to overcome the fallacies of nature through scientific innovation. The reading machine itself fitted into an amalgamation of Soviet pedagogy, technological advancement and *surdotiflopedagogika*. While Sokolianskii was not the first person to build the machine, he was instrumental in its construction as a tool for deafblind learning in the 1930s. The machine fits into Sokolianskii's own attitudes towards the reforming nature of Bolshevik science, but its origins can be traced back to the late tsarist period. Sokolianskii first heard of a similar machine when he was in St. Petersburg at the Institute for Neuro-Psychiatry in 1909. In his discussions with Bogdanov-Berezovskii, Sokolianskii learnt that initial designs for such a machine had been drawn up by Vasilii Tiurin, an inventor and pedagogue.[113] Despite the feasibility of the design, Bogdanov-Berezovskii and other academics 'did not believe the idea was possible', which had led to the abandonment of the project.[114] Despite its rejection, Sokolianskii

[112] Bernstein, 'Prosthetic Promise', pp. 44-45.
[113] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 7.
[114] Ibid.

maintained that the construction of such a machine would be an invaluable tool in disability education. He would only be able to pursue its construction after the establishment of the Khar'kov orphanage.

When he was appointed a Professor of Defectology at the Khar'kov Institute, Sokolianskii travelled to Leningrad to meet with Professor Skirtskii (first name unknown) at the Oto-Phonetic Institute. They held two separate meetings in 1926 and 1927, where they discussed possible designs for a machine for the deaf. [115] They had hoped to construct a machine which converted auditory speech into a tactile form, but Skirtskii explained that 'it was impossible to eliminate the distortion of speech.'[116] In addition, they also identified similar advances in the construction of a reading machine in the United States. Professor Robert Gault from the Carnegie Institute had published his findings in 1927.[117]

While the plans for a machine for the deaf were eventually abandoned, Skirtskii introduced Sokolianskii to Boris Rosing, an inventor and scientist.[118] Rosing, who eventually became well-known for constructing one of the first ever television sets, had successfully constructed a reading machine for the blind. While only a few details exist about its composition, the 'Rosing machine' emphasized hearing over touch. Rosing concluded that 'it seemed to him that the blind had better hearing and therefore, it was easier for them to sort out the hearing from the sound signals.'[119] Sokolianskii asked Rosing whether it would be possible to construct a machine which catered for the deafblind, which emphasized 'touch, not hearing.'[120] However, Rosing, despite his interest in Sokolianskii's research, stated that he did not know to build the machine with its emphasis on touch.[121] Despite the setback, Sokolianskii remained convinced that sensory technology was an avenue for revolutionary pedagogical change within *surdotiflopedagogika*.

[115] Ibid., ll. 11-13.
[116] Ibid., l. 12.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Basilova, 'O Sokolianskom', p. 10.
[119] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 16.
[120] Ibid., l. 17.
[121] Ibid., l. 18.

By the early 1930s, Sokolianskii had begun to search for an individual who would be able to construct a reading machine for the deafblind. He encountered initial problems with locating an individual with the necessary experience, in which he explained that they needed someone who was a 'physicist, technician and at least a radio technician.'[122] It was during his search for an inventor that he started a working relationship with the Kiev-based Professor of Physics, Goldman (first name unknown). Goldman, who would eventually attempt to claim sole credit for the construction of the reading machine, was a Jewish Ukrainian physicist who worked in his own laboratory at the Polytechnic Institute in Kiev.

Initially, Sokolianskii was drawn to him due to Goldman's pro-Ukrainian sentiments. Goldman insisted on presenting all his lectures in Ukrainian, which stoked Sokolianskii's own nationalist sentiments. Goldman was condemned by the Bolshevik leadership for his open displays of Ukrainian nationalism, and Sokolianskii used his authority within Narkomos to assist him (to his later regret). Goldman's significance to Sokolianskii became apparent through Goldman's own desire to create a reading machine in the summer of 1931. He claimed that he had been working on 'electrical discharges and the photoelectric effect, that is, precisely those problems that were fundamental in this matter.'[123] Sokolianskii assisted Goldman in the formation of a laboratory, which would be fitted with the necessary equipment needed for the construction of the machine. Sokolianskii established a budget of '20,000 roubles' for the entire construction process from Narkomos, which covered equipment and travel expenses for Goldman.[124] However, Goldman had no intention of building a reading machine, instead using the additional funds to pursue his own projects. While Goldman continued to work on the construction of the reading machine for appearance's sake, he lied about his work on the machine to Sokolianskii. He claimed to Sokolianskii that he felt that the 'machine was impossible to construct' and asked for additional funds.[125] While Sokolianskii suspected that

[122] Ibid., l. 23.
[123] Ibid., l. 31.
[124] Ibid., l. 62.
[125] Ibid., l. 41.

Goldman was not telling him the truth, he continued to trust Goldman with the design of the machine.

To support Goldman's work, Sokolianskii submitted his funding request for the project to Narkomos in late 1931. He encountered some resistance from the funding committee at Narkomos. The head of the Ukrainian Commissariat of Education was the former Bolshevik revolutionary, Mykola Skrypnyk, who led the Ukrainization efforts of the UkrSSR.[126] Sokolianskii described the funding process as a disaster, in which the committee, 'people who had been selected by Skrypnyk', threatened him with termination if he pursued the reading machine any further.[127] They did not understand that deafblind children could read Braille or gestures with their hands. Consequently, Sokolianskii labelled them as 'scum, illiterate people whom it was impossible to talk with.'[128] The rejection of Sokolianskii's proposal highlighted the precariousness of his position within Soviet Ukraine. While he may have held a professorship at the Khar'kov Institute and key positions within Narkomos, he operated within an extremely narrow discipline and struggled to gain support from the funding committees within Narkomos. In addition, his almost blinkered desire to construct the reading machine led to his manipulation by Goldman, who took advantage of Sokolianskii's elevated position within the Ukrainian Soviet educational apparatus to pursue his own projects.

While Sokolianskii provided a detailed account of the developments of reading machine during the early-to-mid 1930s, it is unclear why he did not mention the destructive socio-political events which dominated Ukrainian society during the late 1920s and 1930s. Initially, the ascendance of Soviet government in Ukraine proved initially to be a boon to Ukrainian identity and culture, with the Soviet regime committed to championing the linguistic and cultural interests of non-Russian nationalities within the Soviet Union. The policy, known as *korenizatsiia*, proved initially successful, with the Ukrainian language being preferred over Russian in much of the UkrSSR government and

[126] From 1927 to 1933, he was appointed as the Commissar for Education of the Ukraine and advanced the policy of *korenizatsiia*, or Ukrainization. of Ukrainization. Olga Bertelsen, *Spatial Dimensions of Soviet Repressions in the 1930s: The House of Writers (Kharkiv, Ukraine*) (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Nottingham, 2013), p. 108.
[127] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 69.
[128] Ibid., l. 71.

bureaucracy.[129] However, Joseph Stalin's desire to bring peasant-owned farms under state control led to adoption of the twin policies of collectivization and dekulakization in the hope of increasing Soviet grain production.[130] The flaws of such policies were apparent from the onset; peasants were set impossibly high targets for grain production while many enterprising peasants, known as *kulaks*, were deported, imprisoned and killed in the millions as the regime sought to establish its dominance in agriculture. However, their actions contributed to the loss of millions of people through the *Holodomor*, the largest man-made famine in Ukrainian history. Robert Conquest has argued that the man-made famine was a direct attempt not only to eliminate Ukrainian peasantry, but the Ukrainian nation, identity and culture.[131]

The policies of collectivisation and dekulakisation went in tandem with the regime's rapid backpedalling of their *korenizatsiia* policy in Ukraine, catching out Ukrainian intellectuals and state officials. It led to provoked widespread arrests, purges and executions amongst the Ukrainian intelligentsia and state apparatus. Skrypnyk, with his frontier role in emphasizing Ukrainian over Russian as the dominant language in Ukrainian schools, was forced to recant his previous beliefs, which eventually led to his apparent suicide in 1933.[132] His successor, Volodomyr Zatonsky, 'oversaw a wide-ranging purge of the commissariat, pedagogical institutions, and of the teaching ranks.'[133]

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[129] For further information on Ukrainian nationalism in the Soviet period and responses to the Ukrainization efforts, see also Matthew D. Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923-1934* (University of Toronto Press, London, 2014); Bertelsen, *The House of Writers*; James E. Mace, *Communism and the Dilemmas of National Liberation: National Communism in Soviet Ukraine, 1918-1933* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1983); Olena Palko, 'Righting the Writing: The Power Dynamic of Soviet Ukraine Language Policies and Reforms in the 1920s-1930s', *Slavic Studies*, 14 (2017), pp. 67-89; Olga Bertelsen and Myroslav Shkandrii, 'The Secret Police and the Campaign against Galicians in Soviet Ukraine, 1929-1934', *Nationalities Papers*, 42, 1 (2014), pp. 37-62; Paul R. Magocsi, *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism: Galicia as Ukraine's Piedmont* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2002), pp. ix-x.

[130] For further information on collectivisation in Soviet Union, see also Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivisation and the Terror Famine* (Pimlico, London, 2002); Robert W. Davis, *The Socialist Offensive: The Collectivisation of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1930* (Macmillan, London, 1980); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999), pp. 122-125; Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (Penguin, London, 2007), pp. 81-93.

[131] Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine, 1921-33* (Penguin, New York, 2017); Conquest, *Harvest of Sorrow*, pp. 3-4.

[132] Bertelsen, *The House of Writers*, p. 108.

[133] Pauly, *Breaking the Tongue*, p. 304; S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, ll. 79-80.

Consequently, Sokolianskii's Ukrainian nationalist sentiments were brought up against him and he was arrested on 7th December 1933 for being a 'member of a Ukrainian counterrevolutionary organization' and was sentenced to three years in prison.[134]

Despite his incarceration, Sokolianskii remained confident about his eventual release, since he knew 'there was nothing that would lead to any serious consequences. I knew that I was being slandered against but I believed that the authorities were not easily misled and the slanderers would be punished like criminals.'[135] In addition, Sokolianskii lamented the time away from his pedagogical work, and 'was depressed that I could not return to work with the deafblind children.'[136] While in prison, Sokolianskii managed to procure a newspaper which revealed that Goldman had begun the construction of a reading machine for the blind 'by order of the Institute of Defectology, which I was in charge of before my arrest.'[137] Although Goldman's claim that he was the sole person in charge of the project, Sokolianskii was overjoyed with the development of the machine. He exclaimed that 'I was so moved that if Goldman had appeared in my room at that moment, I would have knelt down and shed pure tears of joy. In addition, I would have even probably kissed him.'[138]

Despite receiving a three-year prison sentence, Sokolianskii was released from his incarceration on 8th March 1934.[139] It was suspected that his relationship with Gorkii, with whom he had established a friendship in the early 1930s, helped ensure his early release. In addition, Sokolianskii admitted that Zatonsky had professed his admiration of Sokolianskii's work, in which 'he said that I was almost the only one in the world who could be trusted with the education of others.'[140] By September 1934, Sokolianskii had abandoned his fruitless partnership with Goldman. He turned to the Ukrainian Institute of Physics and Technology (*Ukrainskii Fiziko-Tekhnicheskii Institut*, hereafter UFTI) for assistance. Sokolianskii had developed rudimentary designs of the machine,

[134] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 104.
[135] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 90.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid., l. 93.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 104.
[140] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 82.

which were utilised by the technicians at the UFTI. Within a week, the UFTI constructed a reading machine to Sokolianskii's specifications.[141] The machine was particularly ingenious in its approach. While other machines relied on the user's auditory or visual senses to provide feedback from the reading material, the machine utilised electronic oscillations which vibrated against the deafblind person's finger. Sokolianskii described the reading process:

> 'It was based upon an innovative invention using photocells. The book to be read is placed in front of a specially constructed projector that reflects the letters on to a small screen. The reflected light causes fluctuations in the sensory elements, which in turn, influence electromagnets attached to each element. Each electromagnet produces a protrusion of the pin on a flat surface, like the keys on a piano, for the blind reader. There are five pins, which go with the five fingers, and it applies pressure when the text is projected with the spotlight. Thus, the blind could read any book using the sensitivity of his fingers.'[142]

[141] Ibid.,
[142] Ibid., op. 2, d. 15, ll. 75-76.

Figure 5.

The contact surface of the 'reading machine', Khar'kov, c. 1935[143]

Much of the composition of the reading machine remains unclear. It is suspected that the electronic oscillations formed together to create another unique language system, but it is uncertain whether it was a new system or whether it was an adapted form of Braille. Nevertheless, it had a profound impact upon reading proficiency of deafblind children. Sokolianskii commented that it started a 'new way of reading' for the deafblind child.[144] Previously inaccessible books in flat-text would be accessible to the deafblind reader. According to Basilova, it had the potential to replace up to '900 hours of classes'.[145] It was a truly revolutionary change towards the educational development of deafblind individuals. The deafblind child could no longer be limited to the availability of Braille translated reading material. They would be able to examine, interact and visualize the entire breadth of written human expression through the advent of the reading machine.

[143] Ibid., op. 8, d. 191, l. 13.
[144] Ibid., op. 3.2, d. 53, l. 2.
[145] Tat'iana Basilova, *I. A. Sokolianskii, Biobibliograficheskii Ukzatel'* (Moskva, 1989), p. 11.

Sokolianskii introduced the machine into the educational curriculum of his deafblind pupils at the Khar'kov Institute, which had been renamed the Ukrainian Institute of Experimental Medicine (*Ukrainskii Institut Eksperimental'noi Meditsiny*, hereafter UIEM).[146] In late 1934, he showed the reading machine to the adult Ol'ga Skorokhodova and two other blind students from the department for the blind at UIEM, called Neelov and Verdinkov. The results proved enormously successful. Sokolianskii stated that 'Ol'ga was not only reading really fast on it, but also began to perceive, for the first time, which meant that the results were wonderful.'[147] In his initial estimation, he predicted that the deafblind child would need six months to become fully proficient on the machine. However, he was shocked at the speed of his students. Sokolianskii concluded that both 'the deafblind and the blind can read ordinary font converted by a photoelectric device with no less success than sighted readers.'[148]

Despite the positive results of the reading machine amongst his own students, Sokolianskii sought to confirm his findings against other such applications. On 19th January 1935, he sent a letter to Professor Gault who had developed his own version of the reading machine. In the letter, he informed Gault about the success of his own attempts with the reading machine, in which he implicitly referred to Skorokhodova's successful trial of the machine.[149] While his own experiments had progressed fruitfully, he continued to ask Gault throughout the letter to confirm whether their results matched.[150] In Gault's response, he praised Sokolianskii's work and confirmed that his own results emphasized that the tactile sense could be utilised as a mechanism for deafblind literacy efforts.[151] He also offered his advice for Sokolianskii's reading machine, in which 'it is only necessary to improve your tools – an amplifier and a receiver are all that are needed.'[152]

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[146] By July 1934, the entire Khar'kov Institute had been moved from Narkomos to the People's Commissariat for Agriculture after the Soviet reversal of the Ukrainization policy in 1933.
[147] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 53, l. 111.
[148] Ibid., l. 3.
[149] Ibid., op. 3.5, d. 99, l. 1.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., l. 2.
[152] Ibid.

After making some improvements to the machine, Sokolianskii announced that it was ready for application in deafblind schools, to which end he demonstrated its use at the regional party session in 1935.[153] Due to these successes, Sokolianskii asked for institutional support for the development and industrial production of the reading machine for individuals with multi-sensory disabilities. He sought to utilise growing institutional support for the Khar'kov orphanage and to ask for more funds to develop the reading machine for the deafblind. It was necessary to 'ask the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR [*Rossiiskaia Sovetskaia Federativnaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika*] to unite the efforts of individuals and institutions engaged in developing ways of providing the blind with the printed word. It is now necessary to start producing more converters for blind reading.'[154] While the response to the specific request is currently unknown, Sokolianskii received a patent for the reading machine through the Ukrainian Institute of Experimental Medicine on 26th March 1936, when he received the inventor's certificate number 51271 for 'the machine that reads blind and deafblind text.'[155] However, Sokolianskii's torturous, prolonged attempt to construct the reading machine failed at its final hurdle. After plans for its mass production were placed on hold in 1937, the last surviving prototype of the reading machine was inadvertently destroyed after the destruction of the UIEM during the Second World War.[156]

The Writing Method

With the completion of the initial reading period, the first half of the deafblind child's literacy education had begun. It represented the culmination of the development of their spatial awareness, independent mindset, self-care skills, gesticulation, verbal speech and finally Braille. The deafblind child's acquisition of gesticulation had given them a fundamental mechanism for communication, allowing them to convey their ideas to others and to receive thoughts, expressions and beliefs in turn. Their interactions with others served as their 'socialization', in which they began to form their own thoughts about

[153] Ibid., op. 3.2, d. 53, l. 118.
[154] Ibid., l. 4.
[155] Basilova, 'Biobibliograficheskii Ukzatel', p. 11.
[156] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 118.

the world around them through their relationships with others.[157] It led to the formation of their identity, an idea of who they were and where they placed themselves in the world.

Much like sign language, Braille revealed another medium for accessible communication. Instead of through tactile-based gestures, it provided the means for the deafblind child to read text for the first time. Literature was now open for the deafblind to explore through. Skorokhodova praised the effect reading had on her education, in which 'year after year, I expanded my vocabulary which enriched my literary language… I owe it all to reading books and literature itself. The salvation of the blind, the deaf and the deafblind is through reading.'[158] Much like their interactions with others through gesticulation, their immersion in literature, through Braille, would establish their own unique personalities. Sokolianskii's method had provided the deafblind children with the tools to forge their own lives, to make their own choices.

Such attitudes were represented in the deafblind child's learning of the writing method. While reading ensured the deafblind child assimilated their knowledge at their own pace, writing allowed them to dictate their own content. In doing so, it established a mechanism for the deafblind child to truly express their thoughts. Sokolianskii emphasized the importance of creating independent individuals, capable of leading their own lives without assistance from others. While it had manifested in the pre-literate stage through the completion of self-activities, it provided an opportunity during the literacy stage. By being able to write about their experiences, the deafblind child could utilise writing as a form of self-expression, the ultimate form of independence. The formation of independence through writing was another small, but vital, cog within the 'humanisation' process.

Writing was firstly established with the use of a Soviet-built Braille typewriter.[159] The Soviet machine was a braille embosser, which imprinted Braille cells onto specialised paper. Much like a traditional typewriter, the paper

[157] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 8.
[158] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, p. 6.
[159] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 142.

was fed between two opposite pulleys. Unlike a traditional typewriter, the rollers on each side were prevented from flattening the embossed text on the paper. At the bottom of the typewriter, there were six keys. Each key represented one of the six raised dots which formed the Braille cell. The first key on the left referred to the bottom left dot on the Braille cell while the last key on the right corresponded to the bottom right dot. Each of the keys represented a raised dot, which, when pressed in various patterns, formed letters within the Braille script. Numbers, punctuation and other such symbols also had their own equivalents within the Braille script on the typewriter.

The primary purpose of the typewriter was to advance the deafblind child's knowledge of literacy, grammar and writing. Basilova explained that Sokolianskii 'saw the benefit of the Braille typewriter for allowing for the possibility of direct writing… of words, in which the student can immediately verify the correctness of the words being written.'[160] The child could write out a sentence on the typewriter and immediately check for mistakes. It was praised for uniting both reading and writing skills into one machine. Unlike the chaotic history of the development of the reading machine, the first Braille typewriter had been developed at the Perkins School in the United States, in which it was called the 'Perkins Brailler'.[161] Soviet versions of the Braille typewriter had been utilised by Sokolianskii's department for deafblind education since its opening in 1923.[162] With their understanding of Braille through their reading exercises, the use of the Braille typewriter took less than a week for some deafblind children to learn.

Much like Sokolianskii's fifteen-point plan for the reading process, he had also developed an eight-point learning plan for writing method on the Braille typewriter. The first step of the process involved the child's 'understanding of the writing process.'[163] While they had previous experiences with Braille script during the reading process, they had passively felt Braille text. Writing, as opposed to reading, was a pro-active endeavour, which relied on the deafblind child's initiative to create new content. Unlike much of their previous

[160] Ibid.
[161] Author Unknown, 'Next Generation of Perkins Brailler', *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, 102, 11 (2008), p. 735.
[162] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 142.
[163] Ibid., p. 100.

forms of acquired language, the writing method was taught to facilitate the child's construction of original material. It deliberately targeted the child's passivity with an activity which encouraged creativity, innovation and self-learning. In the next stage of the writing plan, the deafblind child was introduced to the machine itself, encouraged to feel its size, to run their fingers over the braille-embossed paper and to type out practice sheets to initiate them into the process of using the typewriter.[164] After the initial stages, they were taught how to load the embossed paper into the machine and it was explained that they had to type their text from right to left (to ensure that the raised Braille text could be read from left to right) and understand how each key corresponded to the six different dots which formed each Braille cell.[165] Once the child had understood how to use the typewriter, they were ready to actually write on the typewriter.

It was not simply a process of procuring a typewriter and encouraging the deafblind child to immediately start writing. The writing method was underpinned by their simultaneous education in Russian grammar. It formed the basis for all types of taught communication for the deafblind child. For seeing and hearing children, much of their understanding of grammatical structures and their correct application comes from observation of its use in audible conversations and written text. However, the deafblind child is unable to learn grammar through such methods. Consequently, they must consciously learn Russian grammar. Much of the deafblind child's understanding of grammar does not come during the language acquisition process, but from the orientation of their environment. Sokolianskii emphasized that the child's perception of objects remained key to the entire grammatical acquisition process.

According to Sokolianskii, the deafblind child forms an image in their mind of an object which is both simultaneously a 'state' and an 'action'.[166] This is formed through their interaction with objects within their known environments, whether it be stationary objects or objects which operated as an action. However, he stated that 'the 'action' or 'state' of the object is recorded

[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 16.

as different images in comparison to the images of the objects themselves.'[167] If the child formed different images of the object's different stages of motion, they could be taught to categorise each stage within an overall framework. Sokolianskii utilised the child's understanding of the duality of the object's stages of motion to introduce Russian grammar or more specifically, verbs. From such a basis, their acquisition of grammar grew with their introduction into the writing process. Once they began to construct sentences, the use of nouns, verbs, Russian cases and eventually punctuation would develop their literacy skills. Grammar and the writing method would go hand in hand as teaching tools for the deafblind child's literacy efforts.

Ol'ga Skorokhodova, who had become the Khar'kov orphanage's most advanced student, had thrived under Sokolianskii's tutelage. Her proficiency in self-care skills, spatial awareness and gesticulation had propelled her to the final stage of the *bukvarnyi* stage; the writing method. Sokolianskii wanted to challenge her during the process, to see how she adapted to the writing process. During the initial stages of the writing method, she was instructed to record her daily observations of her life at the Khar'kov orphanage in a diary. However, she was set the task before she had fully mastered her writing ability. In fact, she had 'barely learnt how to write' at this point.[168] Sokolianskii was less concerned about Skorokhodova's content of written work and more focused on her self-observations on the environment. He wanted Skorokhodova to record her immediate surroundings, which only increased her orientation skills. She stated in her memoirs that 'when I learned how to write, to get answers to questions troubling me, I began to write them down and passed them to [Sokolianskii].'[169] He encouraged her curiosity, driving her to explore new environments on her accord so that she could provide evidence of it to him. Much of the *ochelovechenie* method was the completion of tasks which served multiple purposes. The learning of gesticulation established a primary means of tactile communication and served as a foundation for their acquisition of Braille. Furthermore, Skorokhodova's daily observations positively impacted her desire

[167] Ibid.
[168] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 101.
[169] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, p. 26.

to write, her proficiency with the Braille typewriter and her knowledge of Russian grammar.

While it was agreed that the diary entries would be useful for her literacy acquisition, there was initial ambiguity about the content of Skorokhodova's observations. Sokolianskii initially assumed that she would focus on her life at the Khar'kov orphanage, with a focus on her interactions with fellow students and teachers. However, Skorokhodova wrote more about her life outside the orphanage rather than her experiences within it. Sokokolianskii explained that

> 'the result was remarkably curious. The context of her work was that she only drew from her experiences from the laboratory and the clinic, in which she describes episodes from her past life (the girl used to live in a family, in the rural areas). It turned out that the grammatical form (grammatical structure) used by the girl was… focused on the content on her past life in the country and events from her early childhood.'[170]

The process provided an excellent examination into Skorokhodova's pre-education life, in which it offered a glimpse into the 'internal world' of the pre-literate deafblind child. While such memories had assumed to have been lost, her written testimonies were now being expressed in an accessible written format for others to read and learn from.

Despite her positive steps towards the goal of literacy, she expressed later her own frustrations with how she described things:

> 'it is much more difficult to describe the subject with your own words exactly how I perceive it… when the deafblind describe their sensations, perceptions, ideas and language, we should always remember that they feel the other senses, through their words, they describe the seeing and hearing process. When a sighted person sees a cow from afar, he says "I look at her and she was white, covered in black spots, with

[170] Sokolianskii, 'Obuchenie', p. 18.

> big, beautiful eyes…" On the same cow, the deafblind person will say the same words as the sighted person, but he will describe their immediate sensation and perception, then say, "I looked with my hands at the cow, her hair smooth and soft. I felt her legs, head, and found on her horns that seemed hard to the touch".'[171]

During Skorokhodova's learning process, she continued to make recordings about her daily activities which were examined by her pedagogues. In the initial stages, she made mistakes which Sokolianskii corrected for her.[172] However, his intervention was not conducive for her learning as she never learnt from her mistakes. Eventually, he established a series of repeated steps within the writing method, in which Skorokhodova's corrected texts were returned to her so that she could learn how to rectify her mistakes for future texts. Skorokhodova herself expressed the ease of the process, in which she stated that the Braille typewriter 'gives an opportunity to fix any mistakes.'[173]

Skorokhodova's progression through the Khar'kov orphanage was heralded as a significant success of *surdotiflopedagogika*. Not only did she fully master the necessary self-care and language skills during her school education, she subsequently completed her secondary education.[174] She actively wrote letters to her friends and teachers during this period. Aware of celebrations around Maksim Gorkii's 40th anniversary of his literary work, Skorokhodova composed a letter in Braille addressed to him about her love for his novels. Skorokhodova explained that 'Lidiia Ulanova [one of the pedagogues at Khar'kov] showed the letter to Sokolianskii who was very impressed by the fact that I had written such a letter on my own.'[175] Several months later, Gorkii's responded with a letter to Skorokhodova on 13th January 1933. He expressed his shock at Skorokhodova's multi-sensory disabilities, in which he stated

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[171] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, p. 26.
[172] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 101.
[173] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, p. 20.
[174] Tat'iana A. Basilova, 'K 100-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia Ol'gi Skorokhodovoi – slepoglukhoi poetessy, pisatel'nitsy i issledovatelia', *Klinicheskaia i Spetsial'naia Psikhologiia*, 1, 1 (2012), p. 2.
[175] Interview of Ol'ga Skorokhodova (date unknown) in Levitin, *One is Not Born a Personality*, p. 214.

> ‘your letter is a miracle, one of the greatest miracles marking the achievement of Reason that freely and boldly investigates natural phenomena which moves us greatly and give us confidence in the power of Reason and its ability to resolve the riddles of life, both outside and inside ourselves.’[176]

In the letter, he placed Skorokhodova (and Sokolianskii) on the side of reason and rationality, in direct opposition to the unenlightened and superstitious.

Gorkii’s response was the beginning of a dialogue which continued right up until the year of his death in 1936. He continued to define Skorokhodova’s place within the Soviet paradigm of science against nature dichotomy. In a following letter, Gorkii heralded her role as the physical personification of the socialist victory of science over nature, stating that

> ‘nature has deprived you of three senses out of five, the senses with the help of which we perceive and understand natural phenomena. But science, influencing your touch, one of the five senses, returned to you, as it were, what has been taken away from you. This shows at once the imperfection and chaos of Nature and the power of human reason and its ability to correct Nature’s mistakes.’[177]

He identified Skorokhodova’s education at the Khar’kov orphanage as a marker for the true extent of Soviet rehabilitative efforts. In another letter, Gorkii situated her own efforts to become a literate, engaged member of Soviet society alongside the struggle of the rest of the population, stating that ‘you are to me a symbol of the new realities which our talented and industrious people – the workers and peasants – are creating so quickly and courageously.’[178] Gorkii saw

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[176] Letter, Maksim A. Gorkii to Ol’ga I. Skorokhodova (13th January 1933) in Levitin, *One is Not Born a Personality*, p. 211. Levitin explained in the interview that the Skorokhodova-Gorkii correspondence had previously been published in the monthly magazine for the deaf, *Zhizn Glukhonemykh* (Life of the Deaf) in 1940.

[177] Gorkii mislabels speech as one of the five senses. Maksim A. Gorkii, Pis’ma ‘I. A. Sokolianskomu’ i ‘O. I. Skorokhodovoi’ in *Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*. T. 30. *Pis’ma telegrammy nadpisi: 1927-1936*, p. 273 cited in Sandomirskaia, ‘Skin to Skin’, p. 326.

[178] Letter, Maksim Gorkii to Ol’ga Skorokhodova (date unknown) in Levitin, *One is Not Born a Personality*, p. 212.

Skorokhodova as part of this collective endeavour, a physical representation of the attempts by the Soviet state to reshape society and the individual. Furthermore, Gorkii understood and supported Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method. Much like Sokolianskii, he emphasized the revolutionary changes in society as the conduit which led to Skorokhodova's successful education:

> 'until recently the majority of our people, while they had sight, hearing and speech, lived under the slavery of autocracy and capitalism and they were as good as deaf, dumb, and blind. But as soon as scientifically organised reason and socialism touched the masses, it produced from their midst thousands of talented and courageous builders of a new life.'[179]

Gorkii saw the deafblind as existing within a population who were all 'defective' in their actions in pre-Soviet society. While he attempts to make the flawed comparison of the experiences of an unconscious populace with Skorokhodova's sensory disabilities, he highlights the rehabilitative ethos which defines Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method. Under socialism, Gorkii perceived the deafblind child as no different to all other citizens, in which they all had to overcome their 'defectiveness' in the new socialist utopia.

Skorokhodova's experience were a part of the great social experiment of the Soviet Union; the reengineering of society. While she had gone through an isolated childhood, Gorkii framed her experiences as essential to the entire process. Her education under Sokolianskii was a uniquely Soviet attempt to 'correct Nature's mistakes' through the science of socialism. The evolution from capitalism to socialism ran parallel to Skorokhodova's transition from the 'initial state' to a literate, engaged member of Soviet society. Gorkii understood that her experiences would be worthwhile for the wider Soviet transformative process. Irina Sandomirskaia explained that the Skorokhodova's activities were 'to sacrifice herself as experimental test material', where her individual experiences benefited the wider Soviet collective.[180] In doing so, Gorkii saw Skorokhodova played a significant role within her 'humanisation'. While

[179] Ibid.
[180] Sandomirskaia, 'Skin to Skin', p. 326.

Sokolianskii provided the tools for Skorokhodova's education, it was Skorokhodova herself who would define her own place within Soviet society.

Gorkii remained one of the first individuals, unconnected to the pedagogical advances of the Khar'kov orphanage, who recognised Sokolianskii's overall utopian aims of deafblind education. His understanding of the specific requirements of the deafblind child endeared him to Skorokhodova. Many decades later, Skorokhodova discussed her correspondence in an interview with the Soviet psychologist Karl Levitin, who included several of her letters to Gorkii in the text. In addition, she also provided an account of her feelings at the time she received his letters. While Skorokhodova showed Letivin the letter, she recounted how 'he understood me, sensitive and tender… his mighty brain made mine alive… in those hard days, so simple and so human, he gave me joy, and called on me to strive.'[181] In what was to be their final correspondence, Skorokhodova expressed her anger at several people who questioned the feasibility of deafblind education. In his last letter to her on 20th March 1936, Gorkii offered her advice for these encounters and suggested 'not to be angry with fools; they will be around for a quite a while yet, and you should treat them as you do bad weather.'[182] Several months later, he passed away from pneumonia, after having been placed under house arrest by the regime he had previously lauded. With Gorkii's death, his honest dialogue with Skorokhodova and patronage of the Khar'kov orphanage ended.

Conclusion

The success of Skorokhodova was representative of the accomplishments of the Khar'kov orphanage, which garnered both domestic and international attention. In addition to Gorkii, Vygotskii also visited the school in 1931. Not only was he enormously impressed by Sokolianksii's work, it was also the practical application of Vygtoskii's theory on the social model of disability.[183] In addition, the Ukrainian Institute of Experimental Medicine

[181] Interview of Ol'ga Skorokhodova (date unknwown) in Levitin, *One is Not Born a Personality*, p. 216.
[182] Letter, Maksim Gorkii to Ol'ga Skorokhodova (20th March 1936) in Levitin, *One is Not Born a Personality*, p. 215.
[183] Basilova, 'O Sokolianskom', p. 13.

hosted members from the International Physiological Congress, who had travelled from the congress's location in Kiev to Khar'kov on 22nd August 1935. During their stay, they visited the orphanage, observed the deafblind students and talked at length with Sokolianskii. Dr. Stransky of Czechoslovakia, a delegate to the congress, explained that 'such an Institution for the Deafblind in Khar'kov is unlikely to be found anywhere else in the world.'[184] Likewise, Professor John Jameson of Cambridge University also stated that

> 'the scientific value of Khar'kov is so substantial they could write a book about it all. Those institutions that we have seen… the Institute for the Deafblind and the Institution for the Growth of the Body, and others – are extremely prominent academic institutions not only of the [Soviet] Union, but for the entire world.'[185]

However, the achievements of the Khar'kov orphanage counted for very little within an increasingly repressive Soviet state. While Sokolianskii's imprisonment for Ukrainian nationalism in 1933 was short-lived, his incarceration branded him as a 'bourgeois nationalist'. With his simultaneous expulsion from the party, he became an isolated, scorned figure within the Khar'kov Institute. Despite his status as one of the leading pedagogues, 'few had the courage to speak to him in public and some stopped all contact with him.'[186] He remained at the Khar'kov Institute, becoming an increasingly lonely, but more determined, figure focused on the delivery of *surdotiflopedagogika* to his pupils. In addition, the regime's reversal of its Ukrainization attempts led to the near-complete persecution of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. Many of Sokolianskii's friends and colleagues, including Ukrainian satirist and writer Ostap Vyshinia, were arrested and imprisoned.[187]

In tandem, Sokolianskii's research into deafblind education became embroiled in the controversial rejection of pedology. Closely associated with Sokolianskii's research (despite his own coolness towards the discipline),

[184] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 2, d. 15, l. 71.
[185] Ibid., l. 72.
[186] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 105.
[187] For more on the persecution of Ukrainian intellectuals in the early Soviet period, see the following: Olena Palko, 'Between Two Powers: The Soviet Ukrainian Writer Mykola Khvyl'ovyi', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas,* Neue Folge, 64, 4 (2016), pp. 575-598

pedology defined as the umbrella for virtually every approach to Soviet 'child study, from the pedagogical and the psychological to the biomedical and the ethnographic.'[188] The discipline became tarnished through the over-diagnosis of children with intellectual disabilities by overzealous pedologists in the mid-1930s, which led to its outright ban by the Central Committee on 4th July 1936.[189] It remained part of the regime's attempts to rein in the fields of, not only pedology, but academia in general. The institutional freedom to establish new approaches of disability education experienced by defectologists and pedagogues in the 1920s were stopped in the 1930s by a regime determined to establish its control over a previously autonomous discipline. Sokolianskii's previous successes with deafblind children, despite Gorkii's patronage of the school, could not prevent his eventual fall.

The purges of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, the banning of pedology and Sokolianskii's own previous support for Ukrainian nationalism culminated in his arrest on 12th October 1937 on similar charges of 'affiliation with an anti-Soviet nationalist terrorist organization.'[190] The verdict carried a mandatory ten-year sentence. With Sokolianskii's removal from the Institute, the Khar'kov orphanage was left without its sole defender. Now under the control of officials from Narkomos, they deemed that the deafblind children were considered 'mentally deficient'.[191] Consequently, they were removed from the Institute, which was subsequently closed in the aftermath of the ban on pedology. All the children, including Ol'ga Skorokhodova, were transferred south of Khar'kov, to the village of Vasishchevo.[192] The village was home to a community for children in wheelchairs, but it lacked any of the specialised equipment needed to cater for the deafblind children. Additionally, no educational professionals from the school were allowed to accompany the children to Vasishchevo. The lack of specialised training within an environment unfit for their needs had a debilitative impact on the educational development of the children.

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[188] Andy Byford, 'Turning Pedagogy into a Science: Teachers and Psychologists in Late Imperial Russia (1897–1917)', *Osiris*, 23, 1 (2008), p. 79.
[189] Thomas Ewing, 'Restoring Teachers to their Rights: Soviet Education and the 1936 Denunciation of Pedology', *History of Education Quarterly*, 41, 4 (2001), p. 473.
[190] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 106.
[191] Mariia Mitasova, *Vykhod iz Temnoty*: *Istoriia odhogo Eksperimenta* (Moskva, Eksmo, 2016), p. 11.
[192] Ibid.

While the brutal ending of the Khar'kov orphanage was representative of a regime which favoured total control over educational results, it did not spell the end of *surdotiflopedagogika* under Sokolianskii's remit. His surprisingly early release from prison breathed new life into the discipline. The final chapters will examine his establishment of a new centre for deafblind research and education at the newly established Institute of Defectology in Moscow during the late 1940s and 1950s. It will also focus on the education of Iuliia Vinogradova, a teenage deafblind girl. Her upbringing was the culmination of a lifetime of dedication to the creed of *surdotiflopedagogika*.

3. Post-War Deafblind Education

Figure 6.

Iuliia Vinogradova (left) in conversation with Faina Kazakevich (right) at the Institute of Defectology, Moscow, c. 1955[1]

Iuliia Vinogradova, aged fourteen, laughs at the story being told by her teacher, Faina Kazakevich.[2] She feels the rapid series of gestures in her left hand and the tale becomes even more ridiculous with every sign. Desperate to know its ending, she reaches out with her right hand for Kazakevich's left hand. While listening to the story in her left hand, she formulates her question into her own gestures with her right. Kazakevich responds with the story's ending, provoking

[1] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 8, d. 190, l. 42.
[2] Ibid., op. 4.1, d. 132, l. 84.

a scream of enjoyment from Iuliia.[3] Sokolianskii, who may have taken the picture, was responsible for her upbringing and education in 1955.

The joy shown by Iuliia in the picture contrasted with Sokolianskii's own dire circumstances nearly twenty years earlier. With his incarceration in 1937 for charges of terrorism against the Soviet regime, the removal of his party membership and the destruction of the Khar'kov orphanage for the deafblind, his role in *surdotiflopedagogika* seemed at an end. Like many of his incarcerated pedagogues and Ukrainian intellectuals, the regime, seemingly, no longer tolerated his position within Soviet academia. His history as a Ukrainian nationalist combined with his association to the disgraced field of pedology ensured that he had transitioned from a Professor to prisoner. While it remained initially unclear to him how he would be dealt with the by regime, other Ukrainian intellectuals faced a lengthy prison sentence in penal colonies in the Far East or a summary execution for being an enemy of the state. However, within two decades, he had established a new centre for deafblind research in the Soviet Union, his reputation and professorship had been restored and he continued to educate deafblind children through his *ochelovechenie* method.

This chapter will explore Sokolianskii's return from incarceration to his *de facto* rehabilitation into the field of defectology within the Soviet Union. It will examine how he was integrated back into key positions within Narkompros and the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences (hereafter APN) in the late 1930s and early 1940s, despite his own recent prison sentence. His newfound authority and influence was fundamental in the reinstatement of a new centre of deafblind research in the USSR. While such a centre would take several years to be established, the publication of Ol'ga Skorokhodova's autobiography (with Sokolianskii's assistance) in 1947 brought the field of *surdotiflopedagogika* to national prominence.

Such endeavours led to the establishment of a laboratory for deafblind research and education at the Moscow Institute of Defectology in 1950. As director of the laboratory, he sought out deafblind children across the Soviet Union in need of specialised education. The upbringing of one of these children, Iuliia Vinogradova, will form the basis for further investigation within the

[3] Ibid., l. 86.

chapter. After she developed deafblindness at a young age, Iuliia's parents appealed to Sokolianskii for assistance and educational support. His advice led to her development of self-care skills in her home environment in the village of Boroshovo. An extended observation of her home conditions revealed her advanced self-care skills, intimate understanding of her immediate environment and basic knowledge of the naturalised gestures. Her proficiency in the skills prepared her for her eventual placement at the research laboratory at the Institute of Defectology in 1955. Iuliia's upbringing and education in the immediate post-war period will be compared with the experiences of Skorokhodova and the other Khar'kov students. Furthermore, the chapter will also analyse the application of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method within the post-war period. While extended discussions surrounding the 'humanisation' debate would occur in the post-Stalinist period, much of Sokolianskii's 'humanisation' process remained like his previous approaches in the 1920s and 1930s.

From Prisoner to Professor

In prison, Sokolianskii endured terrible hardships. His label as an 'anti-Soviet nationalist' led to his treatment as an 'enemy of the state'. While he had been exiled from Ukraine during his revolutionary activities in the 1910s and briefly imprisoned in 1933, the new incarceration was expected to be much more brutal. Nearly a decade after his imprisonment, Sokolianskii wrote a letter to his former Khar'kov colleague, Aleksei Grabopov, about the methods used by his interrogators:

> 'they put a person on two chairs, clamp their testicles between the gap between them and they start "interrogating". Any person who has not experienced this has nothing to say. He will not understand. Of course, they used even worse interrogation methods. For example, they took a man by his arms and legs and beat his body against the wall – this was a simple and crude method of

> "interrogation". Sometimes, they tied a person tightly within a bag and rolled them down the stairs.'[4]

While Sokolianskii does not explicitly state that he personally experienced such torture, he goes into detail about the psychological torture enacted on him by his interrogators. He explained that 'you are put into a solitary cell, placed in a very uncomfortable position and forced to sit like this for as long as… [they] decide. You are being watched all the time – day and night… There are only a couple of eyes in front of you. The pair of eyes are a terrible thing.'[5] The combination of psychological and physical torture weighed upon Sokolianskii's wellbeing several years after his eventual release from prison.

The trauma of his incarceration remained a constant reminder throughout the 1940s and 1950s. He commented in the same letter that

> 'even at home, it seems to you that the eyes of the closest person are not his or her eyes, but the same eyes of the same terrible thing that happened to you before… It becomes easier when you share it with somebody. It seems to be like that. Although your closest friends do not always understand.'[6]

However, much to his surprise, he was released from prison after only serving less than a year and half. He had fully expected to remain in prison because of his ten-year sentence, his previous incarcerations and his association with pedology and Ukrainian separatism. In addition, many of his friends from the Ukrainian intelligentsia remained in penal colonies, including Vyshinia, who was eventually released after serving a similar ten-year sentence in 1943.

After only serving a year and half of his ten-year sentence, Sokolianskii was released in 1939. He subsequently received an invitation from the People's Commissariat for Education to work at the Scientific and Practical Institute for

[4] Grabopov was a Soviet defectologist and specialised in *oligophrenopedagogika*. Letter, Ivan A. Sokolianskii to Aleksei N. Grabopov (date unknown) cited in Tat'iana A. Basilova, *Istoriia Obucheniia Slepoglukhikh detei v Rossii* (Eksmo, Moskva, 2015), p. 109.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Letter, Sokolianskii to Grabopov cited in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 110.

Special Schools in Moscow as a senior research associate.[7] In addition, he also accepted the position of headmaster for a school for the deaf within the Institute. While Sokolianskii had not been rehabilitated by the Soviet authorities (this was only to happen nearly twenty years later), it highlighted the unique position Sokolianskii found himself in. Despite his conviction for acts of terrorism against the state, he had only served a relatively short prison sentence. He had also not been internally exiled and was still in possession of his domestic passport. This allowed him to travel to Moscow to begin his role at APN. According to Basilova, there was no mention of his arrests or expulsion from the party on his official personal record within the Moscow Institute.[8] Even Sokolianskii himself expressed a lack of knowledge on why he had been released. He explained that

> 'I still do not understand everything. For example, I still cannot understand why I was invited to Moscow and how it all happened. After all, I cannot do anything useful here for the training of deafblind and mute people. Sometimes it seems to me that I was invited to provide cover for others.'[9]

Basilova speculated that Sokolianskii was released because Maksim Gorkii had interceded with Stalin on his behalf.[10] While it is unclear whether Gorkii's intervention was the sole reason for his relatively short stay in prison, Gorkii's patronage of the school may have played a part. However, Gorkii's death from tuberculosis in June 1936 predated Sokolianskii's arrest in October 1937, so he might not have played a significant role.

The truth of his relatively seamless return to Soviet educational positions may have been less to do with personal favours and more with the ambiguity associated with the Great Terror. Recent scholarship has indicated that the purges of 1936-1938 were not as all-encompassing as they seemed to

[7] The Moscow Scientific and Practical Institute for Special Schools was soon to be renamed the Institute of Defectology within the APN within the RSFSR.
[8] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 108.
[9] Letter, Ivan A. Sokolianskii to Lidiia I. Ulanova (8th August 1941) cited in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 111.
[10] Ibid.

be.[11] Not all individuals suffered the full force of the regime's punishing repression. Inconsistency was a hallmark of the Terror. Some individuals managed to receive shorter prison sentences because of waning interest in waves of arrest for certain professions or demographics, the intervention of powerful figures, or simply errors committed within the enormous bureaucracy of the Soviet Union. While Sokolianskii may have been unfortunate for his dual association to two different groups which had been deliberately targeted by the regime, it did not maintain such attitudes of repression after 1938. Consequently, he may have been released earlier because the Ukrainian authorities felt he no longer posed a threat to society. While it may have seemed unlikely, his early release after three months into a three-year prison sentence in 1933 may have had some influence. Nevertheless, the available archival material does not reveal why his incarceration was so brief in comparison to others or why his personal record was subsequently expunged. Such ambiguity led to his return to the field of defectology only two years after his incarceration.

On 10th March 1940, Sokolianskii attended a conference at the State Pedagogical Institute of Defectology and presented a paper on how the primary goal of deafblind education was to immerse the child in their surrounding world.[12] This proved to be Sokolianskii's first major foray into the academic world since his imprisonment. It received substantial praise from other defectologists at the conference, such as Aleksandr Luriia. Despite the return to an academic setting, he expressed his dejection at his situation to his fellow colleague, Dr. Lidiia Ulanova; 'it is becoming worse again. These feelings of yearning and loneliness. I can hardly work. I am doing everything automatically. I am simply not interested. It seems like a peculiar form of manic-depressive psychosis… The motivation to live is quite low.'[13] While he had been released back into Soviet society, the fear of his re-arrest remained with Sokolianskii. He had established a truly world-leading centre for deafblind education, but his life's work had been rejected by the regime. Not only had they rewarded his

[11] For more information about the Great Terror in Ukraine, see the following: Lynne Viola, *Stalinist Perpetrators on Trial: Scenes from the Great Terror in Soviet Ukraine* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017); Olga Bertelsen, 'Regional Nationalism and Soviet Anxieties during the Great Terror in Ukraine: The Case of Mykhailo Bykovets'', *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 3, 1 (2016), pp. 39-74.
[12] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 110.
[13] Letter, Sokolianskii to Ulanova cited in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 111.

revolutionary work with deafblind children with a prison sentence, they had permanently closed the Khar'kov Institute. It explained his own inhibitions about returning to higher educational institutions.

Despite his feelings of isolation, he continued to rise within the Commissariat of Education. He was made head of the department of blind education (*surdopedagogika*) within the Institute in early 1941. In testament to Sokolianskii's genuine care for the welfare of his former students, he used his eminent position within the Institute to guarantee the care and safety of his former Khar'kov students, who still resided within the inadequate conditions of the wheelchair community in Vasishchevo. Before the beginning of the Second World War, he arranged for Skorokhodova to live near the Institute in Moscow. He also developed plans for some of the deafblind children (some of them now adults) to be housed at the Oto-Phonetic Institute in Leningrad.

Sokolianskii's understanding of the nuances of Soviet state apparatus, developed after nearly two decades of working within the bureaucratic roles, were revealed in his letter to Skorokhodova. He explained that

> 'I will have to deal with this case a lot. It will take a long time to wait for the attention of those who are able to influence this particular case (such as the People's Commissariat for Education, Social Care etc.). The Deputy Head of the Special Department at the People's Commissariat for Education, Zykov, is very sympathetic towards us, but not much depends on him. It is necessary that the People's Commissariat becomes interested in the issue. When you move, we will start working towards such a goal. But you must be courageous and overcome your troubles. I am infinitely sorry for Varya and Anton. Especially Varya. We will do everything we can to bring her close to Moscow.'[14]

Despite Sokolianskii's efforts to move the deafblind children out of Ukraine, only four of the children were moved to appropriate facilities in Leningrad and Moscow before the start of the Second World War in June 1941. Skorokhodova

[14] Letter, Ivan A. Sokolianskii to Ol'ga I. Skorokhodova (date unknown) cited in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 113.

did not travel to Moscow and remained in Ukraine for the entirety of the war. Out of the nine children from the Khar'kov orphanage, only two of the children survived the war. Miraculously, Skorokhodova survived the occupation by living with her former school teachers while Mariia Sokol left the wheelchair community in Vasishchevo beforehand to live with her relatives. According to Mariia Mitasova, the remaining deafblind children were killed by the invading Nazi armies because 'they were considered inferior'.[15] The four children transferred to the Leningrad Institute also died in the siege during the war.

By June 1941, the inhabitants of the Moscow Institute, along with Sokolianskii, were evacuated from Moscow to the east. He was transported firstly to Penza and then finally to the Siberian city of Novosibirsk. In the city, he worked as a deputy headteacher for School 37, a school for deaf students fleeing the front.[16] Sokolianskii's time during the Second World War was relatively peaceful in comparison with his more active service during the First World War. He worked extensively with the school for the deaf, collaborated with the local education centre within Novosibirsk and even graduated from his tractor driver course.[17]

After the Soviet victories on the Eastern front in 1943, Sokolianskii was recalled back to Moscow to assist in the reformation of the Moscow Institute. It would now be called the Institute of Defectology within the APN. Upon the liberation of Khar'kov in 1944, Sokolianskii used the opportunity to have Skorokhodova moved to Moscow for the duration of the war.[18] Despite his involvement in the newly established institute and his *de facto* rehabilitation into Soviet academic circles, he remained coy about his position. He explained that

> 'I still do not even have a corner for my research in the Institute of Defectology; I do not even have a chair to sit down upon, not to mention that the nature of our work

[15] Mariia Mitasova, *Vykhod iz Temnoty*: *Istoriia odhogo Eksperimenta* (Moskva, Eksmo, 2016), p. 11.
[16] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 113.
[17] Ibid., pp. 113-114.
[18] Tat'iana A. Basilova, 'K 100-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia Ol'gi Skorokhodovoi – slepoglukhoi poetessy, pisatel'nitsy i issledovatelia', *Klinicheskaia i Spetsial'naia Psikhologiia*, 1, 1 (2012), p. 2.

> remains very vague. At least, it is still vague. My friends tell me that now that things are going well, that after the session many of the people can help organise the Institute [of Defectology] in a proper way… But I, of course, do not expect anything good to happen from "our" Institute.'[19]

Sokolianskii was right to be wary about his position within the newly established Institute of Defectology. Recent scholarship has identified the late Stalinist period as a period of severe repression and simultaneously, the beginnings of efforts to develop social and economic state structures.[20] With the state-sanctioned campaigns of *Zhdanovshchina*, the Anti-Cosmopolitan Campaign and the Leningrad Affair of 1949, the late Stalinist period was dominated by rising xenophobia, the purging of the Soviet intellectual class and fears about 'pressured elites'.[21] Sokolianskii, with his dubious history and position as a member of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, may have seemed a perfect candidate for further persecution.

Furthermore, the late Stalinist period can also be characterised as a post-war society in need of reconstruction. Such efforts not only extended to the physical rebuilding of the Soviet infrastructure and the economy, but to its citizens. Reintegration of Soviet individuals impacted by the war included individuals with disabilities, specifically veterans.[22] The state was reluctant to champion the rights of the disabled veterans due to their physical embodiment of the losses experienced by the war. Ultimately, the regime chose to replace the image of living personifications of the war's devastation with a separate narrative, one that focused on the formation of a 'collective memory of a

[19] Letter, Ivan A. Sokolianskii to Aleksei N. Grabopov (4th November 1947) in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, pp. 116-117.
[20] For further information on the late Stalinist period, see Chris Ward, 'What is History? The Case of Late Stalinism', *Rethinking History*, 8, 3 (2004), pp. 439-458; Violeta Davoliūtė, 'Postwar Reconstruction and the Imperial Sublime in Vilnius during Late Stalinism', *Ab Imperio*, 1 (2014), pp. 176-203; Julianne Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2010); Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002).
[21] Ward, 'The Case of Late Stalinism', pp. 440-445.
[22] Beate Fieseler, 'The Bitter Legacy of the 'Great Patriotic War': Red Army Disabled Soldiers under Late Stalinism', in *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention*, ed., Juliane Fürst (Routledge, Abingdon, 2006), pp. 46-61

victorious war led by Stalin, the generalissimo.'[23] Despite the marginalisation of disabled veterans from the war-narrative, the regime still recognised their value in the workplace and in society more generally. The fears of population decline were rampant in the immediate post-war years and efforts were established to get all individuals into the labour force.[24] Consequently, Sokolianskii's position as a leading pedagogue in integrating people with disabilities into the Soviet society took on additional importance in post-war Soviet society. The 'humanisation' method could be equally applicable in the post-war period.

With Sokolianskii's position both seemingly, and simultaneously, strengthened and weakened in the late Stalinist period, his restoration of his professorship in 1948 served to assuage his fears about his position in Soviet society.[25] This was despite the increased intervention of the regime into fields closely linked to Sokolianskii's. Benjamin Zajicek argued that within the field of psychiatry, the regime encouraged psychiatrists to defend their practices as 'patriotic, Pavlovian, and non-Western' in response to the fears brought about by *Zhdanovshchina*.[26] While archival materials do not reveal whether Sokolianskii was compelled to justify the 'Sovietness' of his methods in the discipline of defectology, his criticism of Western attempts at *surdotiflopedagogika* would have been ample justification for his work. The return to Soviet pedagogy represented a truly blissful moment for Sokolianskii. It validated his pedagogical efforts over the past twenty-five years. The regime could never be seen to admit wrongdoing (at least during Stalin's lifetime) but the return to his previous rank was an implicit apology from the regime. While he would only be formally rehabilitated in 1958, it confirmed his *de facto* rehabilitation and convinced Sokolianskii that his return to Soviet society was not destined to be short-lived.

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[23] Julianne Fürst, 'Introduction', in *Late Stalinist Society: History, Policies and People*, ed., Julianne Fürst (Routledge, London, 2006), p. 6.
[24] Mie Nakachi, 'Population, Politics and Reproduction: Late Stalinism and its Legacy', in *Late Stalinist Society: History, Policies and People*, ed., Fürst (Routledge, London, 2006), pp. 23-45.
[25] Tat'iana A. Basilova, 'Ob istorii obucheniia slepoglukhikh detei v Moskovskom regione', *Klinicheskaia i cpetsial'haia psikhologiia*', 2, 2 (2013), p. 3.
[26] Benjamin Zajicek, 'Banning the Soviet Lobotomy: Psychiatry, Ethics, and Professional Politics during Late Stalinism', *Bulletin of History of Medicine*, 91, 1 (2017), pp. 60-61.

Much of the available archival material does not shed led light on the circumstances surrounding Sokolianskii's *de facto* rehabilitation within Soviet pedagogy, but it is still intriguing to note that his rise came about within such odd circumstances. Nevertheless, with his rank restored, he set about re-establishing a second Khar'kov, another centre for deafblind research and education at the Institute of Defectology in Moscow. In his funding application for such a facility, he included a list of the necessary laboratory equipment, a complete curriculum for deafblind education and training programme for deafblind adults.[27] D. Azbukin, the director of the Institute of Defectology, confirmed Sokolianskii's request for a laboratory for deafblind education on 26th June 1950.[28]

In his first act as the head of the laboratory, Sokolianskii appointed Skorokhodova as a junior research assistant. Her role revolved predominantly around research and teaching roles for the deafblind. She had already advanced into the post-literacy stage of her education, in which her role at the Institute confirmed her formal entry into the workplace. While her opportunity may not have fitted into the idealized visions of labour in industrial settings, Skorokhodova remained within an environment uniquely suited to her. Her experience as a former student of Sokolianskii's teaching and her position as the most experienced deafblind individual in the Soviet Union placed her within an excellent position to educate other deafblind children. Skorokhodova would induct other deafblind children into the *ochelovechenie* method so that they could pursue the same path to integration as she did.

After the establishment of the laboratory for the deafblind, Sokolianskii had achieved what he had set out do after leaving prison. He had breathed life back into *surdotiflopedagogika* in Moscow after its demise at Khar'kov. Not only was this a triumph for his research, it became a personal vindication for his previous efforts. He explained that

> 'somehow, my professional "loneliness" was interrupted. I have never suffered from personal loneliness. But

[27] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 118.
[28] Azbukin was an experienced specialist in the education of children with intellectual disabilities and the head of the Institute of Defectology from 1943 to 1951. Basilova, 'Ol'gi Skorokhodovoi', p. 3.

> professionally… I have suffered for a very long time. Of course, it is my own fault, I do not blame anyone for this. I do not even blame it for my notorious "circumstances". When I started working on the pedagogy of the deafblind, I managed to organise it into a very decent clinic and it seemed to me that this would cause great interest in the field of pedagogy.'[29]

Despite his previous incarceration, he had the opportunity to reinvigorate deafblind educational research within the Soviet Union. He would perfect the methods which he had established at Khar'kov with new deafblind students. Skorokhodova's publication of her memoirs brought the discipline of *surdotiflopedagogika* back into public and academic consciousness. If she could succeed in producing acclaimed literature, then other deafblind children could aspire for the same goal. Within that spirit, Sokolianskii established a dialogue with Iuliia Vinogradova's parents.

The Dialogue

Iuliia Vinogradova was born on 28th April 1942. She was born prematurely after an emergency caesarean section was performed. Her mother, Lidiia, was a tractor driver and forewoman while her father, Ivan, was a railway inspector.[30] Lidiia was also a permanent deputy of the Kalinin District Council.[31] Iuliia was born and resided in the village of Boroshovo in the Kalinin *oblast'*, northwest of Moscow. She had an elder brother, Vitia, and a younger brother, Shurik. Her grandmother, referred to exclusively by her patronymic Efim'evna, also lived with the Vinogradov family. Iuliia's family upbringing contrasted with Skorokhodova's experiences, where both her parents passed away during her early childhood. However, both children were raised amidst periods of total warfare.

In the first year of Iuliia's life, the Vinogradov family had to flee several times due to the invasion of their village by *Wehrmacht* troops during the

[29] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 5, d. 162, l. 12.
[30] Ibid., op. 4.1, d. 132, l. 38.
[31] Ibid., d. 117, l. 105.

Second World War. They were forced to escape into the surrounding forest and survived the war with help from the local partisan groups. It was only after the German forces retreated were they able to return to Boroshovo.

According to her mother, Iuliia was a very happy child when she was younger, who spoke very clearly. She also stated that in her early years 'Iuliia already spoke about almost everything and pronounced words and phrases like an adult. The only word that she could not pronounce was "*chesnok*" [garlic].'[32] In early 1945, when she was almost three years old, Iuliia contracted meningitis. Lidiia tried to take her to the hospital, but it was too far for her to travel. Instead, her mother took her to a local *feldsher* in a nearby village. He diagnosed Iuliia's meningitis but explained she would not survive the infection. Despite the initial prognosis, she survived the disease, but her sight and hearing had become permanently impaired. Iuliia would ask her grandmother when she returned home 'why is it always night? When will the day come?'[33] Within several weeks, she was no longer able to see or hear. In similar terms, Skorokhodova described her own experience of losing her sight and hearing at an early age. She explained that 'I remember that I had a high fever… it seemed to me that I was very weak. I did not want to open my eyes as I could not see anything.'[34] While Iuliia seemingly did not understand why she had lost the ability to see, Skorokhodova eventually understood the debilitating impact of her illness on her sensory functions.

Her parents sought professional help and contacted the Ministry of Health for assistance.[35] However, it is unclear why it took so long to establish contact with Sokolianskii. On 19th September 1947, Sokolianskii received a letter from Iuliia's father asking for advice concerning his deafblind daughter. In his response, Sokolianskii firstly sought to reassure the parents, stating 'you listen to my advice, you can save Iuliia from mental disability and death; she can be useful to you… She is perfectly normal and capable of mental development, like

[32] Ibid., d. 120, l. 40.
[33] Ibid., d. 116, l. 17.
[34] Ol'ga I. Skorokhodova, *Kak ia vosprinimaiu, predstavliaiu i ponimaiu okruzhaiushchii mir* (Moskva, Pedagogika, 1972), p. 22.
[35] The People's Commissariat for Health was renamed as the Ministry of Health in 1947.

all children.'[36] He even used Ol'ga Skorokhodova as an example to highlight that Iuliia was not disadvantaged by her multiple disabilities, in which he stated that

> 'Ol'ga Skorokhodova was deafblind. But now she is only blind. She speaks very well and she continues to write books. She received the first prize at the Ushinskii Awards and received 25,000 roubles… You see, her blindness and deafness does not prevent her from earning more money from seeing and hearing people.'[37]

Sokolianskii sought to portray Iuliia's deafblindness in monetary terms, showing that individuals such as Skorokhodova had benefited from Sokolianskii's tutelage and had procured employment on her own initiative. Through emphasizing the monetary amount of Skorokhodova's prize, Sokolianskii sought to justify his *ochelovechenie* method to Iuliia's parents. Skorokhodova's experiences had shown that other deafblind children could become further examples for New Soviet People, but only through his method.

Despite Sokolianskii's own desire to continue *surdotiflopedagogika* in the post-war period, the status of Soviet deafblind education had diminished from its prime in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The demands of a population and society after four years of total war meant that there was a lack of appropriate educational facilities for all the people with disabilities, let alone individuals with deafblindness. On 17th March 1948, Sokolianskii even apologised to Lidiia for the lack of appropriate institutions for deafblind children in the Soviet Union.[38] Sokolianskii stated that he had heard rumours about a possible school for the deafblind being constructed in Tashkent, but it was never brought up again during their correspondence.[39] He reiterated that Iuliia would have priority upon the formation of a new institution, despite mentioning that there were at least six other deafblind children in need of a place.[40]

Furthermore, the lack of appropriate educational facilities created a significant issue with the application of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method.

[36] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 132, l. 2.
[37] Ibid., l. 1.
[38] Ibid., l. 12.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

He consistently emphasized the educational benefits for deafblind children within accessible environments with trained staff. However, this proved to be extremely problematic if there were no actual institutions available. Sokolianskii had previously highlighted the issues associated with inaccessible settings, specifically in its detriment impact on the child's humanisation process. Such fears were raised for Iuliia's education. If there were not enough facilities for Iuliia, she would have to be raised at home by her family. Sokolianskii would be able to provide guidance from afar, but Iuliia's family would have to become surrogate pedagogues and deliver her education through Sokolianskii's instructions. It raised the question about whether Iuliia could be 'humanised' within a non-institution environment by family members who lacked the necessary training and expertise. While Iuliia's home-education clashed with Sokolianskii's educational theory, it was a practical reality of post-war *surdotiflopedagogika*.

Sokolianskii instructed Iuliia's parents to immerse their daughter in a series of daily activities. Sokolianskii wanted to ensure that she was not isolated within her environment. This would only reinforce her loneliness and render her inaccessible to her family. He encouraged the parents to teach her how to maintain their household, to engage with other members of the family and to begin learning self-care skills.[41] This was vitally important for establishing her independence. He also encouraged them to immerse their daughter in activities which would develop her literacy skills. He tasked the parents to introduce their daughter to the alphabet, specifically the cut-out examples of the flat-text alphabet. Finally, Iuliia was to improve her orientation of her house and its objects. Familiarity with the home environment was vital to for future development. Sokolianskii explained that 'it will allow her to become accustomed to everything you do.'[42]

Interestingly, Skorokhodova received a more formal, but far more disruptive, education within the early Soviet educational system. While Iuliia was to be educated at home for most of her early childhood, Skorokhodova initially moved to the Odessa School for the Blind in 1922. Sokolianskii's

[41] Ibid., p. 1.
[42] Ibid.

confidence in state educational establishments may have been misplaced as Skorokhodova's hearing loss was not immediately diagnosed. Skorokhodova explained that

> 'once in the school, I had some time to realise that all of the students were just blind. I often tried to examine people's hands to tell them something… I did not even take a walk to the city, because after suffering my final hearing loss, I lost my balance and I could not walk without assistance.'[43]

While Skorokhodova would eventually be transferred to Khar'kov under Sokolianskii supervision, state institutions were not always the most appropriate facilities for deafblind children. Under Sokolianskii's care, Skorokhodova explained that 'we were treated wonderfully by the workers.'[44] The importance of an appropriate educational environment may have been a priority within Sokolianskii's 'humanisation' method, but Iuliia's home education was a practical solution to a theoretical dilemma.

In the months afterwards, Iuliia's parents continued to update Sokolianskii about their daughter's educational progress. In a letter dated in early March 1949, Lidiia explained that Iuliia had successfully begun to learn the flat-text alphabet through cut-out letters. Lidiia explained that

> 'we introduced her to the first letter for the both of us and she really liked it when she cuts out the letter and asks about the subject that the letter is related to. We bring her an object of the letter and she familiarizes herself with it… Iuliia is very interested in these letters and she engages with them every day.'[45]

While Sokolianskii had explained to her parents how to introduce the task, he did not expect it to be carried out so successfully. She had not only begun learning the Russian alphabet but had started to associate letters with individuals and objects. She had realised that things could be named, categorized and placed within an environment for a purpose. To a certain

[43] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, p. 23.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., l. 14.

degree, it revealed to Sokolianskii that she understood the relationship between language and her surrounding environment. While Sokolianskii's response to Iuliia's development is unknown, such advancement can only be described as Iuliia's moment of 'awakening'. By establishing the link between language and the environment, Iuliia had successfully experienced one of the key aspects of 'humanisation'. Furthermore, it also validated her education within a non-institution environment. While Iuliia's education was a compromise, Sokolianskii's insistence for the need of an accessible environment was unnecessary. Iuliia's experience had provided initial evidence that deafblind children could be educated in their home environment by family members.

Sokolianskii continued to give advice to Iuliia's parents. He encouraged them to advance from letter association to word association, which would eventually lead to the establishment of a dialogue between parent and child. To facilitate this, Sokolianskii instructed her parents to begin associating words with objects in their household. He explained that 'she will start to name things in the house and in the garden… she will react accordingly to her needs, expressing her desire to eat and drink.'[46] In addition, Sokolianskii also insisted that the parents take extensive notes on Iuliia's behaviour. He suggested a series of questions for such observations:

> 'What can Iuliia do on her own? What can she do with the help of others? How does she understand the situation? When she walks around the room, is she on her own, or when she goes into the garden, does she do so on her own will? Does she have friends, boys or girls? Do they hurt her? Do they laugh and tease her? How often does she get angry and at whom does she get angry with? How long does she sleep for? Does she know how to get dressed for bed and how to make the bed? Who does she love most out of her family and friends?'[47]

These notes served a two-fold purpose. The lack of available facilities meant that Iuliia's parents were in full control of their daughter's education. Their

[46] Ibid., l. 16.
[47] Ibid.

observations of Iuliia fully integrated them within the process. In addition, the notes would reveal the extent of her communication skills, level of interaction with others, her spatial awareness, how comfortable she was in unknown environments and her overall behaviour. By fully understanding how Iuliia acted within her home environment, Sokolianskii would be able to devise an educational framework which was unique to her experiences.

Such methods had been utilised during Sokolianskii's tenure at the Khar'kov children's home, where he had developed comprehensive profiles of each of his deafblind pupils. Such profiles ensured that the deafblind child's entire history could be called upon to develop personalised training processes for each child. Understanding whether the child had congenital or acquired deafblindness or whether the child experienced vision or hearing loss first was necessary to the process. In Skorokhodova's profile, Sokolianskii knew about the onset of her deafblindness, the extent of her knowledge of localised environments and her time at the Odessa School for the Blind. While Iuliia had proven able to thrive within her home environment, the lack of relevant data made it difficult for Sokolianskii to establish a unique educational framework for Iuliia's process in the *ochelovechenie* method.

It was eventually realised that the process was not enough. A formal observation by a professional pedagogue was necessary. It was agreed that Anna Osterova, a research assistant from the Institute, would travel to Boroshovo to observe Iuliia in her home environment. Sokolianskii made a formal request to Azbukin to send Osterova to stay with Iuliia's family in Boroshovo on 2nd January 1950.[48] Not only did he agree to Sokolianskii's request, he stated that 'the child is outgrowing her environment and requires a placement within a specialised institution.'[49] His approval of Osterova's visit signalled a coming change at the Institute of Defectology. Four months later, Sokolianskii had been told that his request for a laboratory for deafblind research was agreed. Osterova's task was to collect information on Iuliia's behaviour, communication and self-care skills, to assess whether she would benefit from an education under Sokolianskii's tutelage. In addition, she was to

[48] Ibid., l. 168.
[49] Ibid., l. 169.

assist Iuliia's parents with their daughter's upbringing. She would stay in the Vinogradov household for nearly a month.

Osterova's Visit

On 18th February 1950, Osterova met Lidiia at the nearby train station at Staritsa. They travelled via horse and sleigh to Boroshovo village, where she met Ivan, her grandmother, Efim'evna, and Iuliia herself. Osterova described her first impression of her, 'in terms of development, she seems to be normal, very thin and pale. Her hair is golden. She looks like a delicate flower. She is a very nervous, impulsive, persistent and clearly smart child.'[50] When Osterova was introduced to Iuliia, the young girl immediately 'felt my face and clothes, while speaking in small, incoherent sounds. While Iuliia's mother helped me take off my coat, Iuliia took me into the next room and placed my coat on a chair next to the cupboard.'[51] Their initial meeting revealed much of Iuliia'a behaviour and temperament. She showed herself to be curious, inquisitive (a marker of intelligence) and forthcoming with strangers.

Furthermore, Iuliia showed her intimate knowledge of her surroundings. Immediately after Osterova arrived, Iuliia guided her from the door into another room and directed her to place her winter coat on to a specific chair. It was part of a clearly defined routine for the arrival of guests, which Iuliia had memorized from repeated experience. Many deafblind children, such as Iuliia, exhibited an excellent memory.[52] The cognitive process of memory was reinforced through the tactile nature of their first encounter with the object or person. The process of 'touching an object makes it possible to perceive its quality, state, etc. In here, a certain sequence in the perception of both different objects and all their further features is involuntarily observed.'[53] The sense of touch reinforces the memory of the object, its relationship with other adjacent objects and its position within a specific environment. While her understanding of the action was praised by Osterova, it allowed for the possibility of future

[50] Ibid., d. 116, l. 18.
[51] Ibid., ll. 1-2.
[52] Ibid., d. 118, l. 3.
[53] Ibid., l. 108

development. If Iuliia learnt a relatively intricate action of leading guests to take their coats off as they enter the household, she could learn how to complete even more complex routines.

On the next day, Osterova encouraged Iuliia to partake in an exercise designed to test her tactility and intelligence. She brought over a collection of small cubes with raised ridges on one side. When placed together in the correct order, the ridges on the faces of the cubes formed an image. It is unclear from Osterova's notes about what exact image it formed. The purpose of the task was to arrange the cubes into the correct shape to form the raised image. The deafblind child would feel the ridges of the cubes to connect them together. To assist with the process, Osterova had placed another identical set of cubes, with the correct image, adjacent to the deafblind child to act as a reference point. Osterova made the task more difficult through the introduction of several unnecessary cubes. When Osterova handed the cubes to Iuliia, she examined them tactilely, using her hands and tongue. Osterova described Iuliia's progress with the exercise:

> 'Iuliia had put three of the cubes at the top of the box, in which it consisted of one of the images. She examined the fourth cube with her hand and gently touched the edge of the picture on the cube with the tip of her tongue. After examining the fourth cube, she placed it on the correct place adjacent to the other cubes that lay already within the box. For the final two cubes, Iuliia also placed them in the same area as the other cubes. I was amazed that this deafblind girl was able to pick up the six correct cubes of the picture… Iuliia had never seen or used the cubes in her life. Without showing too much excitement, it was impossible to see how Iuliia got acquainted with such new material so quickly.'[54]

Much of Iuliia's behaviour was revealed during the completion of the task. She showed her ability to distinguish between different raised cubes using her hands and tongue, she was able to visualize the completed image, recreate the image with the correct blocks and complete the task. Osterova was not just shocked

[54] Ibid., ll. 5-7.

by Iuliia's intellectual capacity, but her ability to understand and complete the task without making a single mistake on her first attempt.

During her time at the Vinogradov home, Osterova observed Iuliia complete a series of household activities. Iuliia knew how to peel potatoes, lay the table for meals and wash plates after meals.[55] Iuliia's familiarity with key self-care tasks contrasted with the experiences of other deafblind children who had been educated at home, specifically some of the Khar'kov students. Some children, such as Vasili Kirii, remained dependent on others for assistance and were initially incapable of completing basic self-activities without substantial help. Furthermore, Iuliia's completion of self-care activities emphasized the extent of Iuliia's educational and intellectual development. Her knowledge of the environment, the actions and the purposes of such actions all fit into Sokolianskii's 'humanisation' process.

In addition to her completion of self-care activities, Iuliia had a regular sleeping pattern and enjoyed a regular diet. Osterova explained that 'she does not urinate in the bed. At night, she goes to a little bucket in the garden, but by large, she goes alone without any assistance… She either wipes herself with a cloth or does not do so at all.'[56] However, Osterova was less than impressed with the state of uncleanliness within the Vinogradov household, stating that

> 'Iuliia washed in the kitchen. The washstand is nailed on and there is a tiny, dirty shelf for the common soap above the washbasin. The shelf is dirty… and is never washed. Under the sink, there is a dirty stool, which is also never washed, and on it there is a wooden bucket with a handle. Everyone washes in there. They wash themselves badly because they do not want to waste the water as it is difficult to get. They only wash their face and hands. They never wash their neck, ears or feet. They only wash their body once a week, when they go to the Russian bathhouse.'[57]

[55] Ibid., l. 18.
[56] Several deafblind children who stayed at the Khar'kov orphanage suffered from incontinence. S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 116, ll. 44-45.
[57] Ibid., l. 39.

Much of Osterova's commentary on Iuliia's hygiene revealed her disdain for rural settings.[58] Such attitudes most likely tapped into the often fractious relationship between the urban and rural Soviet Union. While such examples of uncleanliness were sneered upon by the Soviet urban population, Donald Filtzer noted that hygiene levels were equally poor in the cities. He explained that 'washing clothes, sheets, dishes or one's body was laborious and time-consuming, especially in a crowed communal flat with no bathroom. All of this was made infinitely worse by the absence of sewerage.'[59] Nevertheless, Osterova's disgust towards the Vinogradov household was already tied into idealized representations of the New Soviet Person. The prevalence of 'dirty' individuals was a visual reminder of societal divisions, a view echoed by Tricia Starks: 'dirt clung to the peasant as a symbol of the barbarous nature of the country.'[60] The maintenance of cleanliness was a symbol of a cultured citizen. The Vinogradov family's lack of cleanliness irked Osterova's cultural values and potentially prevented Iuliia herself from making this transition to a cultured, engaged individual.

Concurrently, Osterova's efforts also tap into Irina Sandomirskaia's assessment that Sokolianskii's 'humanisation' theory sought to civilise wild individuals, such as Iuliia. According to Sandomirskaia, 'the development of the deafblind child is seen as a path from savagery to culture.'[61] The chaos of village life, with its lukewarm attitude to cleanliness and routine-based structure, was to be replaced by the orderliness of modern Soviet society. The humanisation of deafblind children sought to bring children into the light of Soviet science, and away from the randomness of nature and unpredictability of village living. While Iuliia's education had preceded relatively well at Boroshovo, Sokolianskii sought to repeat Skorokhodova's success through a formal institutionalised upbringing.

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[58] Ibid., l. 44.

[59] Donald Filtzer, 'Standard of Living versus Quality of Life: Struggling with the Urban Environment in Russia during the Early Years of Post-war Reconstruction, in *Late Stalinist Society: History, Policies and People*, ed., Fürst (Routledge, London, 2006), pp. 81-103; Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002), pp. 147-156.

[60] Tricia Starks, *The Body Soviet: Propaganda, Hygiene and the Revolutionary State* (The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2008), p. 29.

[61] Irina Sandomirskaia, *Blokada v Slove: Ocherki kriticheskoi teorii i biopolitiki iazyka* (Moskva, Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2013), p. 406.

In true Soviet fashion, Osterova engaged in her version of social reengineering and successfully demanded that Liidia purchase her daughter an array of cleaning products, including a towel, toothbrush and tooth powder. With the necessary cleaning utensils needed, Osterova taught Iuliia how to wash herself using the chain method. Much akin to the processes at Khar'kov, Osterova placed all items within easy reach of Iuliia and went through the individual actions of the task. Since Iuliia had had previous experience in brushing her teeth, 'it was very easy to teach Iuliia how to brush her teeth... she quickly realized and began to gladly clean and rinse her mouth.'[62] After completing the same process for washing herself, she expressed enjoyment at having a clean towel. [63] Not only had Iuliia been introduced to an admittedly familiar activity through the chain method, she adopted the new method efficiently. Adding new actions may have disrupted the overall integrity of the chain itself, but Iuliia proved extremely willing to incorporate new actions into her cleaning process. This proved to be representative of her attitude towards the completion of all her tasks during her time in Boroshovo and eventually, the Institute.

Her willingness to learn and complete tasks was instilled by her grandmother, Efim'evna. She served as Iuliia's primary carer in the Vinogradov household while her parents were out at work. Sokolianskii paid compliment to Efim'evna's disciplined attitude to her granddaughter's upbringing. He explained that 'by following my instructions exactly, she literally saved this girl from destruction. She guided Iuliia, not only in the house, but also in the garden (and the neighbour's garden… and even behind the railroad tracks).'[64] Efim'evna encouraged her granddaughter to increase her understanding of her immediate environment, in which they both explored the attic, farmyard and the surrounding fields together. In addition, Sokolianskii was also impressed by Iuliia's willingness to engage in strenuous work from an early age. He stated that

> 'Iuliia, thanks to her grandmother, was used to difficult work early on. Iuliia cultivated the garden completely; excavated the flower beds and crops, planted the vegetables… stored

62 S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 116, l. 44.
63 Ibid., l. 43.
64 Ibid., d. 117, l. 106.

> things in the cellar, which she also cleaned and prepared for the storing of vegetables. These were all complex operations! And it was all done by a deafblind girl at the age of eight! This was all the work of the grandmother!'[65]

Efim'evna had successfully laid the groundwork for her granddaughter's educational development. Iuliia understood how to manage a plot of land and how the completion of one task led to another. When she gathered the crops from the family's private plot, Iuliia carried out the task not because she was told to do so, but because they needed to be cleared so that more vegetables could be planted in the future. The completion of such tasks fostered her independence. Sokolianskii explained in a letter to Osterova that 'if she is not independent, then she becomes inaccurate, lazy, spoilt. None of the literacy efforts will work, and she will remain an invalid.'[66] While it is unclear whether Skorokhodova exhibited such behaviour at a similar age, Iuliia's experience can be compared to Mariia Sokol's early years, where she proved comfortable in a variety of familiar environments. Iuliia had developed a similar level of understanding through her completion of self-care activities set by her grandmother.

Her grandmother trusted her with specific jobs. She would send Iuliia to borrow kitchen utensils from the neighbours. Osterova explained that she 'went to the neighbours to take a sieve… Iuliia went alone to the neighbour's house and brought back a sieve for her grandmother.'[67] Her explorations of the household with her grandmother had greatly expanded her knowledge of the environment. She perfectly understood the location of many of the objects in the house. Her mother explained that 'if there is anything we cannot find, we need only to tell Iuliia about it and she will find it. I watched it myself many times. Iuliia is smart. She will realize what kind of object her family needs and unexpectedly present it.'[68] Similar behaviour had been exhibited by another Khar'kov pupil, Anton Nosachev, who built up a complete understanding of the location of his household objects. In addition, Osterova observed her take the

[65] Ibid., ll. 106-107.
[66] Ibid., d. 116, ll. 166-167.
[67] Ibid., ll. 18-19.
[68] Ibid., ll. 19-20.

initiative with her grandmother's requests. On occasion, Efim'evna would ask her granddaughter to retrieve an object from her neighbour, only to discover that Iuliia had already completed the task ahead of time. According to Osterova, 'Iuliia knew that this object would be soon needed by her grandmother and prepared for it in advance without needing any request from a family member.'[69]

Iuliia revealed key aspects of the intellectual development. By understanding that her grandmother needed specific objects at certain times of the week, she endeavoured to procure the utensils before they were asked for. Sokolianskii had reiterated the difficulty and importance of teaching the deafblind child to take the initiative, to become independently responsible for their own actions. For some deafblind children, it proved nearly impossible to investigate similar forms of behaviour. In direct contrast, Iuliia had been repeatedly been observed doing so for different tasks. It was more than the completion of the task. She understood the wider context; what role the utensil served for the completion of other important tasks, how her actions helped others and the specific time of day when her grandmother needed the cooking utensil. While Osterova's notes and Sokolianskii's letters reveal much about Iuliia's pre-school life, it is unclear how much of an effect Sokolianskii's advice had on her upbringing. Regardless, Iuliia's early childhood had been extremely promising for her intellectual and educational development.

Osterova went into detail about the nature of Iuliia's relationships with her family. Efim'evna acted as both Iuliia's primary educator and her secondary maternal presence in the Boroshovo home. However, her relationship with other members of her family differed slightly. She maintained a warm relationship with her father, Ivan. When he arrived back from work at the railways in the winter, Iuliia helped him take his shoes and coat off.[70] She helped him wash his face, after which she 'rushes to him and begins to kiss and hug him.'[71] She also completed small tasks for her father, such as grinding tobacco leaves for his cigarettes. Much akin to her tasks for her grandmother, she often

[69] Ibid., l. 20.
[70] Ibid., d. 117, l. 101.
[71] Ibid.

completed such activities without being prompted.[72] Her relationship with her brothers was very different. While Vitia played a minor role in Iuliia's early life, she had a sibling rivalry with her youngest brother, Shurik. Sokolianskii recounted a humorous story from Iuliia's mother, in which she described

> 'when Shurik was offered a cigarette [by Vitia]… Iuliia was outraged, she pulled the cigarette [from his mouth] and trampled on it. Shurik lit another cigarette. She then took him by the ear, put him in the corner, put the cigarette out and told him to stand there until she came back.'[73]

Their relationship together was marked with constant bickering. Iuliia, being older and physically stronger, used her size to push him away, while Shurik deliberately misplaced her things. Consequently, Iuliia placed her clothes on the highest shelves to prevent Shurik from stealing them.[74]

Osterova was encouraged by the different interactions she had with each of her family members. While she proved to be more deferential to her father, she was inquisitive with her grandmother and playful with her youngest brother. She had established unique relationships with her family, which reflected different sides of her growing personality. Sokolianskii had lamented that the deafblind child had struggled to establish relationships with others due to their inability to communicate, but Iuliia's experiences had proven such assumptions wrong. Her relationships were well-developed, complex and relied equally on both her family and Iuliia's input. Iuliia's experiences contrasted with the familial relationships formed by previous Khar'kov students. While Iuliia's played an active role within her family through the completion of activities, several of the Khar'kov students remained largely dependent on their families for support. Petr Vlasov remained bedbound and completely reliant on his brother for assistance, while Kirii's isolated experience at home impacted upon his physical and intellectual development. While the circumstances of each deafblind child are unique, Iuliia's relationship with her family undoubtedly played a substantial role in her educational development.

[72] Ibid., d. 119, l. 43.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., d. 116, l. 39.

Osterova was also intrigued to understand how Iuliia interacted with non-family members. In mid-February, the Vinogradov family held a small dinner party for guests from the village. When the guests arrived, Iuliia was introduced to each person, feeling their face, hair and clothes. While the experience may have been initially jarring for some of the guests unfamiliar with Iuliia's tactile nature, the entire village viewed her extremely positively. Osterova explained that

> 'the villagers consider her to be an extraordinary child and are always interested in her life. The peasants consider her to be a saint. One peasant woman told me that the Lord took Iuliia's sight and hearing and rewarded her with a great mind.'[75]

Such religious attitudes were reminiscent of pre-revolutionary notions of disability, specifically with the position of the holy fool, or *iurodivyi*.[76] Such individuals would wander between villages, expressing piety and knowledge but were perceived to be 'insane'. Julie Brown emphasized that a benign attitude was adopted towards such people with disabilities 'due to a religious tradition that regarded some of the insane as particularly close to God and hence deserving of greater respect.'[77]

While the same notions of 'insanity' were not apparent in the villager's admiration of Iuliia, they were awed by Iuliia's development. It also intriguing to note that the peasantry herald Iuliia's education as a religious miracle. However, their views were misplaced. Iuliia's successes were due to Sokolianskii's pedagogical assistance and the diligence of her grandmother for developing her self-care skills. Iuliia's characterisations as a 'religious miracle' fits into Sandomirskaia's conclusions about the 'humanisation' efforts, where Sokolianskii was determined to leave 'the chaos of the village for the ordinariness of a "normal life".'[78]

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[75] Ibid., l. 20.
[76] Sarah Phillips, '"There are no Invalids in the USSR!": A Missing Soviet Chapter in the New Disability History', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 29, 3 (2009), p. 2.
[77] Julie V. Brown, 'Societal Responses to Mental Disorders in Prerevolutionary Russia', in *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory and Practice*, eds., William O. McCagg and Lewis Siegelbaum (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1989), p. 14.
[78] Sandomirskaia, *Blokada v Slove*, p. 406.

During the party itself, Iuliia and her siblings danced together to the music. Osterova explained that

> 'she loves music and tries to be as close as possible to the harmonica player, often touching the instrument with her hand. When they all play and sing, Iuliia screams in pleasure, and when they dance, Iuliia tries to dance herself, falling into the rhythm of the music.'[79]

Iuliia proved to be very relaxed at the party. Not only did she operate well within a group dynamic, she was not intimidated by the experience and in fact, thrived within it. However, she was within a comfortable, relaxed setting. While she may have been amongst an unfamiliar crowd, she was within a familiar environment. Osterova was intrigued to observe her within unfamiliar conditions.

On 23rd February, she was invited by Lidiia to accompany both mother and daughter on a trip to see Iuliia's aunt, Natasha, who lived in a village a kilometre away. It also proved an opportunity to observe Iuliia within an unfamiliar environment. Nearly all deafblind children struggled in new environments due to their unfamiliarity with the settings. This was expressed by Sokolianskii, who initiated the children immediately within their new educational environments at Khar'kov. Without it, most deafblind children remained fearful of the unknown and some often stayed within one place, unable to move. Skorokhodova described such experiences during her explorations of unknown settings. She explained 'I was not afraid to go forward, because it seemed to me that on every step, danger awaited me, with its rough ground, barriers and obstacles.'[80] Unlike Skorokhodova at a similar age, Iuliia proved to be comfortable in new environments. Iuliia 'walked around at the same hurried pace as she does at home.'[81] Osterova said that 'she does not look as if she is blind. She does not grope, but immediately finds the door and goes into the next room.'[82] While it is unclear why Iuliia proved so willing to explore new environments, her home upbringing may have played a substantial part.

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[79] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 116, l. 174.
[80] Ol'ga Skorokhodova, *Formirovanie rannikh predstavlenii ob okruzhaiushchem mire u slephoglukhonemykh detei* (Minografiia). Ch. 1. O cebe. M., 1970. c. 10 cited in Irina Sandomirskaia, *Blokada v Slove*, p. 21.
[81] Ibid., l. 31.
[82] Ibid., l. 33.

Both Nosachev and Sokol's experiences in their home environments had positive impact on their spatial awareness and tactility. Such experiences proved to be extremely useful for Iuliia's own explorations of new settings.

With Iuliia's proficiency in self-care activities, interactions with others and spatial awareness noted, the focus turned towards her communication skills. While Osterova does not reveal much about Iuliia's language development, she does elaborate on her use of naturalised gestures. Lidiia explained that they had developed several gestures for basic communication, in which most revolved around the work on their private plot. In an example of an extremely specific naturalised gesture, when Lidiia touched Iuliia's left shoulder with the tip of finger, it signalled to Iuliia that she would not have to take buckets of water for the irrigation of their private plot.[83]

However, the exactness of this gesture does bring up questions about whether the origin of the gesture was from Lidiia or Sokolianskii. Many naturalised gestures revolve around basic objects or actions. While the gesture itself was straightforward, the meaning of the gesture was highly complex. It negated a previous action, in which Lidiia, not Iuliia, would be responsible for the buckets of water. It required Iuliia to be initially familiar with the immediate task and to understand that she was no longer required to complete the action when asked. Nevertheless, Iuliia had clearly shown herself to be completely capable to carry out such tasks, which means that the naturalised gesture may have been formed in such a way. While a lack of archival material prevents further enquiry, it is suspected that the gesture may have been established to curb Iuliia's proactiveness in her actions. It may have been developed to stop Iuliia from completing such tasks ahead of time, which may have proved detrimental to the wishes of her parents.

Much of the initial communication efforts were based around language, specifically Iuliia's naming of key objects in her house. On 30th February 1950, Osterova received a response from Sokolianskii to a letter she had sent about initial conclusions of the observation. Sokolianskii insisted that Iuliia begin the naming process as he felt she was ready for the literacy stage. He explained that 'it is necessary to teach the child to name all the items within their home, the

[83] Ibid., l. 5.

daily activities of the child, the names of people whom the child deals with every day and so on.'[84] Iuliia had already exhibited a nuanced understanding of her household objects and their subsequent purposes. Sokolianskii wanted to use her knowledge of the objects as a catalyst for her induction into language, using it as a foundation for further development. Later in the letter, he emphasized the need to 'track her accurately – remember exactly what words and names of objects that Iuliia knows and what words for objects that she does not know. Make sure she remembers the words for objects and the most common of everyday things. Avoid phrases.'[85] Iuliia had already been taught (to an unknown degree) the flat-text alphabet, which may have served as a teaching tool for this process.

Osterova's observations of Iuliia had revealed a sociable, highly engaged teenage girl who had thrived in her home in Boroshovo. However, there were some elements of her behaviour which had been deemed concerning. Osterova had observed Iuliia's often aggressive attempts to force conversation. To gain the attention of others, she would forcibly grab their arm or shoulder.[86] Her use of force was deemed both excessive and aggressive. In addition, her aggressive movements often came without warning. Many of the former Khar'kov students had also exhibited violent behaviour. Varia Shamli bit anyone who touched her and Kirii hit out against individuals who got too close. In addition, Vlasov developed a habit of spitting at strangers. However, Iuliia's actions were not deliberate. She simply did not understand that her attempts to communicate caused discomfort. She also did not realise that she did not need to initiate communication through aggressive movements. At some point in her early childhood, Iuliia had associated the movement with communication, which had led to the processes become entwined. Osterova commented that 'if you let her know that she is hurting you, she rushes to kiss and grab you again. However, she does show regret when she hurts you. I tried to stop her from doing it, but her hands moved incessantly.'[87]

[84] Ibid., l. 165.
[85] Ibid., l. 166.
[86] Ibid., ll. 50-51.
[87] Ibid., l. 47.

Osterova understood that Iuliia would have to be weaned off this action, but this would take a certain amount of time. These were the small, but significant, aspects which could only be addressed within an institutional environment. Iuliia's unintentional movements stemmed from a desire to communicate with others. It was how she interacted and visualized her surroundings. However, she did not know that individuals could perceive things from a distance. According to Sokolianskii, he explained that 'she imagines that we all look with our fingers.'[88] It affected her interactions with other people. Sokolianskii stated that 'she always reaches out to your hands, so that you can look at this thing or person as well. If you do not look with her, then you do not "see" what Iuliia is showing you.'[89] Such aggressive movements would only be partially rectified at the Institute of Defectology.

In addition to her forceful communication, Osterova pointed out that Iuliia's home conditions may have inhibited her development. Despite being an affable child, she spent most of her time by herself. With her parents at work and her brothers at school, she was left alone in the house (her grandmother did not accompany Iuliia for most of the day). When her parents did return, they were unable to provide the necessary attention she desired due to their existing familial and household obligations. Her parents were unable to provide the one-to-one care which Iuliia needed. Many other deafblind children under Sokolianskii's tutelage had experienced social and physical isolation. However, it did not necessarily lead to detrimental effects upon the deafblind child. While Kirii's extended isolation led to severe intellectual and physical disabilities, Skorokhodova's isolation after the death of her parents did not impact upon her educational development. While Sokolianskii emphasized the need for social contact and communication, Iuliia's isolation advanced her knowledge of her immediate surroundings. Osterova reluctantly concluded that her isolation improved her spatial awareness of her house. She explained that 'since her parents are not at home during the day, Iuliia has examined, perhaps more out of boredom rather than curiosity, the entire house and its objects.'[90] Nevertheless before she left the Vinogradov household on 17th March 1950, she

[88] Ibid., d. 117, l. 110.
[89] Ibid., l. 113.
[90] Ibid., d. 116, ll. 36-37.

recommended that Iuliia be transferred to a school environment more suited to her needs. However, she would not be admitted to the Moscow Institute of Defectology until January 1955 at the age of thirteen.

Gesticulation and Dactylology

Within a three-year period between 1947 and 1950, Sokolianskii had continued to send advice and pedagogical assistance to the Vinogradov household to successfully teach Iuliia. While the process had revealed the limitations of *surdotiflopedagogika* in the late Stalinist period, Iuliia had a largely successful upbringing. Sokolianskii even confirmed that she had transitioned out of the pre-literate stage (*dobukvarnyi*) and into the beginnings of the literacy stage.[91] The achievements of Iuliia's educational upbringing contrasted very much with Skorokhodova's education. While both children acquired their deafblindness due to illness at a young age, they pursued different paths.

Skorokhodova's misdiagnosis of her sensory disabilities had led to her enrolment into the Odessa School for the Blind, where her increasing deafness making her stay in Odessa unpractical. Her transfer to the Khar'kov children's home placed her into a formalised, accessible form of education, which allowed her to advance into the literacy stage. Her formal environment was emphasized as a key aspect of her successful education. Skorokhodova benefited from the constant care of professional pedagogues, specialised learning curriculums, accessible environments built specifically for deafblind children and fellow interactions with other deafblind children. It was the culmination of Sokolianskii's previous experience in the establishment of a pioneering, revolutionary branch of defectology, *surdotiflopedagogika*. The application of his *ochelovechenie* method within a formalised learning environment was meant to showcase the superiority of Soviet deafblind education, where deafblind children would be treated like members of society and taught the tools necessary for integration into the Soviet workforce.

However, Sokolianskii's emphasis for formalised institutions had to be adapted in the post-war period. While Skorokhodova experienced the full

[91] Ibid., d. 120, l. 3.

benefits of Sokolianskii's professional teaching curriculum, Iuliia relied on her family to act as surrogate teachers for her home-based education. Nevertheless, Iuliia thrived in her home conditions. Even though she did not have benefits of specially trained pedagogues, Iuliia vastly improved her spatial awareness, knowledge of the environment and self-care skills. She took an active role in her family home, where she completed domestic chores and helped her family with the private plot. Much akin to Skorokhodova at the similar age, Iuliia proved to be a gregarious, active teenager who thrived in her home environment. But most importantly, she had, to a certain degree, become largely independent within her family home. It was the establishment of such independence which proved fundamental to the entire pre-literate stage.

Iuliia's seemingly successful education acquirement of self-care skills, heightened spatial awareness and independency may have raised questions about the necessity for institution-based education within Sokolianskii's method. The experiences of previous Khar'kov students had shown even in the 1920s and 1930s that home-educated deafblind children were an equally valid option for deafblind children for the development of self-care skills. However, Sokolianskii remained insistent on the need for formalised teaching within an accessible, institution environment. While Iuliia had completed the pre-literacy stage, her home-based upbringing may have impacted upon her ability to succeed in the literacy stage. Sokolianskii suspected that it would prove detrimental to her mastery of linguistics and her post-education employment opportunities. While Skorokhodova could rely on a complete formal education directly under Sokolianskii, Iuliia did not have the same luxury.

Nevertheless, Iuliia's next step was to utilise her existing education as a foundation for language acquisition. Firstly, she would learn gesticulation and the dactyl alphabet. She would learn to read and write in Braille. Such techniques would become the primary mechanisms for communication with all people, with or without sensory disabilities. Sokolianskii reiterated that the ability to communicate was not the sole purpose of the *dobukvarnyi* stage. While it benefitted the deafblind child greatly to be able to interact with others, the process itself hoped to instil a more important mentality. Basilova summarised Sokolianskii's attitude and stated that 'the deafblind child begins to form the most important of all qualities of their developing personality, on

which their entire mental development depends upon: the need to designate everything around him, and most importantly, the need to speak, the need for speech.'[92]

If the deafblind child was taught how to express themselves, but lacked the will to do so, then the teaching process would flounder. Many deafblind children, unaware of the importance for communication, simply never showed any inclination to do so. Hence, the process of teaching the deafblind child to communicate was twofold; to teach the methods of communication and the need to use them. Language acquisition within Sokolianskii's method encouraged the deafblind to express their own opinions and feelings about the world around them. Sokolianskii understood that an individual is more likely to communicate with others if he or she had an opinion to express. This took the form of writing letters to family members, the keeping of a personal diary and even modelling as a means of expression. If these deafblind children were to be independent, socially useful individuals, they would have to be able to think as such.

Sokolianskii stated that all language acquisition for the deafblind began with gesticulation.[93] Gestures were established through the child's relationship with their external environment. This was defined by the objects and people within that environment. He stated that 'it is enough for the child to touch the object just once, especially if the function of the object is known beforehand, so that the child will remember the object.'[94] Once the purpose of the object is known, then the child would associate a gesture with that object. This led to the formation of naturalised gestures. With their far removal from more formal tactile-based language systems, they are based extensively on the child's own relationship with their home environment.

After Osterova's arrival in February 1950, Iuliia and her mother, Lidiia, had developed several dozen gestures together. Several years later, Sokolianskii observed Iuliia using several of these organic gestures for her own family, such as 'her mother… (the image of her wearing a yoke – with her right wrist put on

[92] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 135.
[93] Ibid.
[94] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 120, l. 13.

her left shoulder), her father ("by smoking"), her grandmother ("by playing the balalaika") and her younger brother ("rocking in her arms").'[95] She also used a variety of other organic gestures to denote various objects in her household, in which

> 'she acquired signs of household items (firewood – "saw" or "cut", blanket – "covering up in the blanket from the bottom up")… Animals (cat – stroking with the palm of the right hand on the left rear side, cow – "horns" with the left hand and right hand gesture for "to milk", etc.)… Food (meat – cut something soft, bread – "cut", butter – "smear" on the hand, tea – "drink").'[96]

Iuliia's knowledge of her surroundings allowed her to be able to make this association between object and person. Without the years of painstakingly exploring her entire household, Iuliia would have been unable to have a complete understanding of the complex relationship of her environment. With language, the deafblind would be able to communicate with other individuals within a medium that was mutually accessible. Such knowledge of language relied on the deafblind child's intimate knowledge of their environment. Iuliia showcased her ability to translate her understanding of her home setting into tangible naturalised gestures for her individual family members and specific objects in her home.

Other gestures followed the same process. More than five years later, Iuliia was asked to explain her use of organic gestures to Sokolianskii during a classroom lesson. She firstly indicated the formal signed gesture for the word 'sheep', which was followed by a rapid series of organic gestures. At first, Sokolianskii and her pedagogues did not understand what the gestures meant. However, she explained that she had stated three separate gestures, which were 'of small height… sheered with a pair of scissors and her mother'.[97] She explained that when she was younger, her mother had shown her how to sheer

[95] A balalaika is a stringed musical instrument that remained popular amongst peasant communities in the Soviet period. Ivan A. Sokolianskii, *Bukvar': dlia individual'nogo obucheniia vzroslykh glukhonemykh* (Uchpedgiz, Moskva, 1956), l. 132 cited in Basilova, Slepoglukhikh Detei, p. 135.
[96] Ibid.
[97] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 118, l. 184.

sheep. Hence, Iuliia's association of her mother, the shearing process and her youth (conveyed through her smaller self) created the appropriate gestures for the word 'sheep'.

Furthermore, when she was asked about other animals, Iuliia mimicked the action of waving a bell. Sokolianskii explained that 'she showed that the cow had a bell tied to its neck, which she had seen at home.'[98] The naturalised gestures allowed for essential communication to occur between parent and child. However, it excluded others from the conversation due to the uniqueness of the language. Sokolianskii explained that it served their organic needs in the pre-literacy phase and allowed the child to be able to communicate about their environment in accessible manner.[99] This was fundamental to the entire process. If Iuliia formed opinions about her environment, she would be able to communicate such opinions to others. Hence, she could bring about change to that environment if she wished.

After the formation of natural gestures within the deafblind child, they would be replaced with actual formal gestures within formalised sign language. The transition from naturalised gestures to formalised gestures was part of the humanisation process. While the naturalised gestures were suitable for communication with Iuliia's mother, they were largely inaccessible to other individuals. In her assessment of the humanisation process, Sandomirskaia labelled naturalised gestures as 'suitable for primitive life in the village, but not for the "high culture" of humanised people.'[100] Humanisation was about moving away from the development of unique, but inaccessible, natural gestures to a more streamlined, accessible sign language.

Iuliia's own gesture for her father, or more specifically for the word 'father', was the action of smoking. In Russian Sign Language (RSL), the gesture for the word 'father' involves the raising of the right hand in a salute manner to the forehead, after which the hand descends slowly towards the chin in the same movement. Within Sokolianskii's method, the process of replacing the naturalised gesture with the formal gesture is relatively straightforward. Once

[98] Ibid., l. 187.
[99] Ibid., ll. 185-186.
[100] Sandomirskaia, *Blokada v Slove*, p. 406.

the deafblind child had established their own gesture for a specific object or person, they had developed a strong connection with that object or person. The new gesture would be introduced to the child in tandem with the object. For example, the previous gesture of smoking was brought up in conversation, in which the RSL gesture for 'father' would be continually used by the pedagogue with the object. The child would be encouraged to feel their new gesture and try it out themselves. Through repeated efforts, the child would be actively encouraged to use the new gesture instead of the organic gesture.[101] Previous forms of communication would serve as the foundation for the next stage of language. Naturalised gestures would give way to formalised gestures and the dactyl alphabet, which in turn would lead to Braille acquisition and verbal speech.

When she was enrolled into the Institute of Defectology in January 1955, Iuliia had an adequate grasp of gesticulation, dactylology and the Russian flat-text alphabet. Frustratingly, the existing archival materials do not reveal how Iuliia had acquired such language skills in the five years between Osterova's visit in 1950 and her placement at Sokolianskii's research laboratory. The only materials which shed some light on the details of her language development are through the letters between Iuliia's parents and Sokolianskii during this period. She had already exhibited some degree of knowledge of the flat-text alphabet in 1949. More than four years later, on 20th April 1953, Lidiia explained in a letter to Sokolianskii that Iuliia, just before her eleventh birthday, had become fluent in the flat-text alphabet. Lidiia stated that 'Iuliia likes to write on the blackboard, she has learnt how to write all the letters.'[102] In terms of gesticulation, Osterova had already observed Iuliia's use of organic gestures during her visit in early 1950.

By late 1954, Iuliia had begun to express herself not only in organic gestures, but in formalised sign language. She was observed describing her cousin's departure to Moscow through gesticulation. When her cousin, Valia, and her grandmother left the village to travel to Moscow temporarily, Iuliia used a gestured that they were travelling via train to Moscow.[103] In addition, Iuliia

[101] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 134.
[102] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 132, l. 81.
[103] Ibid., d. 118, l. 10.

used the dactyl for the word 'Moscow' as opposed to the gesture.[104] Only six letters exist in Sokolianskii's archives that shed any information about Iuliia's livelihood from 1952 to 1955, let alone her proficiency in gesticulation and dactylology. In these letters, Iuliia's parents explained their worries about their continued search for an institution that catered for their daughter's needs. They also provided updates on Iuliia's home life, in which she learnt how to sew dresses and other items of clothing.[105] However, the letters revealed very little about her clearly burgeoning language proficiency during this period.

It is unclear how she learnt the basics of gesticulation, dactylology and the Russian alphabet. She received no formal education from Sokolianskii or any other pedagogue from 1950 to 1955. It is assumed that her parents provided her with teaching assistance, but they regularly complained about how they were failing Iuliia's educational needs. They explained to Sokolianskii in a letter from 1952 that 'we do not have time to devote to Iuliia and we do not know how to deal with it.'[106] Her grandmother, the sole reason why Iuliia's self-care skills were so advanced, was very ill during this period and was unlikely to have been able to supplement Iuliia's education.[107] Regardless, Iuliia exhibited a desire to study and learn the language on her own accord from the letters available within the archive. Lidiia stated that 'our Yulechka is growing, she wants to study, but there is no one that will engage with her.'[108] Most likely, it was a mixture of Sokolianskii's advice to her parents and her drive to study which encouraged her establish the foundations of gesticulation and dactylology. This prepared her for future induction into specialised education.

Conclusion

Despite Osterova's recommendation in March 1950, Iuliia was not placed within an institution focused on her needs. Sokolianskii's efforts had almost been in vain. He placed some of the blame for this lack of progress on the director of the Institute, Azbukin, and criticized him for his incompetence.

[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., d. 132, l. 75.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid., l. 79.

Sokolianskii even temporarily resigned from his position from the Institute in protest of Azbukin's leadership in October 1950.[109] Despite renouncing his role, Sokolianskii continued to work in his laboratory at the Institute. On 12th April 1951, Sokolianskii wrote a letter to her parents explaining his frustration with the institutional delays. He explained that 'if you send your petitions again to Azbukin, then he, of course, will not tell me anything and will try to make me unaware of this opinion.'[110] However, Azbukin was soon replaced by Aleksei D'iachkov in July 1951.[111] Sokolianskii returned to his former position at the Institute soon afterwards. He claimed in a letter to Protopopov that 'the former director of our Institute is almost like an idiot, if not a complete idiot. When I left the Institute of Defectology, I tried to remove this idiot and it happened when I returned to the Institute.'[112]

Iuliia remained with her family in the village of Boroshovo throughout the early 1950s. In late 1951, she travelled to Moscow with her mother and finally met Sokolianskii at the Institute. It was also the first time she met with Ol'ga Skorokhodova, who was also working within the research laboratory for the deafblind. She showed Iuliia her room within the Institute. In addition, Skorokhodova showed Iuliia a Braille typewriter, which was the first time she used the machine.[113] Despite Sokolianskii's promises, Iuliia was not placed in any institution for the deafblind. Her parents continued to ask Sokolianskii about the availability of a place at the Institute of Defectology in 1952 and 1953.[114] They even asked Sokolianskii about sending their daughter to a school in Kaliningrad to no avail.[115] It was only in December 1954, nearly five years after Osterova's first visit, in which Sokolianskii informed the parents that Iuliia had been offered a place at the Institute.[116] She would start education at the research laboratory under Sokolianskii's personal supervision. She left her old life in Boroshovo to start anew in Moscow.

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[109] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 122.
[110] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 132, l. 67.
[111] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 122.
[112] Letter, Ivan A. Sokolianskii to V. P. Protopopov to Sokolianskii on (6th June 1952) in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, pp. 122-123; S-FPS, f. 1, op. 5., d. 150, ll. 83-87.
[113] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 118, l. 10.
[114] Ibid., d. 132, ll. 72, 82.
[115] Ibid., l. 76.
[116] Ibid. d. 118, l. 10.

4. Iuliia Vinogradova

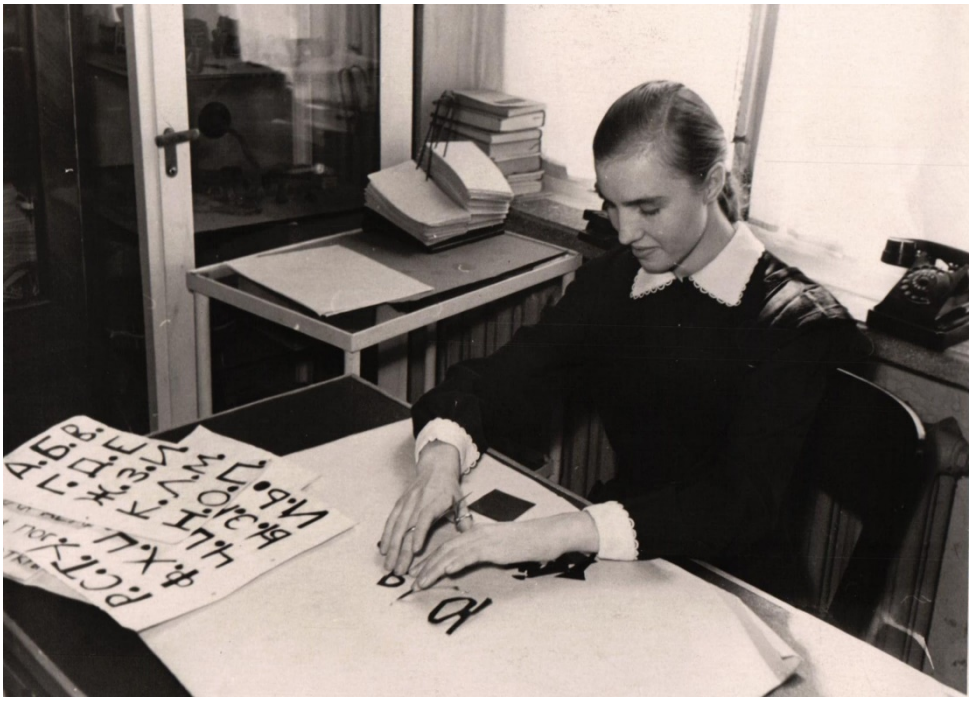

Figure 7.

Iuliia Vinogradova spelling her name using the flat-text alphabet at the Institute of Defectology, Moscow, c. 1955[1]

In the picture, Iuliia sits at her work desk and spells out her name. She arranges the letters in the correct order, making sure to place the last vowel, 'я', (*ia*) in the correct place. On her right, there are several sheets of large letters waiting to be cut out and used. This was one of the many exercises used by Sokolianskii in his teaching of deafblind children at his research laboratory at the Moscow Institute of Defectology. Their tactile examination of the flat-text alphabet allowed them to feel and visualize each letter. Iuliia often sat for hours at a time during the task, constructing words and entire sentences from the cut-

[1] Ibid., op. 8, d. 190, l. 86.

out letters. It prepared her for her language studies. At Boroshovo, she had grown used to her environment. Her informal education under the tutelage of her grandmother and parents had come to an end. Although she had clearly thrived in her home conditions, her upbringing was to be taken over by professional pedagogues in a formal institutional environment. Sokolianskii's research laboratory for the deafblind within the Institute of Defectology became her new home. Previous attempts to house Iuliia within the Institute had failed due to a lack of institutional funding and available accommodation. She was eventually accepted into the Institute at the age of twelve in January 1955. Her entry would mark the resurgence of *surdotiflopedagogika* in the Soviet Union.

However, the death of Stalin and the subsequent Khrushchev Thaw led to a period of retrospection amongst the Soviet populace and regime. Notions about 'humanity' and 'Sovietness' in a post-Stalinist world were free to be moulded and discussed by the populace. Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method, with its ethos wedded to the ideal of the New Soviet Person of the 1920s, would be susceptible to such changes in the regime's new approach towards people with disabilities. Consequently, it posed new questions about whether Sokolianskii's methods of the 'humanisation' of deafblind children were applicable in the post-Stalinist era.

In tandem, the chapter will also examine Iuliia's education at the Institute. Between the years 1955 and 1959, Iuliia would spend nearly four years learning sign language, dactylology, Braille and verbal speech. Using sensory technology, such as the *teletaktor* and the Braille typewriter, Iuliia's acquisition of the Russian language will be explored. Moreover, it will assess the ultimate aims of Iuliia's education. Was Iuliia's education meant to provide her with the necessary skills to be able to integrate into Soviet society or was there an alternative motive? Did Sokolianskii envision Iuliia as a second Skorokhodova, another 'Soviet Helen Keller', or did Sokolianskii see a different pathway for Iuliia? Iuliia's experiences will be examined against Skorokhodova's upbringing, providing an opportunity to assess whether the same ideals which governed Sokolianskii's *surdotiflopedagogika* in the 1920s were as applicable in the 1950s.

Surdotiflopedagogika after Stalin

The period of after Stalin's death in early March 1953 is generally seen by recent scholarship as a period of increasing freedom. The period, known as the Khrushchev thaw, contrasted the years of repression and terror that dominated the Stalinist period. However, its mistaken to suggest that such efforts only began in the immediate aftermath of Stalin. The post-war society that had developed under late Stalinism had its own wants, much of it expressed through the desire for the deceased use of terror and an increased focus on the needs of its citizens, such as demands for household appliances and consumer goods.[2] Furthermore, the regime had to deal with a defiant peasantry, increased examples of hooliganism (*khuliganstvo*) and a new wave of homeless children similar in vein to the *besprizorniki* of the Civil War.[3] The process towards a more open society was not established immediately, it was 'developed quietly on its own, naturally although unexpectedly'.[4] There was a desire from the upper echelons of the Soviet elite to not repeat the mistakes of Stalinism with its consistent use of terror and forced population transfers. The release of thousands of former inmates of the GULAG system was representative of the change in attitude.[5] Elena Zubkova expressed the process as a 'response both to elemental urges and to conscious political decisions made at the time.'[6]

Increasing freedoms took the form of open debates held within Soviet society about the cultural and social direction of the state during the Thaw. The failed attempts at such change had been blamed on the inhibitors of Stalinism and with its apparent demise, individuals sought to achieve a 'moral renewal and rebirth of Soviet society.'[7] Such utopian ideals were recycled in the hope

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[2] Julianne Fürst, 'Introduction', in *Late Stalinist Society: History, Policies and People*, ed., Julianne Fürst (Routledge, London, 2006), p. 13.
[3] Brian LaPierre, *Hooligans in Khrushchev's Russia: Defining, Policing and Producing Deviance during the Thaw* (University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 2012), p. 4.
[4] Elena Zubkova, trans. and ed. Hugh Ragsdale, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957* (Sharpe, London, 1998), p. 171.
[5] For further information on the release of prisoners from the GULAG, see also Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2009); Miriam Dobson, 'Contesting the Paradigms of De-Stalinization: Readers' Responses to "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich"', *Slavic Review*, 64, 3 (2005), pp. 580-600.
[6] Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, p. 171.
[7] Ann Livschiz, 'De-Stalinizing Soviet Childhood: The Quest for Moral Rebirth, 1953-58', in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, ed., Polly Jones (Routledge, New York, 2006), p. 131.

that they would have more impact under an alternative, gentler form of socialism. This included a reintroduction of social engineering, where the regime would attempt to mould the post-Stalinist populace into good communists once again. While such reformative endeavours were applicable to the wider Soviet populace, they were predominantly focused on the younger members of society. Too young to have served during the war, they were heralded for their future role in building a communist utopia, to become a second batch of New Soviet People in the post-Stalinist period.[8]

Unlike the previous attempts at *vospitanie*, Miriam Dobson defined the new process as *perevospitanie*, or re-education.[9] The post-Stalinist regime made different demands from its citizens. Simply participating in labour and being loyal to the regime was not deemed satisfactorily enough to be considered 'Soviet'. In the post-Stalinist period, a true Soviet citizen engaged in both 'the sphere of production and public life', allowing them to contribute to both worlds.[10] In the Stalinist period, individuals were expected to reform themselves and be reformed by the actions of the state. However, in the post-Stalinist period, 'ordinary people were told that they had a civic duty to assist in the regime's quest to remodel every individual into a citizen of the future.'[11] The responsibility was placed upon the populace itself to act as a check on such efforts, to ensure that the transformation would happen to the benefit of the collective.

The reintroduction of the New Soviet Person as a revolutionary ideal was established due to the concerns about the 'Sovietness' of the youth population during the Thaw. Young members of the Soviet populace challenged social norms and conventions through adopting Western dress codes, listening to jazz and engaging in what was considered 'amoral' activities in their free time.[12] Previous attempts at creating a loyal, politically active and hard-working

[8] Gleb Tsipursky, 'Citizenship, Deviance, and Identity: Soviet Youth Newspapers as Agents of Social Control in the Thaw-era Leisure Campaign', *Cahiers de Monde Russe*, 49, 4 (2008), p. 629.
[9] Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*, p. 9.
[10] Susan E. Reid, 'The Khrushchev Kitchen: Domesticating the Scientific-Technological Revolution', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40, 2 (2005), p. 293.
[11] Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*, p. 11.
[12] Susan E. Reid, 'Consumption and Everyday Culture after Stalin', *Russian Studies in History*, 48, 1 (2009), p. 5.

cadre had failed to embed itself in the post-Stalinist youth. While the general relaxing of the regime's opposition to 'anti-Soviet' behaviour was an aspect of the Thaw, it created tensions amongst the Soviet elite through the proliferation of precisely the type of behaviour which flouted the very values of the good Soviet citizen.

Consequently, the Virgin Lands campaign, a continuation of previous Stalinist approaches to 'rehabilitating individuals and making the New Soviet Person via labour', was testament to such beliefs.[13] In similar fashion, Khrushchev's attempts to regulate people's conduct in their free time in the 1954 campaign was another attempt by the state to soothe the tensions caused by the increased freedoms of the Thaw populace.[14] The regime took an active step in teaching others how to act, sending out pamphlets on the specific ways on how to dress, what to do (and not do) in their free time and how to conduct their lives in the 'correct' way.[15] The entire Soviet populace was tasked with enforcing the new ideals on their fellow citizens, specifically to 'monitor others' moral transgressions.'[16] The Thaw was a mixture of general liberalization of the arts and culture, but it clashed with the expectations of the new Soviet leadership. While the ideological desires of the regime eventually fizzled out due to practical restraints, the Thaw did lead to a period of outward expression which existed in stark contrast with the Stalinist era of repression and terror.

The Thaw's relaxation of the punitive measures of the regime led to the fluctuating definitions of 'humanity' and 'Sovietness'. Such ambiguities led to strengthening of previously marginalised subcultures. Claire Shaw's work on the Soviet Deaf community emphasized that the 'deaf saw the chance to overcome their marginal status and claim equality of agency and opportunity within Soviet society'.[17] The Thaw has been identified as a golden period for the Deaf community, specifically in the expression of Deaf culture, language and

[13] Tsipursky, 'Citizenship, Deviance, and Identity', p. 636.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*, p. 9.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Claire Shaw, ''Speaking in the Language of Art': Soviet Deaf Theatre and Politics of Identity during Khrushchev's Thaw', *The Slavonic and Eastern European Review*, 91, 4 (2003), p. 763.

identity.[18] The acceptance of sign language during this period was a fundamental aspect of increasing acceptance of the Deaf community (which will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter). Marginal groups, such as the Soviet Deaf community, thrived during the Thaw, where the establishment of Deaf spaces, theatres and exhibitions were expressions of Deaf identity.

But how did Sokolianskii's own attempts at social reengineering fare within this post-Stalinist landscape? The *ochelovechenie* method was based upon the reformative attitudes of the 1920s New Soviet Person and adopted the Stalinist emphasis on labour and loyalty of the 1930s. Deafblind children were expected to engage in socially useful work, express loyalty to the regime and become literate, erudite members of society. Skorokhodova, with the publication of her autobiography and celebrated status in the Soviet Union, was heralded by Sokolianskii as the shining success of *surdotiflopedagogika*. Through self-care and language acquisition, Sokolianskii considered Skorokhodova to have been a 'humanised' citizen of the Soviet Union.

However, Skorokhodova's experiences were unique. No other deafblind student from Khar'kov achieved the same level of development as Skorokhodova. While she was the face of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method, the remaining Khar'kov students (apart from Mariia Sokol) had passed away during the Second World War. Moreover, Skorokhodova's accomplishments were also a potential barrier to other deafblind children. All future achievement would be measured against Skorokhodova's own upbringing and education, which had the potential of creating unrealistic expectations. Skorokhodova's celebrated position drew attention to the accomplishments of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method but created a false sense of anticipation that all deafblind students would reach the same level. A combination of the deafblind child's experiences, mentality and environmental factors all contributed to the success of the method, not to mention the due diligence and substantial amount of time needed for the process to work.

[18] Claire Shaw, *Deaf in the USSR: Marginality, Community, and Soviet Identity, 1917-1991* (Cornell University Press, London, 2017), pp. 122-157; Shaw, 'Speaking in the Language of Art', pp. 759-786; Anastasia Kayiatos, 'Sooner Speaking than Silent, Sooner Silent than Mute: Soviet Deaf Theatre and Pantomime after Stalin', *Theatre Study*, 51, 1 (2010), pp. 5-31.

Consequently, other deafblind students would have different expectations, depending on their unique circumstances. Iuliia Vinogradova's upbringing proved distinctly different to Skorokhodova. Iuliia's home-based education and extended involvement of her family in her upbringing contrasted with Skorokhodova's problematic early upbringing and eventual enrolment at the Khar'kov children's home. Whereas Skorokhodova's immersion in the *ochelovechenie* method involved the use of sensory technology and one-on-one care from leading pedagogues, Iuliia's grandmother remained the primary caregiver for Iuliia's early childhood. Sokolianskii's insistence on formal educational environments had an impact on Iuliia's education, where he predicted that it would impact upon the development of more complex disciplines during her education, such as language acquisition or even post-education employment. Iuliia's development of her self-care skills had been extremely successful and while she had acquired some knowledge of sign language before her entry into the Moscow Institute, it was less than certain whether her education would continue to be a success.

Moreover, it was unclear what her role was envisioned for Iuliia within post-Stalinist society. While Skorokhodova had embraced the ethos of industriousness espoused by Sokolianskii and the New Soviet Person, such attitudes had changed after Stalin's demise. Being hardworking and collective were not attributes commonly expressed by the Soviet youth in the mid-1950s. Ann Livschiz explained that during this period,

> 'children spoke 'perfect' Bolshevik, but to the dismay of officials, this did not translate into proper behaviour in real life… this led not only to an increase in… negative attitudes towards physical labour and a disinterest in the pioneer organization and socially useful work.'[19]

Although the regime emphasized the need for its citizens to assist in the reconstruction of the Soviet Union, it was apparent that sections of the youth populace were intolerant of such values.

[19] Livschiz, 'De-Stalinizing Soviet Childhood', p. 123.

The purpose of Iuliia's education was tied in with Sokolianskii's adaptation of his *ochelovechenie* method. While the post-Stalinist period led to increased freedoms for several Soviet sub-cultures, the regime was still committed to forging ideal Soviet citizens. Through cultural and agricultural campaigns, the Soviet state wanted to establish a new revolutionary cadre, who would lead others into the utopia of tomorrow. Sokolianskii understood that deafblind children could be part of such an endeavour. Even though commentators pointed out that labour was de-emphasized in the post-Stalinist society, Sokolianskii still continued to highlight its advantages in the post-Stalinist period, stating that 'labour is for the benefit of society.'[20] He believed that there was a place of deafblind individuals who proved themselves to be hard-working, skilled individuals, much like Skorokhodova. With the regime's need for such people and with sections of the populace proving unreliable, deafblind children could thrive within a more tolerant society.

Much akin to the transformative ethos of the 1920s, Iuliia's education took on similar themes in the 1950s. She was part of a new initiative to create New Soviet People, identified as *perevospitanie* of the 1950s. She would be immersed in much of the same methods and techniques as her Khar'kov predecessors under Sokolianskii's tutelage, with the hope that Iuliia would be 'humanised' through the process. However, it was not expected for her to be another Skorokhodova. Her home-based education had detrimentally impacted upon her development.[21] When asked to compare both women, Sokolianskii stated that 'it is a ridiculous and wild question that… [angered me]. Skorokhodova is a writer, a scientific worker. And Iuliia is the most primitive wildflower, taken out from the village.'[22] While Iuliia had advanced tremendously during her period in Boroshovo, Sokolianskii understood that she had yet to reach the same level of Skorokhodova. Within a specialised educational environment and under Sokolianskii's personal tutelage, Iuliia would have the opportunity to pursue her education in the best possible circumstances. While it was unknown at the time of Iuliia's entry into Institute whether she would develop as Skorokhodova had, Sokolianskii ensured that she

[20] S-FPS, f.1, op. 4.1, d. 121, l. 83.
[21] Ibid., d. 120, l. 41.
[22] Ibid., d. 118, l. 161.

would have every opportunity to do so. The following sections will examine Iuliia's entry into the Institute and will trace her experiences through the 'humanisation' process.

The Institute of Defectology

Amidst such ideological flux, Iuliia and her mother, Lidiia, arrived at the Institute of Defectology in the middle of January 1955. However, there were initial problems with Iuliia's accommodation arrangements. Despite Sokolianskii's best efforts, the room still had not been vacated. Lidiia was forced to find alternative accommodation for them with a family friend in Moscow. During their stay, Iuliia had a difficult relationship with the thirteen-year old son of the family friend (his name is not mentioned in the archival material). The boy was described as 'restless and aggressive.'[23] She tried to communicate with him without any success. Sokolianskii recounted Lidiia's explanation of their relationship

> 'Iuliia tries to communicate with the boy, but he just waves his arms in the air and says nothing intelligible for Iuliia to respond to. This causes Iuliia to laugh loudly. She continues to laugh when the boy does not write on her palm, but simply scratches her hand with his finger.'[24]

In addition, he was extremely aggressive and regularly lashed out at her. Unsurprisingly, his actions shocked and confused Iuliia. When she was at home in Boroshovo, she would often have disagreements with her youngest brother, Shurik. Such disagreements rarely led to outbursts of physical violence. In addition, Iuliia understood that they were engaged in a sibling rivalry, with little malice in their actions. However, Iuliia's relatively comfortable home life had not prepared her for dealing with situations involving the threat of physical harm. Initially, she did not know how to respond to the attacks.

Iuliia had not been fully prepared for a life outside the village. Her previous world encompassed her family home and small trips to nearby homes.

[23] Ibid., op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 87.
[24] Ibid., l. 112.

While she had visited the homes of her family and even travelled to Moscow on occasion, Iuliia's successful assimilation into a new environment was going to take some time. While Iuliia's upbringing at home had not prepared her for new environments, Sokolianskii's methods neglected to do so as well. Sokolianskii's insistence of teaching deafblind children in state-funded institutions did not necessarily prepare the children for dealing with non-institution environments. The Khar'kov children remained predominantly within the children's home, only leaving the facility to return to their families. Most of the students did not meet people unfamiliar with circumstances of their sensory disabilities.

Consequently, Iuliia responded to her adversary with a noticeable change in behaviour, as observed by mother. Sokolianskii recounted her mother's observation, stating that 'since the boy's aggressive behaviour is continuous and Iuliia is always in a protective state, she unconsciously expresses her frustration through a strong defensive reaction.'[25] Within an unknown environment, Iuliia could not rely on her intimate knowledge of her home conditions to extricate herself away from the situation. As a result, she adapted to the new circumstances. She deliberately stayed physically close to her mother during the day and made it clear to her that she wanted to avoid one-on-one contact with the boy. Lidiia also intervened on her daughter's behalf, which prevented further attacks. While the experience was unsettling, Sokolianskii stated that it was nevertheless important for Iuliia to experience such encounters. She had excelled in her home conditions in Boroshovo, which had propelled her to the Moscow Institute. She proved to be resilient in the unknown environment, taking active steps to quell the boy's violent tendencies. If Iuliia was able to adapt within equally uncomfortable settings, it boded well for her future education at the Institute. Adaptability proved to be an extremely useful characteristic of the Sokolianskii's deafblind students and of the overall *ochelovechenie* method.

Several days later, Iuliia returned to the Institute after her room was finally vacated. Her new lodgings were quite small. The room itself was only eight square meters in size.[26] It contained a desk with a chair, a small bed and a

[25] Ibid., l. 88.
[26] Ibid., l. 3.

sofa squeezed into the corner. In addition, a small bathroom was located at the end of the corridor. Sokolianskii complained about the size of the room in his notes: 'in cramped and uncomfortable rooms, deafblind students cannot be educated as they are always distracted by nuisances; these inconveniences remind them that they are blind and deaf, and this does not give them the opportunity to develop mentally.'[27] Iuliia confined, urban conditions contrasted with her more open home environment in Boroshovo. Sokolianskii remarked that 'Iuliia grew up among meadows, fields, forests in the countryside.'[28] Despite the criticism of her accommodation, Iuliia's education had begun.

The first step was not through language acquisition, but the immediate orientation of her new environment. The *bukvarrnyi* stage relied on the deafblind child's total understanding of their surrounding environment. While Iuliia had completed the stage for her home in Boroshovo, language training would not begin until she had familiarised herself with her new home at the Institute. Skorokhodova went through same the experiences during her entry into the Khar'kov children's home. Such steps were necessary to begin the process. Skorokhodova explained that 'after I got used to the new situation and was accustomed to the proper way of life, we began with my education.'[29] It was a necessary step of the 'humanisation' process.

In the first week, Iuliia was encouraged by Sokolianskii to explore her new environment. Her lack of knowledge of her surroundings made her initially wary. She 'only partially visualizes the size of the room, a ladder, a restroom and the small corridor.'[30] Eventually, she began to explore her new lodgings. Sokolianskii explained that

> 'Iuliia will walk along the corridor to wash her hands. The length of the corridor is about 25 metres. We left the room to observe how Iuliia is orientating herself in the corridor. On the way, there are several open doors that are in the corridor… When the door is open, Iuliia feels the door

[27] Ibid., d. 121, l. 12.
[28] Ibid., d. 117, l. 78.
[29] Ol'ga I. Skorokhodova, *Kak ia vosprinimaiu, predstavliaiu i ponimaiu okruzhaiushchii mir* (Moskva, Pedagogika, 1972), p. 23.
[30] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 115.

> perfectly, if she stumbles, that is only because she is impulsive in her movement. In this case, Iuliia became entangled in the corridor, not because she came across the open doors, but because there were three of us standing by the door to her room.'[31]

Undeterred by the unknown environment of the Institute, Iuliia explored her bedroom, its objects and the interconnected rooms. Although her accommodation proved to be more urban rather than rural, she nevertheless adapted to her new surroundings.

During the process, Iuliia made mistakes. In one such case, she walked over to the end of the corridor, but struggled to place herself in relation to her bedroom. Sokolianskii explained that 'she began to get confused, to stop and to try and return.'[32] Making mistakes was a part of the learning process. Iuliia's orientation of her environment grew from the experiences. Within the Institute, she relied on the same methods used at Boroshovo. In using specific objects as reference points, she was able to accurately place herself within the different rooms. Sokolianskii explained that 'Iuliia immediately noticed that in the old room, the radiator was on her right, and in the new room it was left to her.'[33] These small, but significant, details were essential for Iuliia's growing spatial awareness. When amalgamated together, they helped her to form a complete picture of her environment. It encouraged her to adapt her movements to the clearly defined environments. Within several weeks, Iuliia moved freely without inhibition throughout her new quarters.

The successful orientation of the immediate environment led to the formation of a personalised daily routine devised by Sokolianskii and Iuliia's pedagogues. At the Khar'kov orphanage, Sokolianskii had stipulated the importance of routine for the students' education and time management. The children engaged in self-care activities in the morning and evening, with classes in the afternoon.[34] Skorokhodova had expressed her support for the routine,

[31] Ibid., d. 118, l. 142.
[32] Ibid., ll. 142-143.
[33] Ibid., d. 117, l. 119.
[34] Tat'iana A. Basilova, *Istoriia Obucheniia Slepoglukhikh detei v Rossii* (Eksmo, Moskva, 2015), p. 22.

stating that the entire process was an 'orderly' means of developing one's knowledge of the immediate environment.[35] However, Iuliia's routine was different in comparison. At Khar'kov, the pedagogues had the use of the entire school, specially designed laboratories and the grounds as available teaching spaces for their classes. While the Institute of Defectology remained the premier facility in the Soviet Union for the education of children with physical disabilities, there was not enough space for Sokolianskii's teaching requirements.

Most of Iuliia's teaching took place within her own bedroom. In addition to her lessons, it was where she slept, ate her meals and spent her free time after lessons. Sokolianskii continued to lament the detrimental impact of the room size on his student's educational needs: 'the fact is that she has been placed in a room which is awful. A small room which only accommodates 4 people at one time. This alone is enough to show the horror of the working conditions.'[36] Skorokhodova's education blossomed within the wide spaces of Khar'kov children's home, which itself was due to the substantial state funding from Narkomos. In contrast, the lack of interest from the regime relegated Iuliia's education to the margins of the Institute. The lack of funding was systematic to the failed promise of the post-Stalinist emphasis on pedagogy. Livschitz explained that 'shortages of funding and supplies… and institutional inertia' scuppered many attempts at genuine reform.[37] Such tepid support from the regime hindered Sokolianskii's attempts to assimilate deafblind children into the Soviet Union.

Despite the spatial limitations, Sokolianskii adapted to the circumstances to provide the best form of teaching for his students. He proposed to split Iuliia's room into separate sections. Each section contained a separate piece furniture, which served to distinguish each area in the room. Each piece of furniture was allocated a specific activity which was associated solely with that piece of furniture. For example, the desk in Iuliia's room was associated with work while the sofa was associated with her free time. Sokolianskii encouraged her to only use the specific furniture for the designated activity. By February 1955, Sokolianskii explained that when 'Iuliia is resting on

[35] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, p. 23.
[36] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 77.
[37] Livschiz, 'De-Stalinizing Soviet Childhood', p. 131.

the couch… she is relaxed and able to do anything. But when she goes to the desk, for when she is engaged in work, her behaviour changes dramatically.'[38] Both teacher and student showed their ability to adapt to their immediate surroundings.

During Iuliia's stay at the Institute, Sokolianskii employed three pedagogues who assisted with her education at the Institute. Her primary teacher was Faina Kazakevich, a research assistant at the Institute. Kazakevich established a close bond with Iuliia. Several days after their first meeting, Iuliia 'rushed to [Kazakevich's] neck and began to hug, kiss, and laugh several times while they embraced each other.'[39] The second person was Vera Vakhtel', a professional pedagogue who would remain in the field of *surdotiflopedagogika* until the 1980s. In addition, Sokolianskii hired a young woman named Nina Ivanova who was also from Boroshovo and wished to work with deafblind children, such as Iuliia, as a professional pedagogue.[40] Ivanova would assist Iuliia in the latter stages of her education.

All three pedagogues had been trained at the Institute under Sokolianskii. Their expertise lay in their extensive knowledge of sign language, dactylology and Braille. All three women were representative of the Thaw, professional pedagogues dedicated to their field of expertise. Pedagogy in the 1930s took on a Stalinist approach to the problems, preferring ideological solutions to pedagogical problems. Consequently, the post-Stalinist landscape allowed individuals such as Iuliia's teachers to pursue their profession with less state intervention in the field.[41] All three pedagogues would take on the role of teacher within Iuliia's life, which had previous been the responsibility of her grandmother. Although her informal home education had been very successful, neither Iuliia's grandmother nor her parents could provide the one-on-one near-constant supervision required for *surdotiflopedagogika*. Iuliia had spent extended periods of time in isolation, which had proven harmful to her development. Within a specialised setting under the watchful eye of trained

[38] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 77.
[39] Ibid., l. 97.
[40] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 126.
[41] Livschiz, 'De-Stalinizing Soviet Childhood', p. 117.

pedagogues, Iuliia would receive the best form of education within the Soviet Union for deafblind children.

The pedagogues at the Moscow Institute differed in quality with the pedagogues at Khar'kov. As discussed in the previous chapters, Sokolianskii initially struggled to find pedagogues with the appropriate experience with children with sensory disabilities, specifically those with knowledge of deafblind children. Consequently, he had to hire pedagogues with limited experience in the field of *surdotiflopedagogika*. In contrast with the 1950s, the Institute of Defectology trained pedagogues in sign language and dactylology, which led to a more professional, experienced pedagogue in deafblind education. Furthermore, while Iuliia was assigned personal teachers, the Khar'kov students were not. With the field of *surdotiflopedagogika* being an entirely new field in the 1920s, it explained much of the limited number of staff and lack of experience in deafblind education. Iuliia's lack of formalised education for so long separated her from previous deafblind children. The use of several pedagogues was Sokolianskii's attempt to not only provide constant assistance, but to also supplement any additional teaching needs that would be arise because of Iuliia's unique experiences.

The importance of the teacher-student relationship remained fundamental to the success of Sokolianskii's method. A positive, fruitful connection between the pedagogue and student was necessary. Despite the obvious differences between both educational institutions, both Skorokhodova and Iuliia developed strong relationships with their teachers. Skorokhodova explained that 'we were surrounded by a lot of care, order and cleanliness, we were treated wonderfully by the teachers.'[42] For Iuliia, Sokolianskii explained that 'Iuliia has already developed a strong connection with Faina Mikhailovich. This is an important circumstance that will greatly facilitate their educational work together.'[43] While Kazakevich's close bond with Iuliia undoubtedly smoothed the teaching process, it was one reason amongst many. The pedagogue needed to assess the capabilities of each deafblind child within their care. An immediate evaluation of the deafblind child's aptitudes revealed their

[42] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, p. 23.
[43] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 97.

capacity for learning as well as their shortcomings. If the child struggled with the transition from naturalised to formalised gestures, then the teacher needed to adopt alternative teaching mechanisms to cater to the student's needs. Alternatively, if the deafblind student became easily frustrated with some activities, the teacher was responsible for providing solutions to counteract this. A key responsibility of each *surdopedagog* was to establish a near-complete understanding of the child's personality, mindset and potential. Their understanding dictated the appropriate level of teaching for each child. Sokolianskii emphasized that the unique circumstances of the child's deafblindness meant that their teaching must cater to those same circumstances.

The pace of classroom teaching was identified as an issue which differed from child to child. If too much time was allocated for the completion of key activities within lessons, the deafblind child would lose interest in the task at hand. Conversely, if the teacher rushed through the task without the necessary context or instruction, it could have a debilitative impact on the child's understanding and completion of the activity. Sokolianskii reserved criticism for teachers who consistently forced their students to complete work in unrealistic timeframes, in which he stated that 'the student will become especially nervous which is disastrous for them.'[44] The maintenance of the teacher-student relationship was a delicate process for any *surdopedagog*. It required an intimate understanding of the deafblind child's mentality and capabilities. Sokolianskii explained that 'anyone who wants to work with deafblind people should have some experience of this themselves… Only then can one expect their work to be highly successful. The teacher must not forget for a single moment that his student is a deafblind person in terms of their reflection of the surrounding reality.'[45]

In addition to their teaching obligations, the pedagogue was also primarily responsible for the formation of independent thinking within the deafblind child. Iuliia had already revealed her curious mindset in her home conditions in Boroshovo. Likewise, the completion of her grandmother's tasks,

[44] Ibid., d. 121, l. 59.
[45] Ibid., l. 97.

specifically the retrieval of objects, showcased her desire to take the initiative in the completion of key tasks. Sokolianskii wanted to build upon Iuliia's existing behaviour. While she had successfully orientated herself to the new environment, Sokolianskii encouraged her to pose questions about the same surroundings. He wanted her to enquire about the objects and people within the environments. The child's curious mindset facilitated the 'humanisation' process. By doing so, the deafblind child would actively engage with their environment rather than react to it. Furthermore, such independence was needed to become faithful citizens of the Soviet Union, especially if they were to embody the values of being 'faithful to socialism and the Party, cultural and moral, collectivist and patriotic'.[46] While the regime expected loyalty from its citizens, it did not simply want them to remain stagnant. They wanted them to forward society, to become active participants of the reconstruction process. Becoming independent was one step closer to becoming a New Soviet Person, a step forward in the *ochelovechenie* process.

The process of asking questions would occur before, during and after the *bukvarnyi* stage. If the child lacked the necessary communicative means, they could still convey their attitude towards the objects within an environment and the environment itself through their actions, specifically during self-care. Most of the child's questions occurred after they had learnt gesticulation, which provided them with an accessible form of communication. However, if the deafblind child was taught a form of communication but lacked the desire to use it to convey their own thoughts, it was a wasted opportunity. The process, the fashioning of a mentality of curiosity, was an essential aspect of both language and literacy training. Not only would this assist enormously in the teaching of these disciplines, but it would help in the socialization of erudite, inquisitive individuals.

However, the theoretical process proved to be far more problematic to implement in Iuliia's training. The process itself was painstakingly difficult, in which 'teaching the student to question is an even more difficult task than to explain the material to them.'[47] Furthermore, 'when a student is not afraid to

[46] Tsipursky, 'Citizenship, Deviance, and Identity', p. 630.
[47] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 121, l. 88.

ask, it means that he is really learning.'[48] To Sokolianskii, to question was to learn. He commented that students who do not have questions, have not fully grasped the subject, having just passively accepted the information without true engagement with the material. Blame was laid solely at pedagogues and teachers who did not prepare their students well enough, in which Sokolianskii stated that 'students respond poorly or do not know how to respond because they are not taught this art form in which curiosity thrives. Students become ashamed to answer, simply because they are not taught how to answer.'[49] The teacher was responsible for the growth of this process, specifically of their understanding of the student. They would set tasks, each tailored to the child's capabilities, which would lead to the formation of an inquisitive mindset.

One such exercise was modelling. It was a tactile-based, accessible activity which served a multitude of purposes. Not only was this a creative endeavour which encouraged the child's imagination, it served as an opportunity to mould their thoughts into physical three-dimensional forms. During this stage of Iuliia's education, she was still in the process of learning gesticulation. Modelling acted as an alternative non-verbal form of expression. According to Basilova, Iuliia already had an interest in modelling from an early age. Near Boroshovo, she had built up basic structures from the clay on the banks of her local river.[50] Sokolianskii incorporated Iuliia's existing propensity for modelling into her teaching. The use of modelling in Iuliia's educational curriculum was an addition to Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method. There is no archival evidence to suggest that Skorokhodova or any of the Khar'kov students engaged in modelling as an activity at the children's home. Sokolianskii utilised new teaching techniques within his overall method and showed a willingness to build upon his work from the Khar'kov days. Iuliia was introduced to the modelling clay by Kazakevich, who showed her how to construct different forms of structures. Sokolianskii had no idea what Iuliia would create, but some of the examples of her models are shown in figures 8. and 9.

[48] Ibid., l. 89.
[49] Ibid., l. 88.
[50] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 137.

Figure 8.

Iuliia Vinogradova and her models, Institute of Defectology, Moscow, c. 1955[51]

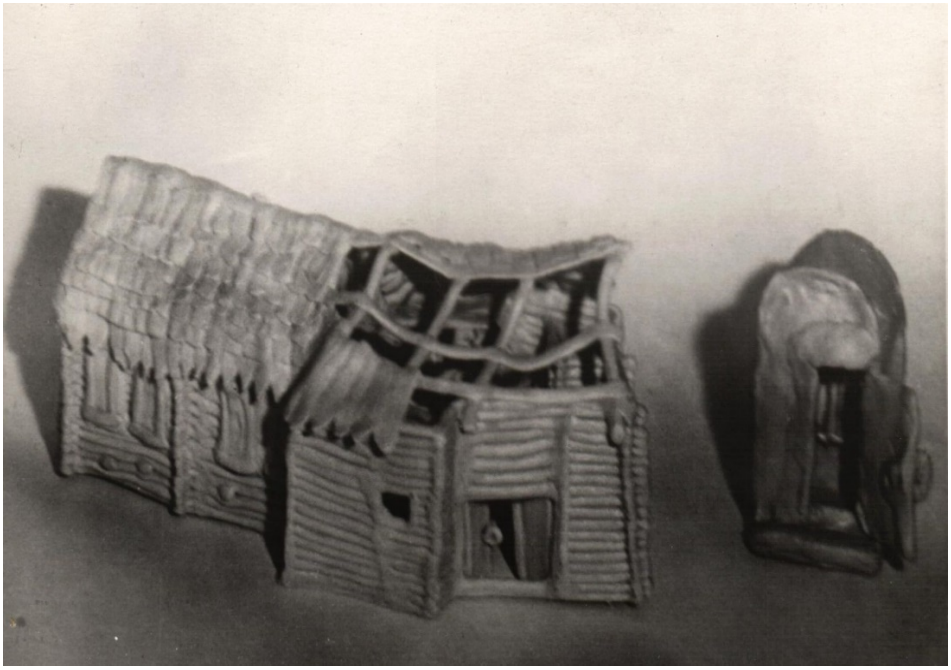

Figure 9.

Iuliia Vinogradova's *izba* (loghouse), Institute of Defectology, Moscow, c. 1955[52]

[51] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 8, d. 190, l. 80.
[52] Ibid., 112.

Iuliia responded to the task with a single-minded dedication which was to become one of her strongest attributes. Sokolianskii recounted how she modelled various objects for several hours:

> 'It is simply amazing. She can sit without getting up for three or three and a half hours, doing the same thing, such as, for example, modelling. Today she was making a cottage. The hut of the log-house was very difficult for her to do... Nevertheless, Iuliia sits down and carries it out for three and a half hours.'[53]

During the process, she completed the construction of various objects, animals and buildings from her village in Boroshovo. This included the Russian log house (*izba*), a sewing machine, cars, bikes, kitchen utensils and other such objects.[54] It is unclear how she created the *izba* in such detail, especially the rooftop comprised of individual logs. Nevertheless, the activity revealed her ability to recall even the most minute details about her home life and how she was able to convert them into detailed models.

Although the task was set to encourage the expression of her thoughts, it also offered a glimpse inside the mind of the pre-literate deafblind child. She used her recollections of the past to create models in the present. It proved to be a positive development in her education. If she was willing to physically build her memories from mouldable clay, she would be willing to express these same memories in other forms of communication. Iuliia's foray into modelling was one of several examples of exercises with an inbuilt focus on the formation of independence. With the formation of independence being a key aspect of the *ochlovechenie* method since the Khar'kov children's home, Sokolianskii utilised new methods to make an extremely difficult process easier. Iuliia's proficiency with the approach proved that such methods worked and opened additional possibilities for other deafblind children. While efforts were made before the pre-literacy stages of Sokolianskii's method, much of this happened alongside and with the deafblind child's further acquisition of gesticulation, verbal speech and eventually Braille. The tools for communication and the desire to use them

[53] Ibid., d. 118, l. 84.
[54] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 138.

would be established concurrently. Such skills were necessary for the development of a unique personality due to the 'humanisation' process.

Teaching Iuliia

Before Iuliia's entry into the Institute, she had already learnt gesticulation, dactylology and the flat-text alphabet a to a certain degree. She showcased some understanding of gesticulation, through her use of organic gestures with her mother in Boroshovo. However, it is unclear to what level she had reached before the beginning of her studies under Sokolianskii. When Iuliia's language proficiency was assessed at the Institute, she struggled to convey her exact thoughts. Although it was clear that she had the desire to communicate, she lacked the fluency needed to fully express herself. Sokolianskii explained that it was a balance 'between the presence of thought and the means of their expression.'[55] During the first few classes at the Institute, Iuliia's attempts to communicate with her pedagogues was limited to the extent of her vocabulary of gestures. Her basic grasp of both formalised sign language and dactylology restricted her ability to establish a dialogue. Consequently, she adopted various actions, not all to her benefit, to overcome her initial lack of knowledge in gesticulation and dactylology. Sokolianskii explained that 'Iuliia simply 'rushes' or 'rebels' in cases when she cannot find a way to adequately express her thoughts.'[56] One of these examples of 'rebellion' was the use of aggressive, jarring movements towards others, specifically to gain the attention of the intended person in the conversation.

Such movements had first been recorded in Boroshovo and continued during Iuliia's time at the Institute. On 28th March 1955, Sokolianskii recorded that Iuliia's pedagogues attempted to stop her from making such movements without much success.[57] Sokolianskii experienced her movements himself and explained that 'it is not exactly rough, but it is rude in the usual sense of it.'[58] She grabbed at others, dragged them over and almost forced them to listen, all

[55] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 29.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., d. 118, l. 73.
[58] Ibid., d. 119, l. 30.

because she believed that such actions were necessary to initiate conversations. Such actions only disrupted the conversation itself. Her desire for more communication achieved precisely the opposite effect. Her violent actions were much akin to the behaviour of the previous Khar'kov students, specifically the most aggressive children, such as Vasilii Kirii.

Sokolianskii assigned such behaviour to Iuliia's rural upbringing, especially amongst other children. He stated that 'it is imparted through her sense of play; of those children who she played with in the village. And she played all kinds of games, including hide and seek. In general, such games in which the touch is fast and, of course, rough.'[59] Sokolianskii's assessment of Iuliia's rural upbringing fit into Sandomirskaia's discussion about the need for the deafblind child to move away from rural environments. The rural upbringing negatively impacted on Iuliia's humanisation. In addition, much of Iuliia's early attempts at communication took on a tactile nature. When she was with her younger brother Shurik, she would try to 'see' what he was doing, which involved touching and feeling every single object he was using.[60] Iuliia's harsh movements had an equally disruptive effect on her gesticulation acquisition.

Much of the initial language training within Sokolianskii's curriculum revolved around the encouragement for communication. It overlapped with the focus on self-care skills in the first stage of the method. Iuliia had already proven her willingness to have conversations with other people; family and even complete strangers. However, there were noticeable flaws with the purpose of her communication efforts. Sokolianskii explained that

> 'she says the first words that come to her, she asks questions about everything that has come to hand. There is no connection in the flow of her questions… It seems that she says all this in order to keep the person beside her.'[61]

Her dialogue was not constructive to the language process. She saw communication not as a means for conversation, but for the alternative purpose of keeping the other person next to her as long as possible. Iuliia believed that

[59] Ibid., ll. 30-31.
[60] Ibid., d. 119, l. 38.
[61] Ibid., d. 118, l. 180.

if she simply repeated every gesture, irrespective of its content, then the person would stay with her. She misunderstood the purpose of communication. Sokolianskii suspected that her, almost desperate, need for communication manifested itself through her extended periods of isolation in Boroshovo. To avoid the same feelings of social isolation, she resolved to use communication, specifically gesticulation, for that purpose.

Furthermore, it revealed Iuliia's misunderstanding of the overall purpose of language. She utilised language not as a means of communication, but for social contact. This confusion about its exact function complicated the language acquisition process and the *ochelovechenie* method. The 'humanisation' process intended to provide deafblind children both the tools for language and the desire to communicate with others. It was part of the efforts to create cultured, literate individuals in the post-Stalinist era. If Iuliia utilised sign language as a means of alleviating her social isolation rather than actual communication, then she was addressing a symptom of the issue rather than the root cause. Iuliia's intensions threatened the integrity of Sokolianskii's method. In direct contrast, Skorokhodova understood the language for its sole purpose and developed her knowledge through interactions with others.

Despite Sokolianskii's attempts, both Iuliia's aggressive hand movements and incessant communication were not immediately rectified during the first six months at the Institute. Sokolianskii expressed his disappointment, saying

> 'it turned out to be so difficult, so far all efforts have almost failed… Iuliia is getting even worse i.e. she pulls or pushes even more strongly than before and runs away. I stopped all attempts to re-educate Iuliia in this manner, as it could only get worse.'[62]

Sokolianskii's inability to change Iuliia's behaviour represented a rare setback for his educational approach. It could be argued that her lack of training within a specialised institutional environment planted the seeds for such behaviour, which ultimately proved detrimental to further language acquisition. However,

[62] Ibid., d. 119, l. 31.

the lack of appropriate, available institutions within the Soviet Union put the onus back upon the *ochelovechenie* method. While the method proved flexible enough to deal with the capabilities and limitations of each deafblind student, it lacked the necessary techniques to overcome ingrained behaviour exhibited by its pupils. Other such pedagogues may have escaped criticism for such an attempt, but Sokolianskii prided his method on changing not only the behaviour of the deafblind student, but also enabling the formation of gregarious, socially active individuals.

Nevertheless, Sokolianskii continued with Iuliia's acquisition of formal sign language and dactylology. While Iuliia had begun learning sign language during her upbringing in Boroshovo, its use amongst the Soviet Deaf community fluctuated between the 1930s and 1950s. Gesticulation took on a specific meaning within the Soviet Deaf community, with its use integral to the formation of a Soviet Deaf culture and identity. While it served as a facilitator for the construction of Deaf selfhood, it also existed as a source of friction for their attempts to integrate themselves into the wider Soviet community. The use of sign language by deaf individuals provoked distrust amongst the local populace and the regime itself. With its use separating deaf signers from the perceived norm, fears developed around its use as a secret language by foreign saboteurs. With the regime's desire to root out real and fictional enemies of the state, it led to outbursts of arrests amongst the deaf community. Claire Shaw pointed out to a notorious incident in 1937, where 'fifty-four members of the Leningrad branch of the VOG were arrested on suspicion of participating in a German spy ring. Many of those arrested were active in amateur deaf theatre.'[63]

Despite the regime's decision to target Soviet subcultures within society, sign language was formally adopted into the deaf educational curriculum in 1938. While pedology had ended the careers of many defectologists, the decision to incorporate sign language into deaf education was taken after its use was emphasized. It was decreed that to develop an 'all-round personality development' for deaf individuals, sign language and dactylology were enshrined as auxiliary forms of communication within deaf

[63] Shaw, 'Speaking in the Language of Art', p. 783.

education.[64] The change ended the dominance of the oral method in the Soviet Union and facilitated the adoption of the Vygotskian principle in encouraging all types of communication within deaf (and deafblind education) education. While Sokolianskii had already adopted the same approach beforehand at Khar'kov, the 1938 ruling had formally legitimized his approach within Soviet defectology.

In the post-war period, gesticulation was questioned as a legitimate language by Stalin himself, who expressed his disdain of sign language in his published work, *Marxism and the Question of Linguistics* in 1950.[65] In response to a question about whether spoken and gesticulated language could be considered equal, Stalin rejected the comparison outright. He stated that

> 'properly speaking, this is not a language, and not even a linguistic substitute that could in one way of another replace spoken language, but an auxiliary means of extremely limited possibilities to which man sometimes resorts to emphasize this or that point in his speech. Gesture language and spoken language are just as incomparable as are the primitive wooden hoe and the modern caterpillar tractor with its five-furrow plow and tractor row drill.'[66]

Stalin's criticism of sign language and those who employed it revealed his derision of those whom he considered backward and primitive. If Soviet society was to be forged into a better, collective version of itself, then the use of a maligned, regressive form of communication was not part of such visions.

Stalin scorned the chances of deaf (and deafblind) signers from assimilating themselves into society. He wrongly believed that spoken language was the basis of human thought, stating that 'deaf-mutes, who have no language at their disposal… cannot develop on the basis of linguistic material.'[67] Stalin doubted the validity of gesticulation as a legitimate alternative.

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[64] Galina L. Zaitseva, 'Problems of Sign Language in Soviet Deaf Education', in *Sign and School: Using Signs in Deaf Children's Education*, ed., J. Kyle, (Multilingual Matters, Philadelphia, 1987), p. 102.

[65] The section which focused on sign language was in response to letters from D. Belkin and S. Furer on 11th July 1950 in *Pravda*. Iosif V. Stalin, 'Tovarishcham D. Belkinu i S. Fureru', *Pravda* (2nd August 1950), p. 2.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

Furthermore, he questioned the ability of deaf individuals to become engaged members of Soviet society. Even Sokolianskii expressed his concern with Stalin's rejection of sign language, stating in 1953 that '[Stalin] pointed to us, the teachers of deaf-mutes, how we should understand the thinking of the deaf-mute who do not speak the human language. Long searches… of the correct way of deaf education and verbal speech came to an end.'[68]

Stalin's death ushered in a new era for sign language in the Soviet Union, where the Thaw was labelled as the beginning of a 'golden age' for the Soviet Deaf community.[69] The increasing freedoms of the Thaw manifested itself through the legitimization of Soviet subcultures through cultural exhibitions, with Soviet Deaf culture blossoming in this period. Increasing legislation led to further dissemination of Deaf culture through cultural ventures, specifically in the form of Deaf theatre, cinema and poetry.[70] Consequently, it meant greater exposure of sign language to a Soviet populace that was able to experience new subcultures within Thaw. Unlike in the late Stalinist period, deafness was legitimized, no longer confined to the margins of Thaw society. Such overtures were paired with the regime's efforts to re-establish the New Soviet Person. Anastasia Kayiatos explained that 'the new wave of surdopedagogy that began in the late 1950s strove to mainstream the deaf child into proper adulthood as a productive citizen within the hearing world.'[71] Sokolianskii's efforts to educate Iuliia were aligned with such endeavours. Iuliia's language acquisition through gesticulation would not only allow her to communicate, but it would open avenues of inquiry that would greatly benefit her development.

In the first months at the Institute, Iuliia developed her knowledge of gesticulation in lessons. In addition, she reinforced her learning through extended conversations with herself in sign language in her free time. According to Sokolianskii, Skorokhodova and other deafblind children also exhibited similar behaviour.[72] Iuliia formed gestures with her right hand and felt them with her left, with her fingers on her right-hand gesturing into the palm of her left. Sokolianskii observed Iuliia's conversations with herself, in which she said 'In

[68] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.1, d. 31, ll. 16-17.
[69] Shaw, *Deaf in the USSR*, p. 24.
[70] Shaw, 'Speaking the Language of Art', pp. 759-786.
[71] Kayiatos, 'Soviet Deaf Theatre', p. 12.
[72] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 121, l. 27.

many days, I will go home and meet my father, mother, grandmother, Vitia and Shurik. I will say hello and I will kiss them.'[73] Prior to her one-person conversation, she had learnt the gestures for 'hello', 'meeting' and 'kiss'.[74] Not only did she endeavour to memorise them immediately during the lesson, she practised the use of these words (specifically in the formation of new, improved sentences) in her own time. Sokolianskii explained that '[She] does not forget them… she enjoys using them, which has been confirmed by today's observation.'[75]

Iuliia was routinely commended by Kazakevich and Vakhtel' for her conscientious approach to her learning. When she could not immediately recall a gesture she knew, Iuliia deliberately refused help from her teachers. Much akin to a hearing child covering their hands over their ears, she 'clamped down on the teacher's hand so that they would not say anything and would not help or prompt.'[76] However, she did not refuse help on every occasion, understanding when it was appropriate to request assistance. Sokolianskii explained that 'when she is not sure, Iuliia pulls the hand of the teacher to ask for a prompt.'[77] She was an engaged student, who remained determined to master the language taught to her. Such personality traits were very much associated with the characteristics of ideal Soviet citizens of the post-Stalinist period. Her resolute attitude may have had its roots in her residual memories of isolation brought on by her inability to communicate.

The foundations of her positive attitude to learning had been established in her Boroshovo days. With such a basis, Iuliia applied herself to mastering the discipline. Sokolianskii taught her the gestures for punctuation, starting with the gesture for the full stop.[78] Punctuation gestures were significant not necessarily for gesticulation, but for her eventual induction into Russian grammar and the writing process. Basilova explained that 'Sokolianskii attached special importance to the introduction of the separating sign after each

[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., l. 28.
[77] Ibid.
[78] The gesture started with the placement of the index finger of either hand onto the middle of the palm of the opposing hand.

letter. In this, he saw the prototype of future punctuation.'[79] Iuliia's familiarity with the use of full stops, as well as other punctuation, prepared her for future reading and writing exercises. Sokolianskii constantly emphasized the need for the deafblind student to use their current form of communication as a bridge for the next stage.

Much like gesticulation, Sokolianskii dedicated the initial months of lessons to the improvement of Iuliia's dactyl knowledge. Within the *dobukvarnyi* method, dactylology acquisition followed on from formal sign language, which had been the method employed during the Khar'kov children's home. However, Sokolianskii decided to teach both forms to Iuliia at the same time. With Iuliia's previously attained knowledge of both sign language and dactylology, Sokolianksii deemed it unnecessary to teach them in sequential order. He adapted his existing method to meet Iuliia's needs. While the teaching both forms of sign language may have seemed to be initially confusing for Iuliia, both language disciplines complemented each other. Specific words were easier to construct in the dactyl alphabet rather than as a gesture in formal sign language. Sokolianskii pointed out that the word 'onion' [*look* or *л*ук) was such an example. When Iuliia was taught the dactyl for the word, 'onion', she complained that it was much easier to convey the word in its dactyl form rather than as a gesture. Sokolianskii agreed with her, stating that the gesture for the word 'is a very complex, emotional process, its image is bright, and it requires a lot of movement. The dactyl for 'onion' is only three letters long.'[80] Both disciplines were closely linked, shown particularly in the overlap between the dactyl signs and gestures in Iuliia's daily vernacular.

While she learnt new dactyl signs, Iuliia also experienced difficulties with the signing process. She interfered with Kazakevich's attempts to teach her new signs, in which Iuliia grabbed her teacher's hands in a rough manner. Unlike previous attempts, she understood that her actions were disruptive to the task. While she continued to interfere with the task, she attempted to stop herself from doing so. Sokolianskii explained that she wrapped her left hand in cloth and placed it away from her body.[81] It impressed both Kazakevich and

[79] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 141.
[80] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 120, l. 3.
[81] Ibid., d. 118, l. 53.

Sokolianski, who stated that 'there is no need to complete the process by using both hands… but by the very fact that the girl used her own efforts to help herself deserves attention, as it is a marker for intelligence.'[82] What proved significant was Iuliia's own awareness of the damaging consequences of her actions, especially to her learning. She took positive steps to stop herself from interfering with the class, in which she understood its overall importance for her life. This applied throughout much of Iuliia's education at the Institute.

Iuliia's continued to display an excellent attitude to learning throughout her early time at the Institute. From 15th January to 15th March 1955, Sokolianskii commented that 'there was not even a hint of any whims from Iuliia, any reluctance to engage with the material, laziness or withdrawal due to illness.'[83] Kazakevich explained that 'she behaves like an exemplary student in her classes.'[84] She was completely focused for nearly all lessons, in which she 'performs what is required actively and obediently, often with enthusiasm.'[85] Iuliia's conscientious attitude to the work drew comparisons with Skorokhodova, who was described as having a 'relentless pursuit of work'.[86] Much of Iuliia's successful attitude to learning was placed upon her successful orientation and teaching by her grandmother. Complex, repetitive tasks, such as the clearance of the cellar and weeding, prepared her for similarly difficult activities within the research laboratory. While other Khar'kov students were frustrated with the repetition of the self-care tasks, Iuliia understood the purpose of the activities. Sokolianskii praised Iuliia's grandmother, Efim'evna, for inadvertently preparing her granddaughter for his own method. He explained that Iuliia 'applies a striking assiduity in everything she does, which is born out of her own initiative, but she listens to suggestions from her teachers and educators.'[87]

However, Iuliia's behaviour outside of lessons proved to be substantially different. In her free time, she often sat by herself and remained idle. During such time, she talked to herself through gesticulation, 'often saying something

[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid., l. 82.
[84] Ibid., d. 121, l. 36.
[85] Ibid., l. 72.
[86] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, p. 21.
[87] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 118, l. 82.

on her hand… these are mostly the names of her friends.'[88] In addition, Sokolianskii stated that Iuliia had shown no inclination to explore her bedroom on her own initiative in the first three months of her stay at the Institute.[89] When asked to explore the room by her pedagogue, Iuliia willingly obliged and conducted an exhaustive examination of her entire room. When she was asked to complete a task, she accomplished it willingly, but she remained inert without some form of direction. Iuliia exhibited similar behaviour during her dactyl training, in which 'when someone asks her to take the initiative, she does not find anything and does not know what to do. But if someone shows her something, then she will ask right away (in dactyl) "what is this?".'[90]

Iuliia's experiences compare with Skorokhodova, who experienced much of the same idleness. Sokolianskii explained that Skorokhodova

> 'prefers talking to herself like a cat, about any topic but never asks questions during the whole conversation no matter how long it is. I had to convince her to put herself at risk of quarrels, to actively meet new people, to lead conversations, to ask others many questions during the conversation.'[91]

Establishing a mentality of curiosity proved to be extremely difficult for Sokolianskii's students. Sokolianskii even explained that 'it might be said that curiosity and inquisitiveness are not common features for deafblind people.'[92] While the process may have eventually worked Skorokhodova, it was only accomplished with 'great difficulty'.[93] Sokolianskii directly compared Skorokhodova's experiences with Iuliia's, where he stated that 'Iuliia did not even give a hint and did not ask about her surrounding environment, though she noted some insignificant changes to her receptor field.'[94]

Much of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method focused on the establishment of independence through the deafblind child's active engagement with tasks. However, the completion of such activities relied on the

[88] Ibid., d. 117, l. 122.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., ll. 122-123.
[91] Ibid., d. 121, l. 101.
[92] Ibid., l. 100.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

impetus of the pedagogue, rather than the deafblind child. It was a long, complex process which was littered with unsuccessful attempts. The acquisition of self-care and language skills all contributed to the formation of independent behaviour. In addition, Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method was not entirely fool proof. He understood that the unique circumstances of each deafblind child required the need for different educational techniques. Some methods would work better than others, while some may not have worked at all. He constantly pushed himself to discover new methods to incorporate into his teaching. He even questioned himself, stating in his own writings 'what are the methods for developing curiosity and intelligence? So far, there are no such methods that give a quick result.'[95] The experiences of each deafblind child all advanced his own understanding of *surdotiflopedagogika*.

While Iuliia's conduct in lessons was lauded, Sokolianskii expressed some frustration towards the ease at which she was distracted. He explained 'the greatest enemy in teaching the deafblind is their willingness to be distracted by the slightest change within their external receptor field. Their perception is so acute that they cannot help but become distracted by the most insignificant irritation coming from outside.'[96] Distinct changes to the teaching environment ultimately proved extremely disruptive. One such interference was temperature. On 10th November 1955, he documented Iuliia's behaviour in the cold conditions:

> 'Iuliia engaged with the work sluggishly and made mistakes in her calculations, which had not happened before… She continued to pay attention to the work despite the very low temperature in the room… She did not complain. She usually never complained about any inconvenience.'[97]

Her lack of protest was admirable, but it affected the quality of her learning. When Sokolianskii wrapped her in warm clothing (most likely furs), he witnessed an unsurprising change in her demeanour. She 'became animated and began to engage in all the calculations with pleasure and completed the tasks

[95] Ibid., d. 117, l. 123.
[96] Ibid., d. 118, l. 41.
[97] Ibid., d. 117, l. 6.

unerringly.'[98] While extreme temperature fluctuations influence all individuals, let alone those with deafblindness, Iuliia was particularly susceptible to minute changes in the temperature. It is unclear whether Sokolianskii believed this to be linked with her multiple-disabilities or within Iuliia herself.

In addition to temperature, strong, pungent smells were often disruptive. Sokolianskii complained about the smell of cigarette smoke from the Institute guards, which wafted in through Iuliia's bedroom window.[99] He declared in his notes that all literacy-based activities should be conducted in absolute isolation to external influences.[100] However, Sokolianskii's insistence for such unblemished conditions clashed with the practicalities of *surdotiflopedagogika* in the 1950s Soviet Union. A lack of institutional funding had relegated much of Sokolianskii's teaching to Iuliia's bedroom. While Sokolianskii had adapted to the situation, he was aware that his own desire for acceptable teaching environments would not necessarily be provided by the Institute.

Furthermore, the anticipation and arrival of Iuliia's family members also proved to be a source of friction for Sokolianskii. In the days leading up to their visit, Iuliia would often get so excited that it inhibited her completion of key tasks during her lessons. It continued to be a disruptive period during their visit as well. In the first month of Iuliia's entry into the Institute, her mother, Lidiia, accompanied her to lessons every single day. Sokolianskii had initially wanted Lidiia with her daughter as it eased Iuliia's transition process from Boroshovo to Moscow. He also emphasized the need for a familial atmosphere at the Institute, in the same ethos as the Khar'kov orphanage.[101]

While it did help Iuliia ease into her new accommodation, it provoked unforeseen consequences. Sokolianskii explained that 'in the village, Iuliia did not see her mother from the early morning until the late evening… But for this month, she was so used to the fact that her mother was always with her, that any occasional temporary absence [of her mother] made Iuliia agitated.'[102]

[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., d. 117, l. 41.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid., ll. 98-99.
[102] Ibid., l. 100.

Lidiia's continued presence at the Institute affected her daughter's behaviour in lessons. It inhibited her ability to complete tasks during lessons. Consequently, Sokolianskii asked Lidiia to leave the Institute for her own daughter's sake, to ensure that Iuliia's education could be carried out without further distraction. However, Sokolianskii continued to be frustrated when more of Iuliia's immediate family visited her throughout 1955.

On 4th July 1955, Lidiia returned to the Institute to visit her daughter. Sokolianskii observed Iuliia's noticeable change in behaviour, in which she 'raved constantly about home, about meeting her relatives at home.'[103] She expressed such thoughts in both lessons and in conversations with herself. When her mother arrived, 'Iuliia, naturally, was not engaged. She was always sitting with her mother… she began to ask about the house, her relatives, about the animals, and about everything that remained in the memory in her home life. And within her memory, everything is preserved to the smallest detail.'[104] Although she continued to be distracted by her relatives, it was a minor disruption. Sokolianskii demanded total dedication from his pupils, even at the expense of their relatives. However, Iuliia's family had been responsible for her welfare and upbringing long before her placement at the Institute of Defectology. Her grandmother had helped Iuliia to develop self-care skills, her mother established an efficient dialogue between them and Iuliia's friendship with her brother helped her understand the importance of personal relationships. Iuliia's relationship with her family had been essential for her education and they would continue to be a part of her life well after her departure from the Institute.

Nevertheless, Iuliia's reaction to her family's arrival raises questions about where she belonged. It is unclear whether she belonged at the Institute under Sokolianskii's care or at home in Boroshovo in the care of her family. While residing within a properly catered environment under Sokolianskii's tutelage was obviously beneficial to her educational development, Iuliia expressed a desire to return home to Boroshovo. It was expressed through written, signed and verbal mediums, in addition to her joyful reactions during

[103] Ibid., l. 103.
[104] Ibid., ll. 103-104.

family visits. Even her first examples of verbal speech (which will be explored in further detail later in the chapter) were about 'how she misses home.'[105]

The question about where Iuliia belonged taps into a wider question about Iuliia's position in society: did Iuliia belong in her home environment or in an institution? While the end goal of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method was to integrate students into wider Soviet society and not to keep them indefinitely within institutions, it is important to assess this within Iuliia's experiences. While the Boroshovo home environment did not cater to the specific needs of Iuliia's disabilities, she had integrated herself into her community, established herself as a useful individual within the family dynamic and received the respect of her family and fellow villagers. On the other hand, the Institute provided Iuliia with the necessary language and literacy skills needed to integrate herself into other environments in the Soviet Union. Both were beneficial for her overall development within the *ochelovechenie* process.

Furthermore, there are unanswered questions about Sokolianskii's desire to establish an independent personality within deafblind children. If Sokolianskii was striving so hard to create independent behaviour within the deafblind child, why did he then insist on keeping Iuliia at the Institute? While it may have been vital to her educational development to stay, it did not bode well with the validity of the method if Sokolianskii was keeping his students under his tutelage against their will. Sokolianskii even described how 'Iuliia tolerated not being home.'[106] While her experiences at home had developed her self-care skills to the point where Iuliia was considered ready for the literacy stage, Sokolianskii continued to emphasize the need for her to remain within specifically catered institutions. Despite her objections, Iuliia ultimately had little in where she resided. Both her parents and Sokolianskii emphasized the need for her to remain within full-time education at the Institute despite Iuliia's desire to return home.[107] While Iuliia desired to return home to Boroshovo, she would stay at the Institute for another four more years.

[105] Ibid., d. 120, l. 17.
[106] Ibid., d. 117, l. 89.
[107] Ibid., l. 69.

Gesticulation to Braille

After several weeks of intensive lessons on the basics of gesticulation and dactylology, Iuliia had proven herself ready for the next step of the pre-literate stage. Her lessons focused around the acquisition of the flat-text alphabet.[108] It followed the chronology of the *ochelovechenie* method established at the Khar'kov children's home. Through the medium of cut-out letters, Iuliia was able to engage with the previously inaccessible flat-text alphabet (as shown in figure 7.) The activity served two purposes; to reinforce Iuliia's retention of previous forms of language and to encourage her to form words and sentences from the list of letters. Iuliia's mother, Lidiia, had previously confirmed her daughter's knowledge of the alphabet in her correspondence with Sokolianskii. Despite such guarantees, Sokolianskii started Iuliia from the very beginning of the process.

In February 1955, she began her lessons on the flat-text alphabet, in which her fluency in the dactyl alphabet underpinned the learning process. Despite her previous experiences with the flat-text alphabet, it took Iuliia several lessons to fully grasp the activity. In Iuliia's first attempt, she made several mistakes in word construction. When she was given a word to formulate, she searched through for all the correct letters but placed them in a random order. When asked to repeat the task again, she rearranged the letters in a different, but still incorrect, order.[109] It was clear that while Iuliia understood the need for the correct composition of letters, she believed that the sequential order of the letters within the word was unnecessary. This was reaffirmed when she attempted to read the word out not from the starting letter, but from any letter in the word.

Strangely, when Sokolianskii asked her to spell out the word in dactyl, she spelt the word in the correct sequential order.[110] It was based upon Iuliia's understanding of the word composition itself. She routinely asked her teachers why words were spelt in a such a way. When asked to construct the phrase '*on sidit*' (he is sitting), Iuliia asked Vakhtel' why the word for 'sitting' had the letter

[108] The flat-text alphabet is the traditional Cyrillic alphabet on a flat surface or sheet.
[109] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 12.
[110] Ibid.

'i' twice.[111] While she understood that certain letters formed together to create different words with associated meanings, she had not fully comprehended the specific purpose of letters. In her mind, if there was already one letter in the word, why was there a need to repeat it again? The confusion resulted not from Iuliia's completion of the task but misunderstanding of word construction. However, the process was addressed through her repetition of the task over a sustained period.

By mid-February, Iuliia slowly began to successfully construct words in the correct order. According to Sokolianskii, 'Iuliia read the first words evenly from letter to letter. But when she read for a second time, she only touched upon the first letter and the rest was all very straightforward.'[112] She dedicated much of her free time to perfecting the method, much like her acquisition of sign language. Buoyed by her commitment to the discipline, Sokolianskii encouraged her to form words, sentences and even basic punctuation with the cut-out letters. In one of the last lessons before Lidiia departed back to Boroshovo, she assisted her daughter during the classes. Sokolianskii explained that

> 'Iuliia cut out her name in the paper – VINOGRADOVA – but she did not cut out a full stop and she asked her mother to show her how to cut it out. Her mother found it too difficult to show her how to do it and waited for me to come along. I indicated that the full stop should be cut out from the paper like a small circle.'[113]

Iuliia had already learnt the purpose of the full stop during her acquisition of gesticulation. She not even been taught how to cut out full stop, but she actively enquired about it for the completion of the activity. Sokolianskii was highly impressed that Iuliia had requested the full stop for the sentence construction. Her impressive efforts were compared favourably to Skorokhodova's experience during the same process at Khar'kov.

[111] Ibid., l. 21.
[112] Ibid., l. 51.
[113] Ibid., d. 121, l. 99.

Iuliia's dedication to the task was observed by her pedagogues. She had constructed so many words from the total pile of cut-out letters that 'it is nearly impossible to cut out all the letters fast enough for her.'[114] Sokolianskii observed her constructing a word from a pile of cut-out letters:

> 'She searches for the necessary letters amongst the heap, but not only looks for the letter which the word starts with, but also puts aside the letters which are also a part of the word. This happens even if the last letter she is looking for is the first letter of the word. Hence, in Iuliia's mind, as she is making the word, she remembers all the necessary letters.'[115]

Iuliia's formation of flat-text words revealed much of her own thought process. It not only showed her proficiency in completing the task, but she memorized each word correctly. Unlike previous Khar'kov students who just picked out each letter in sequential order, Iuliia searched through the alphabet for all the relevant letters for the specific word. In addition, it revealed how she visualized the word in her mind. She overcame her initial problems with word construction to correctly complete the tasks.

In one lesson, Sokolianskii asked her to construct the words '*papa*' (father) and '*mama*' (mother). Instead of forming each word separately, she constructed both words together at the same time.[116] In rectifying her previous approach to the task, she adopted a far more efficient process for word and sentence construction. Most importantly, her successful acquisition of the flat-text alphabet opened another avenue for communication, specifically with individuals unfamiliar with sign language. Sokolianskii explained that the 'positive feature of flat-font text reading is that there is an exact copy of the letter in the palm of your hand. A letter on the palm of your hand and reading it forms the only contact with people around who do not know the special alphabets.'[117] To initiate communication with others, Iuliia would simply spell

[114] Ibid., d. 118, l. 48.
[115] Ibid., d. 117, ll. 117-118.
[116] Ibid., d. 118, l. 48.
[117] Ibid., d. 121, l. 126.

out the word, sentence or entire conversation on a person's palm. Iuliia was able to have conversations, albeit slowly, with seeing and hearing individuals.

The process prepared Iuliia for the next part of the *dobukvarnyi* method; verbal speech. The incorporation of verbal speech into Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method was representative of Vygotskii's desire for deaf (and by extension, deafblind) children to learn all forms of language. Through learning sign language and verbal speech, such children would be able to sign with other deaf and deafblind children while also having the fluency in verbal speech to communicate with hearing individuals. It integrated the children into both communities. Furthermore, the formal decision to incorporate sign language as a compulsory auxiliary language in deaf and deafblind education in 1938 put Vygotskii's theory into practice. However, the Thaw had ushered in a golden period for the Soviet Deaf community and the usage of sign was no longer a source of tension with the regime. With exclusively Deaf spaces thriving in the post-Stalinist period, it was less necessary for the Deaf community to be linguistically integrated into wider Soviet society. There was a lack of need for verbal speech, especially with its obvious connotations with the Soviet (and Western) adherence to oralism for most of the 20th century. Despite the prevalence of such discussions for the Deaf community, it did not have the same impact within Sokolianskii's education of deafblind children. Verbal speech remained vital for the assimilation efforts for the deafblind child.

Despite Sokolianskii's emphasis on the importance of verbal speech, little is known about Iuliia's learning process. Before she started her lessons on the technique, Sokolianskii stated that 'Iuliia herself sometimes tried to babble, that is, she tries to express herself through her mouth.'[118] Initially, it was believed that her 'babbling' was an attempt at verbal speech. Unlike congenitally deafblind children, Iuliia had acquired deafblindness after the age of three, in which she had already begun to develop her verbal speech. She struggled to say certain words, such as garlic, but the processes may have remained ingrained. However, Sokolianskii speculated that 'this is not because she was in her early childhood… this is because she developed a 'reflex' of the

[118] Ibid., d. 117, l. 32.

lips to speak, which had been formulated through direct observation.'[119] Iuliia's understanding of the role of verbal speech may have come through her own tactile examination of individuals' lips while speaking. Consequently, Iuliia's own attempts at verbal speech manifested itself through incoherent babbling. Nevertheless, it was an extremely promising start for a difficult process. Her understanding of the purpose and action of verbal speech meant that Sokolianskii did not need to explain the process to her. Iuliia's willingness to engage in verbal speech would only assist the learning process.

However, Sokolianskii initially expressed doubt about whether Iuliia could learn verbal speech. It had been nearly ten years since Iuliia had talked to others. It was the longest period without verbal speech training of any deafblind student under Sokolianskii's care. It was feared that Iuliia's ability to communicate verbally would suffer due to a lack of use. Sokolianskii compared Iuliia's circumstances with Skorokhodova, stating that 'Skorokhodova lost her speech much later and I have no doubt that her speech was… restored…. But Skorokhodova began to recover soon after the loss. As for Iuliia, more than ten years have passed. Will it succeed?'[120]

Iuliia's upbringing continually placed question marks on her ability to make the next steps in her education. While Skorokhodova benefited from an immersion within Sokolianskii's system, Iuliia's home-based education led to doubt about her capabilities. Sokolianskii explained that 'her voice had survived quite well, although her intonation is broken completely and not preserved.'[121] Furthermore, verbal speech acquisition was an extremely hard process for the deafblind child. Skorokhodova was the only deafblind student who had had 'fully mastered' the medium.[122] Oral speech had taken Skorokhodova twenty years to perfect and even then, Sokolianskii explained that it 'does not always work.'[123] Iuliia's verbal speech education was an arduous, lengthy process which would take up most of her life.

[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid., d. 117, l. 41.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., l. 7.
[123] Ibid.

Nevertheless, Iuliia's verbal speech education commenced through touch. She felt her pedagogue's facial features and vocal cords to assess how each individual movement acted together to form speech. The method was almost identical to the techniques utilised at the Khar'kov children's home. As seen in figure 10., Iuliia placed her hand on her pedagogue's chin to ascertain how to mimic the movement. Likewise, the constriction of her mouth into a circular shape suggests that she is forming the phenome for the letter 'o'. Through extended repetition, Iuliia initiated the process of verbal speech acquisition. In terms of the context, the deafblind child relied on their previous languages, specifically dactyl speech. Skorokhodova emphasized the role of dactylology during this stage, stating that 'the dactyl verbal language develops as an add-on gestural form of communication that occurs within the sign as a communication option for sign language and only later develops as an independent and dominant form of speech, which displaces the need for gestures.'[124]

In tandem, Iuliia's intimate understanding of her immediate environment directly impacted on the quality of her verbal speech. It helped her visualize her surroundings in her mind, in which Sokolianskii stated that 'the deafblind person is at the mercy to the concrete impressions of their surrounding reality.'[125] If the deafblind child had a good understanding of their home conditions, it manifested itself through expressive, detailed language. Consequently, Sokolianskii concluded that on 12th March 1955, 'Iuliia was enriched with the images in the new situation, she was already expressive in the verbal form of images and objects.'[126] Despite the fears expressed by Sokolianskii initially, Iuliia's verbal speech acquisition had started well.

[124] Skorokhodova, *Predstavliaiu i ponimaiu*, p. 3.
[125] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 118, l. 182.
[126] Ibid.

Figure 10.

Iuliia Vinogradova learning verbal speech at the Institute of Defectology, Moscow, c. 1955[127]

However, Iuliia did encounter some initial problems during the teaching process. During her acquisition of gesticulation, she used her newly established language proficiency as a means of staving off loneliness. She simply repeated all the words and phrases she knew in the hope that it would achieve her alternative aim. Such tactics were also observed during her lessons on verbal speech. Sokolianskii declared that 'this was the most dangerous thing that can be expected during the initial period of learning a verbal language.'[128] Iuliia yelled out words in no discernible order and 'distorted some of the words.'[129] Much like during the gesticulation process, it was eventually resolved through increased repetition of the activity.

In addition, Sokolianskii remarked on the content of her first audible words. Iuliia expressed her longing for her home at Boroshovo, in which 'she began to rave about home, how she misses home.'[130] In the early stages of verbal acquisition, she continually repeated the same phrases about her desire to return home. While it is unclear about the exact content of her verbal speech, Sokolianskii utilised Iuliia's previous experiences in Boroshovo as the basis for

[127] Ibid., f. 3, op. 7.1, d. 7, l. 16.
[128] Ibid., f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 120, l. 16.
[129] Ibid., l. 17.
[130] Ibid., l. 16.

some of her initial vocabulary. Shortly after Iuliia expressed her desire to return home, Sokolianskii explained that 'the other day, she sat on the couch in her free time and composed an entire episode of her life… she reproduced a [verbal] picture of bathing with her mother.'[131] Nevertheless, she actively engaged with the learning process to willingly use verbal speech in her daily conversations. While the content of Iuliia's speech initially revolved around her desire to return to Boroshovo, Sokolianskii was happy that she had mastered the primary stages of the method.

With the completion of the initial gesticulation, dactyl and verbal speech phases, Iuliia had completed the *dobukvarnyi* stage of the *ochelovechenie* method. Sokolianskii immediately placed her within the literacy, or *bukvarnyi*, stage. Once the deafblind child understood a previous form of language, whether it be gesticulation or verbal speech, it acted as a foundation for literacy acquisition. Sokolianskii stated that 'it does not matter about which specific alphabet you start literacy training. Any other alphabet will become easier and easier.'[132] Braille remained the primary form of a tactile, printed system for literacy education. In providing an accessible format for deafblind students, Sokolianskii explained that 'it makes it possible to move naturally from letter-to-letter.'[133] Iuliia could apply her knowledge of previous language forms to an embossed format. Iuliia's previous experience with gesticulation, dactylology and verbal speech had confirmed her fluency and ease with the acquisition of a new form of language. She had mastered the initial stages of verbal speech, a type of communication which differed substantially to her more familiar tactile-based forms of language.

At Khar'kov, Sokolianskii utilised a fifteen-point reading plan as a step-by-step walkthrough for teaching deafblind children Braille. A reading plan is not specifically mentioned in the archival material regarding Iuliia's Braille acquisition, but Sokolianskii taught her using several of the same techniques from the original reading plan. Much of the underlying principles of Braille relied on the same structures as sign language, specifically in its tactile form. Iuliia's acquisition of Braille proved to be straightforward. She learnt that each Braille

[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid., d. 121, l. 5.
[133] Ibid., l. 126.

cell comprised a series of raised dots, in which each series of dots formed a specific letter. Sokolianskii utilised the 'system of parallel text' method which he had developed in Khar'kov to similar effect in Iuliia's Braille acquisition. He provided the dactyl gesture for a specific letter and began the process of associating each letter with its equivalent in Braille. Iuliia was asked to confirm each letter in Braille with its dactyl or flat-text form, which reinforced her understanding of the Braille letter. Iuliia was taught to read the Braille cells with the tip of her finger. Unlike sign language or dactylology, there was no designated reading hand. It did not 'make a difference to which hand she reads with and therefore, it is necessary to teach the deafblind how to read with both hands.'[134]

Iuliia made initial errors during the reading process. She had been taught to read from left to right in a horizontal motion over the Braille cells. However, she moved her fingertip erratically in different directions.[135] While she was taught how to read it, her understanding of the process was disjointed. Her confusion may have been due to her reading process of the individual Braille cell. The entire Braille cell is 32 square millimetres and Sokolianskii realised that her forefinger was slightly too small to feel the entire cell, with its raised dots, in one fluid motion.[136] Iuliia tried to compensate for this by moving her forefinger from the top of the cell to the bottom. Consequently, it meant that Iuliia's horizontal tactile reading of the Braille script was not seamless, in which she consistently moved her finger down and across. In addition, she kept breaking contact of the individual cells, which only slowed down her understanding of the text. It impacted upon her ability to read Braille script fluently.

Sokolianskii also emphasized that her previous experiences with the cut-out versions of the flat-text alphabet may have adversely contributed to it:

> 'firstly, this has occurred because of her habit of reading cut-out letters from the flat-text alphabet. Secondly, it is still the result of an insufficient technique of reading, with the letter

[134] Ibid., l. 125.
[135] Ibid., l. 120.
[136] Ibid.

> still being perceived as an element… The movement is excessive and makes the process for reading difficult.'[137]

The large size of the flat-text alphabet encouraged Iuliia to feel contours of the entire letter. Since she was used to the process of examining each letter, Iuliia repeated the process for the Braille cells. It was initially a slow, tiresome process, a view expressed by Sokolianskii both at the Khar'kov children's home and at the Moscow Institute. Reading Braille required repetition of the process until the deafblind student ironed out the mistakes and improved their reading speed. Iuliia eventually employed a more fluid motion for the Braille reading. With greater knowledge of the Braille alphabet, her reading skills grew. She associated Braille words with their equivalents in sign language and dactylology. The memory association between the varying alphabets helped her retain the Braille alphabet. Sokolianskii explained that

> 'the perception of the word is not only a combination of letters, but the perception of the meaning… The combination of the letters plays the role of a trigger mechanism… There are a minimum series of letters that cause the image to form.'[138]

Previous forms of communication served as the foundation for Braille. Once Iuliia made the connection between the Braille cell and its equivalent dactyl gesture form, it expanded her knowledge of Braille. This process would only improve through continual practice.

Sokolianskii's incorporation of sensory technology into *surdotiflopedagogika* assisted with the deafblind child's acquisition of the Braille text. He utilised two different machines for the purpose; the *teletaktor* and the Braille typewriter.[139] The *teletaktor* facilitated conversation between people with deafblindness and people with blindness. While gesticulation was a common form of language for people with deafness and deafblindness, Sokolianskii understood that blind and deafblind individuals lacked a similar

[137] Ibid., l. 130.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Early prototypes of the *teletaktor* had been utilised at UIEM, but Sokolianskii's notes reveal little more about their development.

form of communication, despite the similarity of their sensory disabilities. Blind education, or *tiflopedagogika*, rarely incorporated sign language into the curriculum as blind individuals could communicate verbally. However, Braille remained a common denominator. Sokolianskii sought to establish a machine which allowed for such communication to occur. While the application and impact of the *teletaktor* in Iuliia's education has been recorded, the construction of the machine is unclear. It is known that its development did not face the same logistical nightmare or political scrutiny as the reading machine in the 1930s.

Sokolianskii's relied on language as a 'humanising' mechanism for the deafblind individual's assimilation into Soviet society. Verbal speech and sign language would bring about such integration, while the development of their literacy skills would allow them to access and contribute towards Soviet societal endeavours. Sokolianskii's use of the *teletaktor* and the Braille typewriter in Iuliia's education in the 1950s followed on from his use of the reading machine in the 1930s for his Khar'kov students. He understood the benefits of the mechanical aids to both Soviet deafblind education and to the wider attempts to integrate deafblind children into society. In his mission to create educated, literate individuals, Sokolianskii utilised sensory technology to achieve the same purpose during the Thaw. While the reading machine was not utilised during Iuliia's education in the 1950s, Sokolianskii sought to utilise new, improved technology, such as the *teletaktor*, to establish alternative methods of communication for the deafblind child. Its extensive use throughout Iuliia's education fit into to the reintroduction of the New Soviet Person narrative of the post-Stalinist period.

Figure 11.

Iuliia Vinogradova communicating with Nina Ivanova using the *teletaktor*, Institute of Defectology, Moscow, April 1955[140]

The *teletaktor* comprised of three separate components; the transmitter, the receiver and the power unit. The transmitter, pictured in figure 11., was a small box with six buttons on the outer frame. These buttons controlled six separate pins within the box. When pressed, the pins sent electronic oscillations from the transmitter to the receiver (which is held by Iuliia in figure 11.). Each oscillation corresponded to a specific dot within the Braille cell. The top left button operated the first pin of the cell, the medium left button corresponded to the second and, finally, the bottom left button controlled the third pin. It was repeated on the right side, which controlled the fourth, fifth and sixth pins.

In describing how it worked, Sokolianskii typed in the word 'мама' (*mama*, or mother) into the transmitter. He explained that 'for the word MAMA, you have to press down on the following pins for the letters: M (1, 3, 4), A (1), M (1, 3, 4) and A (1).'[141] The six pins on the transmitter mimicked the formation of a Braille cell, in which the letter 'M' is represented as ⠍ and 'A' for ⠁ . Each

[140] Ibid., op. 8, d. 190, l. 32.
[141] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 121, l. 67.

electronic oscillation represented an individual letter, which Iuliia felt on the tip of her finger. The transmission of the *teletaktor* was conducted in two separate ways. The first was a continuous method, in which the letters were transmitted as written text, with grammatically correct words, sentences and punctuation. The second method, known as discontinuous, conveyed the letters in a non-sequential stream, often in the form of the Russian alphabet.

On 8th April 1955, Iuliia had her first lesson with the *teletaktor*.[142] She was introduced to the different components of the machine and encouraged to physically examine each aspect. When Iuliia had expressed her familiarity with the machine, Ivanova asked Iuliia to place her finger on the receiver and told to expect the feeling of the electronic oscillations. Upon feeling the oscillations, Iuliia became very excited. 'She did not need any more clarifications. She was very anxious and screaming, especially when the letters were coming out. "We held the fingers of the apparatus and confirmed to her that she was correct in her tact", causing her delight.'[143] When asked to repeat the Braille words which were transmitted to her, Iuliia enthusiastically confirmed the correct words in sign.

After several days, Iuliia became increasingly familiar with the process of the *teletaktor*. She 'began to construct words and sentences through tactility quite confidently.'[144] Her proficiency allowed for a new, accessible means of communication. While gesticulation and dactylology allowed for communication between deaf and deafblind individuals, the *teletaktor* facilitated a dialogue between blind and deafblind people. In addition, it was also a much quicker method of communication, in which Sokolianskii explained that 'it reaches the speed of conversational oral speech.'[145] Much of Sokolianskii's pioneering approach to deafblind education was his willingness to incorporate technology to provide efficient teaching tools for his students. The *teletaktor* was an example of such revolutionary technology, in which it offered a quicker, more accessible alternative for communication for the deafblind.

[142] Ibid., op. 4.1, d. 118, l. 78.
[143] Ibid., ll. 78-79.
[144] Ibid., l. 89.
[145] Ibid., l. 79.

While the reading machine had assisted Khar'kov students in the 1930s, the *teletaktor* provided for Sokolianskii's students in Moscow in the 1950s.

While the *teletaktor* served as a communication tool for the deafblind child, the Braille typewriter was the primary mechanism for writing. The deafblind child's education in literacy comprised of both reading and writing in Braille. Through the Braille typewriter, the deafblind child would be able to create her their own content, to write freely about their own opinions about the world. Braille was more than just raised text, but an accessible method for the cultivation of Iuliia's burgeoning personality. She would learn how to construct entire paragraphs and successfully apply Russian grammar and punctuation in the text. Braille bridged the gap between gesticulation and socially useful work. Much like Iuliia, Skorokhodova utilised the Braille typewriter for the development of her writing ability. While Sokolianskii utilised an eight-point writing plan for teaching his students at Khar'kov, the writing plan is not overtly mentioned during Iuliia's education. Iuliia started her lessons on the Braille typewriter directly after the completion of the initial Braille reading stage (as seen in figure 12.).

In the beginning of the process, she made errors in the first few days. Sokolianskii explained that 'every time Iuliia typed a letter, she immediately reaches up with her hand and touches the letter [on the paper]… The movement was repeated every time.'[146] While it is unclear why she touched each letter, it is suspected that she wanted to confirm tactilely that the letter was correct. However, it meant that Iuliia's typing speed was significantly slower. She was eventually weaned off this habit through constant practice. However, Iuliia continued to exhibit her highly conscientious approach to the completion of key tasks during her education. In addition to her need to touch the Braille letters, Iuliia also tried to read embossed paper with both hands. Sokolianskii explained the futility of her actions, in which 'reading with two hands at the same time is impossible, as it is impossible to speak using both hands.'[147] Much like the previous mistake, Iuliia rectified the error through practice. Within a week, she had successfully learnt how to use the Braille typewriter. She understood the

[146] Ibid., d. 117, l. 116.
[147] Ibid., d. 118, l. 134.

various combinations to form letters, numbers, punctuation and other such aspects of the Russian language. However, while Iuliia had learnt how to type, she did not understand the role or importance of Russian grammar. Russian grammar, being a part of the Khar'kov writing plan, remained enormously important within Sokolianskii's education of Iuliia. the Braille typewriter, the next stage revolved around the use of sentence structure, word endings, Russian cases, gender, verbs and punctuation.

Figure 12.

Iuliia Vinogradova typing on the Braille typewriter while in conversation with Faina Kazakevich, Institute of Defectology, Moscow, c. 1955[148]

Russian Grammar

The structure for any form of communication lies within its grammatical structure. The deafblind child's acquisition of Russian grammar relied on their intimate knowledge of their immediate environment. The understanding of the position of objects, specifically whether they were animate or inanimate, played

[148] Ibid., op. 8, d. 190, l. 135.

a substantial role in their grammar acquisition. Such understanding manifested itself into a series of vivid images within the deafblind child's psyche. It represented the tactile representations of all objects and people within the environment. Sokolianskii explained that the images constituted a complex, non-verbalised system of rules.[149] He theorized that the deafblind child subconsciously understood the capabilities of each object within an environment. While a ball could be bounced, a rock could not. Such understanding could be used to form the basis of a grammatical system during language acquisition. Sokolianskii explained that 'these images are only isolated from those chains in which they are links… they become the leading aspects of the sentence (subjects) and the main parts of speech (nouns).'[150] The external environment provided a similar set of guidelines which could be adopted during the child's acquisition of the grammatical structure.

Sokolianskii emphasized the importance of the child's knowledge of previous forms of communication and their home environment. Their understanding of the intrinsic rules that govern the environment established a foundation for grammatical structure. Much like the deafblind child's orientation of the environment, it showed that language, much like their surroundings, followed a set of stated guidelines which could be learnt, memorised and practically applied in their own writings. Sokolianskii highlighted the benefit of teaching texts on the grammatical structure:

> 'The purpose of these texts is to bring the deafblind child into designing their images in strict accordance with the grammatical structure of the language of words, understanding language as a centuries-old system of signs, framed in a logically harmonious structure, in which there should not be anything that does not exist in nature or society… Each element of the language must strictly correspond to what is available in the surrounding reality.'[151]

[149] Ibid., d. 117, l. 52.
[150] Ibid., ll. 52-53.
[151] Ibid., d. 131, l. 5.

The learning process was an enormous undertaking within the *ochelovechenie* method. Unlike the short learning processes of the *teletaktor* and the Braille typewriter, Sokolianskii estimated that the deafblind child would take between two to three years to achieve a mastery of the process.[152] Despite this extended period, the rewards were substantial. Once the deafblind child had mastered Russian grammar, they would be able to write fluently. Sokolianskii stated that

> 'he puts his own content into the given grammatical scheme; he himself composes texts in which he describes episodes from his personal life, or describes events from his immediate world, which he observes directly or even he himself (what is especially important) took part.'[153]

Equipped with the knowledge of the grammatical system, the deafblind child had the opportunity to express their feelings and opinions on any subject of their choice. It was the freedom to convey their thoughts in a previously inaccessible format.

Sokolianskii's approach towards teaching grammar differed between his tenure at Khar'kov and Moscow. While Skorokhodova succeeded in mastering her grammatical knowledge (as evident through the publication of her autobiography), the exact techniques are not discussed in much detail in his personal archives. Only one other student, Mariia Sokol, achieved an unspecified level of literacy. It is unknown how far the other Khar'kov students advanced. Nevertheless, Skorokhodova's fluency in writing was due to the foundations established at Khar'kov, but also to decades of reinforcement and application through the publication of poems, articles and other such examples. It is perhaps unfair to equate Skorokhodova's education with Iuliia's, but they serve as a useful comparison in the differences in Sokolianskii's approach before and after the Second World War.

Sokolianskii's specific techniques for the different sections of the *ochelovechenie* method were not as well-defined at Khar'kov as they were for successive periods. While he had established much of the groundwork for

[152] Ibid., l. 6.
[153] Ibid., l. 5.

surdotiflopedagogika through the observation of Gracheva's shelter, the visits to European centres for deafblind education and his own experiences in deaf education, it was still a relatively new field with much to discover. Sokolianskii's successful techniques were based upon perfecting and improving upon lesser methods. The trial-and-error approach was compounded due to the unique nature of each deafblind child. The personalised teaching system needed to be developed depending on the child's onset of their disabilities, the length of time out of formalised education and their general upbringing. Skorokhodova's education was a success but Sokolianskii discovered much of his method through her journey from an isolated orphan in a school for the blind to a published, celebrated researcher. Skorokhodova's acquisition of language and grammar proved to be extremely useful but her education was haphazard and unformulated, most noticeably when she was encouraged to keep a diary despite barely knowing how to write. The experiences of Skorokhodova and other deafblind children at Khar'kov over a ten-year period allowed for the formalisation of a distinct method with specific techniques for designated stages of the deafblind child's education. Such techniques will be explored in remainder of the section.

Iuliia began lessons on the grammatical structure several months into her stay at the Institute of Defectology. While she started the learning process after the acquisition of verbal speech and Braille, she had already established a basic understanding of Russian grammar. Iuliia understood the use of basic verbs, Russian cases, third-case pronouns and the full stop.[154] For the deafblind child's learning of the grammatical system, Sokolianskii focused firstly on word and sentence construction. Iuliia was introduced to a new word through a tactile examination or demonstration of the word's function or purpose. If the word was a verb, the action was demonstrated to her. If the word was an object (generally a noun), then she felt the object in her hands. The process reinforced the association of the specific word with the object or action. During the demonstration, Iuliia felt the weight and surface of the object in question or performed the action herself. She was encouraged to ask questions about the specific word, such as word formation and whether it was related to other

[154] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 148.

similar words or actions. Her overall experiences with each learnt word formed a distinctive memory of the word itself.

In such a case, Sokolianskii discussed at length Iuliia's learning of the word 'skin' (*kozha*) in Braille. Iuliia's pedagogue, Ivanova, pulled back her skin with her hand and indicated to Iuliia that the word for it was 'skin'.[155] In response, Iuliia reciprocated the action on Ivanova's skin and repeated it on her own skin. Iuliia gestured to Ivanova and Sokolianskii that she understood the new word for 'skin'. The combination of her tactile examination of the object, the process of repeating the action, and her previous knowledge of the word in sign language and dactyl reinforced the word. However, the process itself may have created confusion. It is unclear whether Iuliia understood that the word 'skin' was linked to the skin itself or to the action of pulling the skin back. While Sokolianskii states that Iuliia explained that she had understood the word, the use of actions to describe body parts may have caused some ambiguity about the specific meaning of the word. Nevertheless, Sokolianskii envisioned that the method would allow for the creation of an entire vocabulary of words. In another lesson, Sokolianskii taught the phrase 'to put a thread through a needle' (*vdevat' nitku v igolku*).[156] He encouraged Iuliia to try out the action, in which she attempted to put a solitary thread through the eye of a needle. However, she struggled initially with her fingers and instead placed the thread with her tongue and lips. The entire experience became an ingrained memory, in which Iuliia actively recalled when she needed to remember the necessary phrase and verb.

While the technique of intensive memory association of words with experiences proved extremely successful for vocabulary acquisition, there were still some issues during Iuliia's teaching. On one occasion, there were problems with Iuliia's use of Sokolianskii's name. She referred to her educator solely by his first name, Ivan. However, Iuliia was informed by Kazakevich that she was going to see 'Ivan Afanas'evich' (Sokolianskii's first name and his patronymic).[157] Sokolianskii explained that

[155] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 118, l. 70.
[156] Ibid., d. 119, l. 15.
[157] Ibid., d. 118, l. 178.

> ‘when they entered the room, Iuliia greeted me and stopped to wait… Then she asked, “And what about Afanas’evich?” Clearly, she thought that these names were for two different people, who were called “Ivan” and “Afanas’evich”.’[158]

Admittedly, this was less of a criticism of the word association technique and more to do with Iuliia’s confusion of Russian naming customs. Overall, the method allowed for the growth of her complete vocabulary. This prepared Iuliia for the internalization of various nouns, verbs, Russian case endings and other such examples of Russian grammar.

With Iuliia’s completion of word construction, it prepared her for the next stage of sentence construction. She started to learn how to form and structure simple sentences. These are short sentences which include a subject and predicate. Sokolianskii explained that ‘to build a sentence, you need only two words.’[159] The length of the sentence was often immaterial, just its construction to ensure that it followed the set conventions. The sentence itself was highly prized as the most important aspect of grammatical structure. According to Sokolianskii, ‘a sentence is the life of the word, active, not simply potential. The sentences form the essence, the core, the foundation of the grammatical structure of speech. The grammatical structure dictates everything.’[160]

Only a week after Iuliia had completed her Braille typewriter lessons, Sokolianskii inducted her on a series of educational tasks on sentence structure. He set her a list of simple sentences to copy out on the typewriter. For the task, her first few sentences were ‘Iuliia woke up. Iuliia got up. Iuliia washed herself. Iuliia ate food. Iuliia studied.'[161] The sentence reflected her familiar daily tasks, which helped her visualize her actions and complete the writing exercise. With initial assistance from Sokolianskii, Iuliia used the Braille typewriter for the first time to copy out the listed sentences. Sokolianskii insisted that the deafblind student copy out sentences before they constructed their own sentences. He

[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid., d. 120, l. 15.
[160] Ibid., l. 14.
[161] Russian transliteration: ‘*Iuliia prosnulas’*. *Iuliia vstala*. *Iuliia umylas’*. *Iuliia ela*. *Iuliia uchilas’*.’ Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 142.

theorized that the deafblind child's repetition of the task reinforced their grasp of Russian grammar. She may not have understood their purpose or why word endings changed for different sentences, but she gained an overall understanding that such changes did occur and retained some elements of the grammatical system. The process was repeated over a period of several weeks as one of Iuliia's classroom activities.

Unlike Skorokhodova, Iuliia was eased into the process of writing through the repetition of short, simple sentences over a sustained amount of time. While Skorokhodova had ultimately benefited from the diary entries, it was initially a chaotic process which led to multiple mistakes from Skorokhodova and substantial revision from Sokolianskii himself. Iuliia's benefited from the more methodical approach. After the completion of the exercises, Iuliia's use of third-person pronouns improved, she understood the use of the past tense to describe previous actions and even showed an awareness of reflexive verbs and their different suffixes.[162] The tasks served two purposes; the reinforcement of the grammatical system through repeated exercises and sentence construction of familiar experiences.

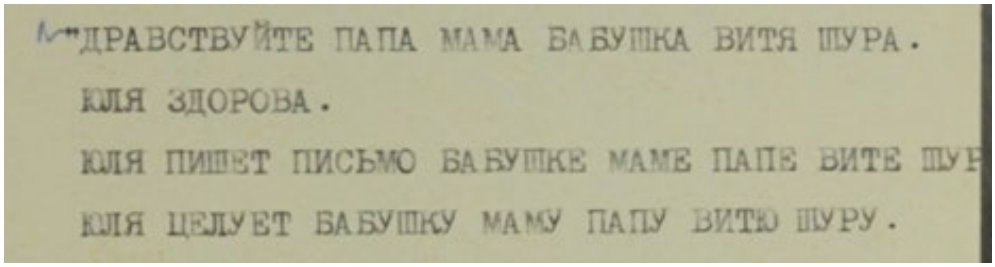
ЗДРАВСТВУЙТЕ ПАПА МАМА БАБУШКА ВИТЯ ШУРА.
ЮЛЯ ЗДОРОВА.
ЮЛЯ ПИШЕТ ПИСЬМО БАБУШКЕ МАМЕ ПАПЕ ВИТЕ ШУР
ЮЛЯ ЦЕЛУЕТ БАБУШКУ МАМУ ПАПУ ВИТЮ ШУРУ.

Figure 13.

A transcript of Iuliia Vinogradova's first typed letter, Institute of Defectology, Moscow, 5th March 1955[163]

[162] Ibid.

[163] An amended translation of her letter is provided as follows: 'Greetings father, mother, grandmother, Vitia, Shura. Iuliia is healthy. Iuliia writes a letter to her grandmother, mother, father, Vitia, Shura. Iuliia kisses her grandmother, mother, father, Vitia, Shura.' S-FPS, f. 1, d. 4.1, d. 117, l. 93.

The success of the repetition exercises led Sokolianskii to set Iuliia a writing task. On 5thMarch 1955, Sokolianskii asked her to write a short letter home to her family, shown in figure 13. In her first ever letter, Iuliia made only a few errors. The word, 'greetings' (*zdravstvuite*), was missing its first letter and she did not use the appropriate conjunctions and punctuation when she listed out her family members. Nevertheless, Iuliia's practical application of Russian grammar was praised. Her previous immersion in simple sentence construction proved immensely useful for the completion of the task. She used the Russian cases correctly, in which she switched between nominative, prepositional and accusative cases. This was shown through the change of ending for her eldest brother's name Vitia, which *Vitiu* was used as opposed to *Vitu*.

The archival materials do not explicitly reveal when Iuliia began her study of the Russian case system. It is suspected that it did not occur during her acquisition of the dactyl alphabet. Sokolianskii explained that he did not introduce word endings while teaching dactylology, as he believed it was 'a particularly harmful application of dactylology in the teaching of grammatically correct speech.'[164] Nevertheless, Iuliia's awareness of the purpose of Russian cases and case endings most likely took place during the Braille acquisition stage. Iuliia's use of Russian cases was documented in Sokolianskii's notes on her classroom activities.

In one such lesson, Iuliia initiated a discussion about plaited hair. During her rural upbringing, Iuliia had adopted the cultural norms of her family, which included the braiding of hair by female members of the family. Her grandmother and mother had both plaited their hair. However, Iuliia realised that her female pedagogues did not follow her family's traditions. During a writing exercise, Iuliia typed out the sentence '*U Yulii est' kosa*' (Iuliia has a braid).[165] For the next sentence, she tried to write 'Grandmother has a braid' but she made a mistake with the case ending. She used the incorrect genitive case ending for '*U babushka*' (grandmother) when instead she should have used '*U babushki*'.[166] Sokolianskii intervened and 'showed her [the correct ending]… she then

[164] Ibid., d. 121, l. 79.
[165] Ibid., ll. 32-33.
[166] Ibid., l. 33.

corrected herself.'[167] She subsequently rewrote the sentence correctly several times. Significantly, it also represented one of the first occasions in which Iuliia created her own literary content. Even though it was a simple sentence, Iuliia felt comfortable with her literacy skills to produce her own material. She noticed a change in her environment and expressed her thoughts on the subject in a written form. Sokolianskii was far more concerned with the intent of Iuliia's actions rather than the quality or quantity of the material.

Iuliia's discussion surrounding the custom of braiding highlights her position as a young woman in the post-Stalinist era. In the early stages of Soviet power, women had been freed from the obligations of domestic labour and 'kitchen slavery', only to be forced back to their previous position in the increasing conservative Stalinist period of the mid-1930s.[168] The Khrushchev era introduced some changes, particularly through the demographic crisis and the increased role of consumerism within domestic society.[169] Women were expected to be mothers, homemakers and workers, but Susan Reid expressed that the 'combined burden of job, childcare and housework prevented many women from engaging in social and political life.'[170] Despite the ongoing discussions of motherhood in the post-war period, Iuliia nor Skorokhodova are discussed in such terms.

Instead, both women were portrayed in their dedicated approach to education and engagement in productive endeavour. While Skorokhodova pursued an academic and literary career in deafblind research, Iuliia excelled in domestic pursuits, specifically in sewing. Sokolianskii explained that 'Iuliia learnt [how to sew] very early… the children often sewed dresses for the dolls and skilfully learnt how to use the needle.'[171] Iuliia brought her dolls with her to the Institute and even constructed her own bed for them. Her expertise proved to be extremely applicable in the Khrushchev period, especially with the introduction of sewing machines into Soviet households in the hope of easing

[167] Ibid.
[168] Reid, 'Khrushchev Kitchen', p. 293; Reid, 'Consumption and Everyday Culture', p. 4.
[169] Melanie Ilič, 'Women in the Khrushchev Era: An Overview', in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, eds., Melanie Ilič, Susan E. Reid and Lynne Attwood (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004), p. 9.
[170] Reid, 'Khrushchev Kitchen', p. 293.
[171] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 118, l. 50.

the burden of domestic chores. Furthermore, Iuliia's distinction in the pursuit served her well in her post-education employment.

Iuliia's conscientious attitude towards sewing was equally apparent towards her acquisition of grammar. However, she often struggled with word endings, especially if they were irregular nouns or verbs. The word '*papa*' (father) was such an example. She did not understand why the word for father followed the rules commonly required for feminine words, despite being a masculine noun. In her initial use of the word in her writing exercises, Iuliia wrote '*papa*' incorrectly when used in the genitive case (instead of '*papy*', the correct form). Sokolianskii blamed his own carelessness for Iuliia's problems with case endings. When Iuliia was introduced to the genitive case, Sokolianskii admitted his own lack of focus during the lesson. He explained that 'because of my imprudence… the girl ran into difficulties and this stripped her of any consistency.'[172] Sokolianskii, like other such individuals, was guilty of not always adhering to his own directives. His *ochelovechenie* method required the total commitment of the pedagogue to the deafblind child's education.

However, his lapse of concentration had led to consequences in Iuliia's completion of the activity. Since Sokolianskii did not pick up on her mistakes, Iuliia believed that she had completed the task correctly. More significantly, it reinforced her existing errors. Skorokhodova experienced the same circumstances, where a lack of diligence led to persistent mistakes in her writing. It was initially feared that the minor errors would lead to more serious issues, which would be harder to address later in her education. *Surdotiflopedagogika* was a highly intensive, hugely consequential discipline which expected an equal level of patience and exertion from both student and pedagogue. Sometimes even its pioneer lacked the discipline needed for the method.

Although Iuliia encountered some initial problems with various Russian cases, she retained a good understanding of the gender of nouns. Much of the word to memory association processes earlier in the *bukvarnyi* stage had emphasized the gender of the specific word. Hence, her knowledge of the gender of specific words and their application in a grammatical context was considered sufficient for the initial grammar acquisition stage. However, she did

[172] Ibid., d. 121, l. 34.

continue to make mistakes during her learning of the method. Iuliia continued to be frustrated by irregular words, such as '*papa*'. In one lesson, Sokolianskii described Iuliia's attempt to describe the actions of her parents. She wrote the sentence '*Mama vziala*…' (Mother took…). However, she used the incorrect word ending when she repeated the sentence with the word '*papa*', in which she typed '*Papa vziala*' (Father took…).[173]

In addition, Iuliia continued to make minor errors. She struggled to remember previously learnt words. Sokolianskii explained that 'as for other names, she hesitates, as if waiting for a prompt.'[174] This was eventually overcome through the repetition of the same exercises and self-assessment. Iuliia insisted on going through her work after she completed it. Such behaviour was linked with her desire not to make mistakes, which had previously led to her need to check each printed letter on the paper from the Braille typewriter. In addition, Sokolianskii and the team of pedagogues all went through Iuliia's work together to ensure that she was consistent in her approach. Sokolianskii praised Iuliia as she had 'not yet made a single mistake in writing simple sentences in terms of feminine and masculine gender.'[175]

The study of personal pronouns was another aspect of Iuliia's grammatical learning. During the initial stage of literacy acquisition, Sokolianskii recommended that the deafblind child write only in the third-person. He explained that

> 'the very, simple auxiliary pronouns, used by us, made the adoption of personal pronouns very simple and accessible, without causing any difficulties for our deafblind students… the students were comfortable from the very beginning to make up their self-contained texts, speaking about themselves or denoting themselves in the third-person.'[176]

The method was employed during Skorokhodova's education at Khar'kov. The deafblind children had learnt to refer to themselves in the third-person during

[173] Ibid., l. 108.
[174] Ibid., l. 106.
[175] Ibid., l. 108.
[176] Ibid., d. 131, l. 8.

their acquisition of gesticulation. It was considered a more efficient method of streamlining personal pronoun usage, which had the potential to overload the deafblind student with, what was deemed, unnecessary pronouns. Sokolianskii explained that it was essential not to introduce the first-person pronouns during the gesticulation and verbal speech stages, stating that 'we consider it impossible to even do this, even harmful' to their education.[177] The third-person pronoun was viewed as the most efficient means of expression. Once the deafblind child showed a degree of fluency with the third-person pronoun, they were ready to learn other personal pronouns.[178] Sokolianskii explained that 'when the third-person pronoun is firmly mastered, it was not difficult for the deafblind to switch from the third-person to the first-person pronoun.'[179]

Punctuation formed a significant part of Iuliia's grammatical education. She had already internalized the full stop during the *dobukvarnyi* stage. However, Sokolianskii explained that other deafblind children did not always grasp its significance in sentence construction;

> 'when teaching grammar, a full stop is almost the most important aspect of mastering grammar. Children do not know or understand the importance of this. Why do I need to write with a capital latter? A capital letter is written after a full stop. Why is it written as a capital? A capital letter is written in connection with a full stop in the text. And what about a separate sentence? And for nouns?'[180]

While Iuliia understood the purpose of the full stop as a gesture, she did not initially consistently apply it during her reading and writing tasks. She often kept reading entire passages without adhering to the full stops in the text.

Iuliia's erratic use of full stops proved obviously detrimental to the quality of her written work. Unlike Iuliia, Skorokhodova had few problems in understanding the use of punctuation and applying it to her written work. Consequently, Sokolianskii adopted new techniques for Iuliia's education to

[177] Ibid., d. 121, l. 58.
[178] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 150.
[179] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 131, l. 8.
[180] Ibid., d. 121, l. 81.

encourage her to use punctation, specifically full stops, more consistently in her writing. He asked her to read an entire paragraph which contained no punctuation. After Iuliia read the text, he placed a single full stop at the end of one sentence and asked her to read it again. Sokolianskii stated 'when she read the full stop, she stopped.'[181] In the same exercise, he asked Iuliia to place the full stops in the appropriate places within the text. It tested her ability to understand the construction of simple sentences, in which

> 'she read several sentences, correctly marking the full stops. Some of them did not have full stops, due to a lack of space on the sheet. Iuliia stopped sometimes in confusion, but quickly took a pencil from the table and placed full stops on the sheet.'[182]

The archival materials do not reveal the extent of Iuliia's knowledge of punctuation as it only goes into detail about her activities on the full stop. However, Sokolianskii stated that the knowledge of the role of the full stop made it much easier to learn other types of punctuation marks.[183]

Iuliia's education on Russian grammar was to take nearly two and half years. Her literacy skills had advanced significantly during her time at the Institute. She understood how to use personal pronouns, punctuation and Russian cases and could construct different kinds of sentences on the Braille typewriter. Such combined knowledge led successfully to the completion of Iuliia's writing tasks. On 3rd March 1955, Iuliia had completed a writing task but questioned the parameters of the task itself. Her pedagogue, Kazakevich, had instructed her to write the sentence 'Faina was sitting'.[184] But Iuliia asked her, 'what is the word for what Faina is sitting on?'.[185]

Her question provoked an exclamation of excitement amongst the pedagogues. When Iuliia had asked questions in past exercises, they had been requests for assistance. However, her question revealed Iuliia's nuanced understanding of the context surrounding the original sentence. Sokolianskii explained that 'what was important in this case is that Iuliia concluded herself

[181] Ibid., l. 82.
[182] Ibid., l. 85.
[183] Ibid., l. 103.
[184] Ibid., l. 9.
[185] Ibid., l. 18.

that one should not only sit, but sit on something (on the chair, in this case).'[186] Instead of passively completing the activity, Iuliia actively sought to gather more information about what exactly Faina intended to sit upon. While the formation of consistent, independent behaviour within the deafblind child was a long process, Iuliia had exhibited precisely the type of mentality which Sokolianskii had emphasized in the past. Such actions were reminiscent of Skorokhodova's experiences, who eventually overcame her passivity during the latter stages of her education.

On 18th April 1955, Iuliia transitioned from simple sentences to extended sentences. She wrote out, '*1. Koshka begaet. 2. Koshka lezhit na polu. 3. Koshka begaet na polu.*' (1. The cat is running. 2. The cat lies on the floor. 3. The cat runs on the floor.)[187] It encouraged her use of a variety of different grammatical aspects, such as the application of the prepositional case, the third-person pronoun and verbal usage. She continued with similar exercises, with increasing difficulty and variation, throughout mid-1955. On 23rd June 1955, Iuliia completed a series of writing tasks with references to her mother and older brother. She wrote '*1. Iuliia s mamoi poshli na prud… 4. Iuliia poshla v vodu. 5. Mama poshla v vodu. 6. Iuliia odelas'. 7. Iuliia c mamoi poshli domoi. 8. Vitia sidel v krovati. 9. Vitia obnial Iuliu.*' (1. Iuliia went with her mother to the pond… 4. Iuliia went into the water. 5. Mother went into the water. 6. Iuliia got dressed. 7. Iuliia went home with her mother. 8. Vitia was sitting in his bed. 9. Vitia embraced Iuliia.)[188] Her successful application of grammar was evidenced through her completion of the exercise. Iuliia had developed her use of the instrumental case, diversified her vocabulary and fluctuated between opening sentences with her mother, brother or herself.

Iuliia's development in self-care and language and literacy skills had garnered much attention from the academic community. While Sokolianskii's initial work with Skorokhodova and the release of her autobiography had brought his research into the limelight, some commentators expressed doubts over the viability and validity of his *ochelovechenie* method.[189] They criticized

[186] Ibid., l. 19.
[187] Ibid., d. 125, l. 3.
[188] Ibid., l. 5.
[189] Ibid., d. 117, l. 8.

him for not basing his method on the experiences of other children, in which they argued that he relied too much on Skorokhodova's education (despite Sokolianskii's educational work with the Khar'kov students). Sokolianskii responded to his critics by presenting Iuliia's educational achievements in front of an academic audience. Iuliia would validate Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method.

The decision to showcase the fruits of deafblind education had been repeated previously in other countries, such as the experiences of the young boy, Victor of Aveyron, in mid-seventeenth century France. Victor had lived a life of isolation without human contact. Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, a French physician, attempted to educate Victor. While Victor's extended isolation made his education difficult, he was taken to assemblies of scholars and other individuals to give demonstrations of his skills.[190] He displayed his limited skill in language and other attributes, including his skill in climbing trees.[191] Several decades later in France, French deaf students often demonstrated their linguistic ability to academic audiences in the hope for educational funding for the French deaf schools.[192] In the United States, Laura Bridgman's successes in America led to some individuals suggesting that she should have been incorporated into the American display at the Great Exhibition in 1851.[193]

The reasons for the use of demonstrations involving such children were multifaceted. Victor's experience was linked in with the wider debates which occurred during the Enlightenment. Leading intellectuals saw Victor as key to understanding the nature of man. They wanted to see Victor's state to learn what 'man was like before language [and] what his ideas were like before they were filtered and shaped by convention.'[194] In Victor's case, they were highly interested in whether innate ideas existed within humans. Unfortunately, the boy's prolonged isolation prevented much from being gleaned from his experiences. Unlike Sokolianskii, such intellectuals were more interested in

[190] Harlan Lane, *The Wild Boy of Aveyron* (George Allen Ltd, London, 1977), p. 17.
[191] Lucien Malson, *Wolf Children and The Wild Boy of Aveyron*, trans. Edmund Fawcett, Peter Ayrton and Joan White (New Left Books, London, 1972), p. 75.
[192] Sophia Rosenfeld, 'The Political Uses of Sign Language: The Case of the French Revolution', *Sign Language Studies*, 6, 1 (2005), p. 19.
[193] Ernest Freeberg, ''More Important than a Rabble of Common Kings": Dr. Howe's Education of Laura Bridgman', *History of Education Quarterly,* 34, 3 (1994), p. 305.
[194] Lane, *The Wild Boy*, p. 24.

Victor's initial state rather than his education. For the deaf individuals in the later period, it was for financial support. The children had to justify the success of their education through visual showcases of their linguistic skills. Their actions hoped to both validate their education and the continued funding of the French deaf school system. Such actions were representative of Sokolianskii's attempts to justify his method through Iuliia's demonstration.

Laura Bridgman's circumstances were slightly different. While she was not displayed at the Great Exhibition, others believed that her successes deserved to be lauded on the international stage. She was 'the great product of American culture' and her education placed her as a 'perfect symbol of her society's commitment to educate all of its members, no matter how humble the station.'[195] To her benefit, Bridgman's education tapped into the republican ethos of the American ideal and several commentators wished to proudly display her achievements to the world. However, such attempts were representative of a small minority of the population. In addition, Bridgman's experiences seemed to be commodified, to be placed amongst other displays at the Great Exhibition. Although her life experiences elevated her to a celebrated status, she was de-humanized to serve an alternative purpose.

In Iuliia's case, Sokolianskii decided to host four demonstrations. The first and second demonstrations were summed up by Sokolianskii, in which Iuliia 'was almost indifferent at the first demonstration and she obviously liked the second one, there were even more people.'[196] A lack of archival material on the content of the first and second demonstrations prevents further discussion, but their successes led a third demonstration. It took place within the Psychology Department of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences (APN). According to Sokolianskii, 'Iuliia liked that there were so many people around and all the people were different from the others she had met before, including the women.'[197]

The fourth and final demonstration was staged at the All-Union Conference of Psychologists, which was held at the Philosophy Faculty at the

[195] Freeburg, 'Dr. Howe's Education of Laura Bridgman', pp. 305-306.
[196] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 119, l. 36.
[197] Ibid.

Moscow State University on 5th July 1955.[198] The demonstration was a significant event, in which Sokolianskii invited Iuliia's mother to accompany her. Before the demonstration, Sokolianskii circulated a report on Iuliia's progress at the Institute which detailed her extensive knowledge of sign language and dactylology, her forays into literacy acquisition, her basic use of verbal speech and her excellent self-care and orientation skills. On the day of the conference, Sokolianskii arrived with Iuliia and her mother. Many important pedagogues and psychologists were in attendance, which included A. Smirnov, the chairman of the All-Union of Psychologists, Aleksei Leont'ev (who had reviewed Skorokhodova's memoir in 1948), Luriia, who had praised Sokolianskii's work after his return from prison, and the psychologist G. Roginskii. Iuliia even asked her mother why there were so many people in the room.[199]

For the demonstration, Sokolianskii asked Iuliia to complete a series of activities, which included a conversation in sign language, writing out a letter in Braille and the use of the *teletaktor*. Iuliia reacted to the events 'remarkably calmly, although she was a little embarrassed.'[200] The demonstration provoked a shocked reaction, in which 'some of the listeners were especially struck by Iuliia's knowledge of the alphabets: dactyl, graphic (on the palm of the hand), braille… and typewritten (on the Braille typewriter).'[201] Not only were the audience enormously impressed by Iuliia's training, they were entirely complimentary to Sokolianskii's approach to *surdotiflopedagogika*. Roginskii stated

> 'I cannot find the words to convey the gratitude and admiration to the fact that you delivered to the audience your message and the demonstration of the possibilities of the deafblind girl, Iuliia Vinogradova. We need to change our minds and readdress the facts that you have told us. We are going to follow the progress of your future work and

[198] The conference eventually led to the reformation of the Psychological Society as the Union of Psychologists of the USSR. Its Moscow chairman, Aleksandr Zaporozhets, was a well-known pedagogue who wrote extensively about deafblind education and psychology.
[199] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 119, l. 36.
[200] Ibid., d. 118, l. 156.
[201] Ibid., d. 121, l. 8.

> unrelenting attention, but what you have already achieved is decisively changing the views of many of our concepts of the natural person.'[202]

Smirnov posed his own question, demanding 'how have physiologists not paid attention to such an important fact of working with the deafblind?'[203]

The demonstrations validated Sokolianskii's academic position and his *ochcelovechenie* method. Sokolianskii received a personal commendation from Smirnov himself for the quality of his work and both Sokolianskiia and Iuliia were featured in state newspapers.[204] Nevertheless, the use of the demonstrations raised questions about Iuliia's position. Sokolianskii used Iuliia for his own benefit, to justify his position as the leading practitioner within the *surdotiflopedagogika* in the Soviet Union. Iuliia was a passive exhibit, expected to showcase to other pedagogues and educationalists the full extent of her self-care and linguistic ability, much like Victor of Averyon. While Sokolianskii encouraged deafblind child to lead their own lives, he wasted little time in using Iuliia to his own advantage.

In more positive terms, the demonstrations had a profound impact on the perception of deafblindness. Due to her fluency in Braille, sign language and verbal speech, the audience members viewed her as a human, whereas they had previously believed such individuals to be incapable of humanisation. In their minds, Sokolianskii had successfully educated the uneducable. It proved to others outside Sokolianskii's circle that deafblind individuals could be assimilated into the post-Stalinist society. It was observable evidence that Skorokhodova was not an anomaly, but the first amongst potentially many other integrated children. While Victor's education proved to be ultimately unsuccessful, Sokolianskii's education of Iuliia emphasized the achievements of the *ochelovechenie* method.

[202] Ibid., d. 118, l. 157.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.

Mathematics

Despite the academic and public adulation of his life's work, Sokolianskii did not stand on ceremony. Iuliia's demonstrations were successfully in raising awareness for Sokolianskii's work, but her education was still not complete. She had advanced well through the literacy stage, but she had not reached the post-literacy stage. With her knowledge of the sign language, verbal speech and grammar acquisition, Iuliia was ready to learn other disciplines which would be particularly applicable for her future employment opportunities. One such discipline was mathematics. Mathematics fulfilled several purposes within Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method. It tapped into the regime's attempts to formulate New Soviet People through *perevospitanie*. With the general loosening of restrictions for different subcultures, people with disabilities could pursue previously inaccessible occupations within Soviet society during the Thaw. In the Stalinist period, Skorokhodova had pursued a literary and academic career. However, Iuliia's education in mathematics suggested a change in attitude.

While the deafblind child was inducted in an education of literacy and language, they were not the sole pathways for future employment. The Thaw had ushered in a new era and Iuliia's acquisition of mathematics ensured that there were other avenues open to her. Socially useful work was no longer through literary efforts, but through the sciences as well. With their mathematical education, deafblind children could become technicians, scientists and other similar professions. They were now given the tools to contribute to engineer change themselves, to be a part of the construction of a post-war utopia. Mathematics also fitted into the reformative aims of the *ochelovechenie* method. It was about providing deafblind children with necessary skills to be engaged, worked citizens of the Soviet Union. Mathematics provided another way to assimilate into society through socially useful labour. In contrast with Skorokhodova's education at Khar'kov, mathematics was fully integrated into Iuliia's educational curriculum in the mid-to-late 1950s.

Although Iuliia's education in mathematics was undoubtedly important, it is unclear where it fit into the overall educational curriculum. Frustratingly,

archival materials do not go into significant detail about the application of mathematics at the Khar'kov school. It is assumed that it formed a part of the educational curriculum. Furthermore, Skorokhodova's consistent use of mathematics in her written testimonies suggests that she may have learnt it at Khar'kov. Iuliia's induction in mathematics also raised questions. Iuliia's mathematical education began in mid-September 1955, only several months after the fourth demonstration. She spent at least an entire year on the discipline, in which she learnt basic mathematical operations, engaged in elementary algebra and extended her number range from one to one hundred thousand.[205]

However, Meshcheriakov revealed that his own educational curriculum for the deafblind took place over a nine-year period, with yearly targets for the child's mathematical proficiency.[206] Sokolianskii's mathematical curriculum proved to be not as detailed as Meshcheriakov's curriculum. While it was an essential element of both curriculums, it is suspected Sokolianskii's theory lacked comprehensiveness due to a lack of previous experience. Other than Skorokhodova, there were no other deafblind children who had received an education in mathematics. Iuliia's mathematical education was a new endeavour, where mistakes from both the teacher and student would occur. Unlike Skorokhodova, Iuliia would be inducted into an entirely new way of teaching, which would incorporate Soviet technology to provide the highest standard of education.

By the middle of September 1955, Iuliia was introduced to mathematics in her lessons. The teaching process relied heavily on her previous knowledge of gesticulation, dactylology and literacy. It required the pedagogue to provide substantial assistance through gesticulation. While the method was initially complicated to teach, it did not mean that the deafblind children found the process particularly difficult. Sokolianskii explained that 'the mathematical capabilities of the deafblind are also unlimited much like normal children. The essence is in the study of mathematics… and how to understand

[205] Sokolianskii's notes on Iuliia's mathematical prowess end on 7th June 1956. S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 124, ll. 1-45.
[206] Aleksandr I. Meshcheriakov, *Awakening to Life* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979), p. 216.

mathematics.'[207] Iuliia herself had engaged in rudimentary mathematics at Boroshovo. She counted out the number of objects within the store cellar and measured out the size of each object to ensure it all fit in together. While her mathematical knowledge had improved slightly during her studies at the Institute, she had (deliberately) not received any formal education on the subject from her pedagogues. With the confirmation of Iuliia's literacy prowess, she started lessons on mathematics with the aid of the 'counting device' (*schetnyi pribor*).[208]

Iuliia's lessons consisted of several fundamental objects; the counting device and counting sticks. While the archival material goes into detail about the content of the exercises, they reveal little about the composition of the counting device. From the available material, the pedagogue input a specific number into the counting device and showed the number to Iuliia.[209] She subsequently read the number, counted out the correct number of sticks and placed the sticks into the box located within the machine. It is unclear whether the counting device counted the total number of sticks automatically. Regardless, the pedagogue would inform Iuliia whether she had successfully completed the task. In the first step of Iuliia's education in mathematics, she focused on the natural numbers.[210] Despite having been observed using basic mathematical operations in Boroshovo, Sokolianskii insisted on starting at the very beginning of the curriculum. Once her level of competency had been established, her lessons would be tailored to her personality, behaviour and mindset.

During the first class on Friday 16th September 1955, Kazakevich input the number 'one' into the machine, which Iuliia read and placed one stick into the box. The activity was repeated for the number 'two', 'three' until the number 'ten'. To test her understanding of the process, the pedagogue asked her to complete task in a random order.[211] Sokolianskii explained that 'she

[207] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 124, l. 137.
[208] Ibid., l. 1.
[209] It is unclear how these numbers were shown to Iuliia in an accessible format. It may have been in a Braille format or through electronic oscillations (much like the *teletaktor*). In addition, the archival materials suggest that, on occasion, the pedagogue provided a gesture for the specific number instead of inputting it into the machine.
[210] The numbers predominantly used for counting; one, two, three etc.
[211] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 124, l. 1.

finished the task on the natural series the first time without any errors.'[212] However, her teaching was interrupted by the arrival of her family on 17th September. Sokolianskii complained that 'Iuliia was interrupting the lesson all the time and repeating the names of her relatives. It was a distraction.'[213] The lack of practice prevented her successful repetition of the task on Monday 19th September. Confused by the numbers six, seven and eight, she placed the wrong sticks inside the counting device. By the end of the lesson, Iuliia had rectified her mistakes and completed the task successfully.

Iuliia's mathematical curriculum remained wholly consistent with Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method. The deafblind child was given a specific task, in which they were expected to repeat various versions of the same task. The constant repetition reinforced Iuliia's understanding of the number range and served as a foundation for the next exercise. Each completed task acted as another layer of experience and familiarity with the mathematical process. If the deafblind child struggled with the next task, they could rely on their previous exercises for support. Iuliia's fluency in natural numbers prepared her for the basic arithmetic operations; subtraction and addition. On Saturday 24th September, she was taught subtraction. The pedagogue gestured the number 'five' and placed five sticks in the counting device. Iuliia was instructed to take two sticks from the device. She completed the task and was asked to state the number of sticks remaining in the device. She responded with the correct gesture of 'three'.'[214] While she had only one lesson on subtraction, Sokolianskii insisted on teaching her addition in the next lesson. On Monday 26th September, the pedagogue placed different numbers of sticks in the device and asked Iuliia to add sticks to each number to create bigger amounts. Sokolianskii explained that 'she added the sticks from 2, 3 and 4… Example: 5+3=8, 2+3+5=10, 2+2+2+2+2=10.'[215] The summations were completed correctly and without any errors.

Subtraction and addition operations which involved the positive integers one to ten were repeated in Iuliia's lessons for nearly two weeks. During

[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid., l. 2.
[215] Ibid., l. 3.

this period, she was taught how to count on her fingers.[216] She was encouraged to complete her arithmetic operations on her fingers before giving a final answer as her pedagogues wished her to employ an alternative tactile method. They hoped that it would provide a clearer approach to the tasks. By the end of September, she had mastered the range from one to ten. On 5th October, her number range was extended to twenty, which was confirmed through her repetition of the numbers from one to twenty in sign language.[217] The pedagogues tested her application of double-digit subtraction and addition summations. Examples of her equations included '9+2, 8+2, 13+5, etc. When the amount exceeds a dozen, Iuliia takes away the extra sticks and counts a dozen.'[218] Despite knowing how to count to a dozen, Iuliia would only be taught the word 'dozen' (*diuzhina*) later in the curriculum. On 8th October, the director of the Institute of Defectology, Professor D'iachkov, came to observe Iuliia completing her mathematical equations. During the demonstration, she 'showed the correct number not only with her fingers, but also with the number of sticks she held in her hand… she did everything on her own initiative'.[219] D'iachkov was highly impressed with the demonstration, especially Iuliia's completion of the task without a single mistake.

On 20th October, Iuliia's literacy education merged with her mathematical curriculum. The classroom exercises had previously revolved around the question-answer format. However, this approach was to be diversified. Sokolianskii wanted her to take more initiative in the classroom environment and encouraged her to take on the responsibilities of the pedagogue. To facilitate this transition, she learnt the words 'take' (*voz'mi*) and 'place' (*polozhi*).[220] Such actions were practically applied during the tasks, in which Iuliia was instructed to take and place the sticks from the device. Sokolianskii described how 'she was given the task by the teacher of taking the sticks out of the box and putting the sticks back into the box… She proceeded

[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid., l. 4.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid., l. 52.
[220] Ibid., l. 8.

without errors. After each phrase, she showed the gesture 'took' and 'put' after stating the [correct] number of sticks.'[221]

Much of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* approach incorporated new teaching approaches with the intension of improving and streamlining *surdotiflopedagogika*. Iuliia's excellent attitude during classwork and proficiency in her completion of mathematical operations, with few mistakes, encouraged Sokolianskii to intensify her pace of learning. Instead of spending several weeks reinforcing her knowledge of the number ranges, she was taught the numbers twenty-one to one hundred from 28th October to 1st November 1955.[222] In addition, she was taught the word 'dozen'.[223] This was necessary for counting in ever-increasing groups of numbers. The pedagogue showed 'Iuliia four dozen sticks and asked her to repeat the words for the number of sticks. She stated the words for dozen, then two, three and four dozen.'[224] The lessons culminated in a series of exercises on 3rd November, which included the following operations: '19+9, 75+5, 71+9, 73+10, 51+15, 56+16, etc.'[225] In addition, Iuliia completed the task without the use of the counting sticks. Sokolianskii explained that 'the addition of numbers without sticks to 50 is completed quickly and confidently. Equations over 50 cause her to think longer, but she completed it with no mistakes.'[226]

Iuliia reinforced her knowledge of the natural numbers until late 1955. In one lesson on 16th November, Kazakevich mistakenly set her the sum '57+48', with its combined total outside Iuliia's known number range. She gestured the incorrect number several times, before the pedagogue changed the equation to '57+41'. Afterwards, 'Iuliia immediately said the right answer.'[227] In addition to her continued repetition of the mathematical operations, Sokolianskii tested her knowledge on specific numbers. She was instructed to lay out one hundred sticks, count to a hundred without the sticks and repeat similar activities over the course of a week.[228] In addition, the sticks were bundled together into

[221] Ibid., l. 9.
[222] Ibid., l. 13.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid., l. 12.
[225] Ibid., l. 14.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid., l. 17.
[228] Ibid., l. 18.

groups of ten and she was taught to count in groups of tens. Sokolianskii commented that during one of these exercises, he 'dropped one of the sticks [from the bundle] and Iuliia picked up the stick, examined all the other tied sticks and found out which one was missing its total number.'[229] Not only did the bundles of sticks lay the foundation for future exercises with multiplication, Iuliia confirmed her excellent spatial awareness with her identification of the correct bundle.

By the beginning of December 1955, Iuliia's teaching medium changed. In the past three months, she learnt mathematics through the counting device and with pedagogical assistance. Much of the work was carried out tactilely, using sticks, gestures and the counting device. In a new approach, Sokolianskii introduced counting columns into her curriculum. The sum of each column equated to a number less than one hundred. In the first use of a written exercise during her mathematical education, Iuliia successfully completed the equations. She 'counted the columns twice with a gesture showing 'the same' and gestured what was 'correct'. There were no errors.'[230] In the same lesson, the range of numbers was increased from one to two hundred. Sokolianskii explained that 'the teacher gestured and provided the word for number 110, which Iuliia repeated. She counted up to 200 in a fast, orientated manner.'[231] Her approach to the tasks were lauded by her pedagogues.

Within three months, she had mastered basic arithmetic, expanded her number range to two hundred and integrated her literacy education with mathematics. She continued to expand her vocabulary and learnt the words 'some' (*neskol'ko*) and 'a lot' (*mnogo*).[232] From mid-December 1955 to 24th January 1956, she expanded her number range from one hundred to ten thousand. Much of her time was spent before and after the New Year on the repetition of addition and subtraction exercises. In addition to arithmetic operations, Iuliia memorized the new words 'equally' (*odinakovo*), 'more' (*bol'she*) and 'less' (*men'she*).[233] Iuliia's growing vocabulary was utilised in her teaching, in which she was expected to use the newly learnt words in the

[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid., l. 20.
[231] Ibid., l. 21.
[232] Ibid., l. 22.
[233] Ibid., l. 27.

completion of the mathematical tasks. By 16th January, it had been extended to ten thousand and within two weeks, it had reached one hundred thousand.[234]

By mid-January 1956, Iuliia was familiar with complex addition and subtraction-based equations. Her mastery in this part of the discipline had been reinforced through several months of immersive study and repetition of the exercises. However, the archival materials offer an incomplete narrative of her mathematical education, with conflicting accounts of the content of her teaching. On 17th February 1956, Sokolianskii introduced her to elementary algebra. It formed the next stage of her curriculum. He employed the use of abstractions within linear equations to test both her problem-solving ability and her addition skills. On 17th February 1956, the pedagogue posed the equation '5+x=8' to Iuliia.[235] Initially, she was confused about the equation's structure. Without any initial assistance from her teachers, she placed five sticks in one pile and eight sticks in an adjacent pile. She received some help from her teacher, who suggested the number 'three' as an answer. Once Iuliia understood the purpose of the abstraction (as a substitute for an unidentified number), the exercise became clear to her. Consequently, all future repetitions of similar tasks were completed correctly.

However, on 8th March 1956, Iuliia was introduced to multiplication in algebra through the following equation '2x+x=36'.[236] While there is no evidence to suggest that she had learnt multiplication before this point (from the available primary material from Sokolianskii's typed notes), it was a peculiar method for introducing multiplication for the first time. In addition, it is not stated whether she successfully completed the equation or whether it was only shown to her. Iuliia also does not complete any tasks to do with multiplication for nearly three weeks. It was only on 31st March 1956 when she was asked to complete the summation '4x4'.[237] Throughout the month of April, Iuliia engaged with several exercises involving multiplication.

On 6th April, she struggled to find the correct answer for the equation '5x7'. Iuliia did not understand why the answer was thirty-five, in which she put

[234] Ibid., l. 28.
[235] Ibid., l. 34.
[236] Ibid., l. 36.
[237] Ibid., l. 38.

down forty repeatedly.[238] She was also introduced to the multiplication tables from two to nine. Sokolianskii's notes reveal that she spent two months perfecting her knowledge of multiplication through the tables.[239] However, the archival materials fail to provide any more information to the full extent of her teaching. It is unclear whether she continued with her multiplication lessons or whether she started to learn about division. In addition, the material provides no information about how Iuliia subsequently applied her newfound mathematical skills outside of lessons. Nevertheless, Iuliia clearly excelled in the discipline. Not only had her demonstration in front of D'iachkov proven to be a success, she had become one of the first Soviet deafblind students to complete large parts of the *ochelovechenie* method. Iuliia's fluency in mathematics paved the way for her development in other fields of study.

Writing

In the latter stages of the *bukvarnyi* stage, Iuliia developed her writing proficiency, specifically through the completion of what Sokolianskii called 'spontaneous writing'.[240] Much like her mathematical studies, the archival materials become increasingly sparse in the years after June 1955. Iuliia's foray into 'spontaneous writing' took place over a five-year period from mid-1955 to December 1959. During this extended period, her increased knowledge of the grammatical structures would be applied to her writing. Previous writing tasks had involved the copying out of sentences set by Sokolianskii which did little to develop her agency. Through the completion of 'spontaneous writing' Iuliia was encouraged to produce her own material. Sokolianskii wanted her to write about her own experiences, much like Skorokhodova had done more than two decades previously. He hoped that Iuliia's months of training in the writing method had prepared her for the task. However, the initial efforts were wrought with difficulty and indecision.

[238] Ibid., l. 39.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 147.

At first, Iuliia was placed in front of a Braille typewriter and asked to 'come up with something herself, to come up with any phrase.'[241] She was told to write whatever came to mind, but the initial attempt failed. According to Sokolianskii,

> 'during these hours before lunch, Iuliia was only doing the tasks according to her instructions. When nobody was telling her what to do, she [became confused]… she thought they were demanding something incomprehensible, which was unusual for an ordinary lesson. Hence, she sat in a waiting pose, occasionally demanding that she be told what to do… We had to stop the experiment as it was unsuccessful. Iuliia did not understand what we were demanding.'[242]

Sokolianskii initially believed that they had overestimated Iuliia's independence. It compared with Skorokhodova's similar struggles with independence, specifically in communicating with others. However, Skorokhodova was encouraged to write despite having limited knowledge of the process itself, while Iuliia had completed much of initial parts of the literacy method. Meshcheriakov also commented that 'she had little personal initiative and could sit for hours on end for her sofa not doing anything.'[243] Iuliia's inability to complete the task by herself revealed that she needed more direction from her pedagogues.

Nevertheless, Sokolianskii insisted on repeating the task again but under different conditions. In previous observations of Iuliia's behaviour, he had noticed that she independently produced her own sentences when she rearranged cut-out letters of the flat-text alphabet. Iuliia willingly engaged in the activity in her free time. Sokolianskii hypothesized that the cut-out letters activity served as catalyst for the typing exercises. It would put her into the correct frame of mind for the independent activity. While hesitant at first, Iuliia 'finally, after several minutes, started typing different sentences. Only sentences. Not a single word!'[244] Despite Iuliia's initial tentativeness,

[241] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 121, ll. 39-40.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 272.
[244] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 121, l. 41.

Sokolianskii's intimate knowledge of her behaviour turned a seemingly failed experiment into a successful endeavour. It was a positive step forward towards the establishment of Iuliia's independent thought and expression.

Sokolianskii was initially unsure about the content of Iuliia's spontaneous texts. His responsibility revolved around ensuring that she wrote freely and independently. However, while he encouraged independence, its very definition meant that he had to forfeit control over her written content. It was a peculiar position for the pedagogue who prided himself on a strict adherence to his method, which relied more on the discipline of both the teacher and student. Nevertheless, the method sought to create independently curious Soviet citizens and he could not dictate nor control the substance of Iuliia's writings. Sokolianskii speculated she would describe her life and routine at the Institute. Much of Iuliia's vocabulary revolved around the completion of her self-care activities.

However, her writings referred very little to her life in Moscow, much to Sokolianskii's surprise. On 10th April 1956, she wrote extensively about beehives near her village in Boroshovo;

> 'Father and Mother took a beehive and went home. Father opened the floor. He went into the cellar. Mother held the beehive in her hands. The beehive fell to the ground. Father and Mother put the beehive in the cellar. The bees went to bed. The bees were asleep. Mother and Father came out of the cellar. Father closed the cellar.'[245]

The entire process of writing her own experience provoked a reaction from Iuliia. She was excitable, perhaps overjoyed in reliving a fond memory from her past.[246] While it is unclear from the archival material whether Iuliia was writing about an event that occurred, she took the opportunity to describe her life, not in Moscow, but with her family in her home in Boroshovo. According to Basilova, Iuliia 'only occasionally wrote about her life in the laboratory and clinic, and more often, she described episodes from her past life.'[247] It is strange that

[245] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 145.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid., p. 146.

Sokolianskii was shocked by Iuliia's decision to write about her memories in Boroshovo. He had the same expectations of Skorokhodova, who surprised him by detailing her experiences as a young child with her mother.

One of the methods for spontaneous writing was through letters to Iuliia's family. Iuliia's closeness with her family provided a useful medium for extended writing exercises, something that was not utilised during Skorokhodova's education. She wrote out the letter on the Braille typewriter and checked for errors. One of Iuliia's pedagogues would check through the letter for mistakes and type it out again in the flat-text alphabet. The letter would be sent to her family and any response would be translated into Braille for Iuliia's benefit. In one written letter home, Iuliia asked about her family members and even her domestic animals. Comically, Sokolianskii suspected that she had been encouraged to do this by her mother, but she claimed that it was on Iuliia's own initiative.[248] Iuliia continued to express her own feelings and thoughts about Boroshovo in many written accounts about her childhood. On 13th September 1956, she described an entire episode of the first time her mother showed her how to milk a cow. During the writing process, Sokolianskii explained that 'she often finds it difficult to remember the specific words.'[249] Iuliia had to describe the word in sign language or dactyl signs to her pedagogues for a prompt. He explained that 'when Iuliia started to explain the whole episode and she had finally received the word she wanted, 'milkmaid', she became happy. She repeated the whole episode with the gestures: "cow", "milk", "bucket".'[250]

When Iuliia composed letters home, the true extent of her language proficiency was revealed. In another letter home, she wrote extensively about her interactions with the chickens on her family's private plot, which included feeding them with bread crumbs and chasing them outside house. However, Sokolianskii reviewed her letter and pointed out that she had made several mistakes. He pointed out that she had written '*brosala tsypliat*' (I threw the chickens) instead of '*brosala khleb tsypliatam*' (I threw bread at the chickens).[251]

[248] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 117, l. 129.
[249] Ibid., l. 74.
[250] Ibid., l. 75.
[251] Ibid., d. 121, l. 115.

However, Iuliia reviewed his corrections the next day and complained that she had in fact thrown the chickens. According to Iuliia, she explained that after she had caught the chickens, she would pick them up and throw them over the fence and into the yard. Her protests impressed Sokolianskii. Not only did Iuliia accurately describe her memories with an ever-increasing vocabulary, she successfully argued with her pedagogue that she had intended to use the correct word.

While Iuliia had successfully proven to Sokolianskii that she had not committed a mistake, she had made errors in previous written exercises. In one such example, she wrote a text outside of her normal lessons. In one sentence, she had intended to use the word '*prilavok*' (countertop) in the dative case, but instead wrote '*privku*' and missed out the necessary '*la*'.[252] Usually in classroom writing exercises, Sokolianskii or the pedagogue checked her completed work repeatedly to ensure there were no mistakes. They were afraid that Iuliia would internalize the mistakes which would only reinforce her errors. However, since the written piece was finished outside of the classroom environment, Sokolianskii only examined the work in the morning of the next day. After the amended work was returned to her, Iuliia initially read her mistake in the correct form (*prilavku*), but she soon realised that she had made an error. According to Sokolianskii, 'Iuliia expressed her annoyance, expressing herself using the gestures "bad, bad!". She remembered that when she was writing the text, she made the mistake.'[253]

Similar mistakes provoked comparable outbursts of frustration. Iuliia often became confused with the subject of a sentence, especially when it involved the instrumental case and the verbs of motion. When tasked with writing the following two sentences 'Vitia entered the water with Iuliia' and 'Iuliia entered the water with Vitia', she used the incorrect endings for the verb '*voiti*' (to enter).[254] In the perfective aspect form in the past tense, the masculine ending is '*voshël*' and the feminine ending is '*voshla*'. Iuliia's mistake came down to her lack of understanding of the placement of the subject within the sentence. She had typed incorrectly '*Vitia s Yulii voshla v vodu*' (Vitia entered

[252] Ibid., l. 52.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid., l. 48.

the water with Iuliia), when she should have written '*Vitia s Yuliei voshli v vodu*', which was the correct gendered verb ending in the past tense.[255] Her mistake came down to a lack of understanding between the object and the subject of the sentence, a key aspect of the use of cases, verbs and other such grammatical aspects.

While it was due to a lack of grammatical understanding rather than intrinsic errors, Iuliia continued to be frustrated by her mistakes. Sokolianskii explained that 'sometimes Iuliia checks her writing in a day or a few days and if she finds a mistake, she becomes very agitated… usually Iuliia reacted with much emotion on word endings and even on the slightest and most insignificant of errors.'[256] Sokolianskii placed errors into two categories; those which are bearable and unbearable.[257] Some mistakes, usually involving first-time errors or minor misspellings, were not considered serious issues. However, repeated errors, especially those that dealt with fundamental grammatical aspects, such as case construction, were deemed problematic. Not all mistakes were considered good for learning, in which Sokolianskii explained that the pedagogue needed to know when to intervene to prevent errors from being repeated.[258]

Nevertheless, Sokolianskii commended Iuliia on her ability to almost always recognise mistakes in the different forms of non-verbal and written communication. He stated that 'almost as a rule, in all cases, Iuliia notices her mistakes in writing and pronunciation and reacts sharply to her mistakes, correcting them.'[259] Iuliia usually reacted to such mistakes with a frustrated grunt. Conversely, Sokolianskii compared her reactions with Skorokhodova who 'began to take offense as she became more literate' when others criticized her mistakes.[260] While her reaction to the mistake was usually in the medium of a frustrated grunt, Iuliia usually found most errors on her own initiative. On the occasions in which she remained unaware of these mistakes, it proved problematic for her development. In a lesson in 1957, Iuliia wrote '*pokhala*'

[255] Ibid.
[256] Ibid., l. 47.
[257] Ibid., l. 50.
[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid., l. 54.
[260] Ibid., d. 119, l. 14.

instead of its correct form '*poekhala*' (to depart).[261] In addition, she tried to use the same word but in a different from by typing out '*prakha*'.[262] Initially, Iuliia did not realise that she had made the same mistake in two different ways. However, Sokolianskii realised that she had made this mistake while she was writing independently. While Iuliia's engagement in her own writing tasks outside of lessons sped up her learning, mistakes were not immediately rectified and threatened to become embedded. Iuliia had been encouraged to type about her surrounding environment, but her desire to do so, without the required pedagogical supervision, affected the quality of her language development.

One of Iuliia's most significant writing successes was accomplished on 19th November 1958. With limited assistance from Sokolianskii, she created her own text. Unlike in previous years, she no longer needed to rearrange the cut-out letters to prepare herself for spontaneous writing. Instead, 'she thought very slowly about the text and we must assume that before she started writing, all the text developed in her head, and only then did she start typing. She started signing to herself, showing the [dactyl] gesture for 'Ш' [*sh*].'[263] Iuliia's approach had become more streamlined and efficient. While it was initially difficult to construct the original text, she had developed her own personal method for doing so. After much time, she wrote a short story about a day with her younger brother, Shurik:

> 'I have a younger brother called Shurik. He is in 5th grade of his primary school. When winter arrived, I lived at home. I always accompany Shurik to school in the morning. After walking with him to school, I return home and began cleaning the room; wiping the dust, washing the dishes and sweeping the floor. After lunch, I walk silently in the yard and at 2 o'clock, I meet Shurik, who was returning home from school. In the evening, I meet my parents who are returning from work. I had dinner with my parents and at 10 o'clock, I went to bed.'[264]

[261] Ibid., d. 121, l. 54.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Ibid., d. 131, l. 95.
[264] Ibid., l. 13.

The text, a vivid, detailed recollection from her past in Boroshovo, was written testimony which showed the extent of Iuliia's education. The combination of her knowledge of the Russian case system, sentence structure and punctuation had contributed to her excellence in writing.

By late 1958, she wrote in a confident, efficient style, her use of Russian grammar was excellent, and she even rewrote the document in the third-person at Sokolianskii's request.[265] Despite such advances, there is little evidence to suggest that her writing skills developed any further. While Skorokhodova went on to compose and publish several autobiographies about her experiences, Iuliia's writing ability never advanced beyond the latter stages of her period at Boroshovo. Although it is unclear why Iuliia's writing skill plateaued, it is suspected that she had reached the limits of her education. Sokolianskii's emphasized Iuliia's home-based upbringing as both her strength and weakness. It had enhanced her self-care skills at the expense of negatively impacting upon her long-term ability to learn and excel in her language disciplines.

Skorokhodova had set an extremely high standard for all future deafblind children through her literary and academic career. Consequently, very few deafblind children were ever going to meet or exceed such levels. Iuliia's education had proven ultimately beneficial to her. She had successfully learnt a verity of different disciplines, excelled at the Institute and perfected her language skills. While she may not have reached the heights of Skorokhodova, Iuliia had developed her writing skills to the limit of her ability. Nevertheless, her tutelage under was coming to an end. By 1960, she left the Institute and returned to her former home in Boroshovo to live back with her family again. Iuliia would eventually return to the Institute to continue her education but without her mentor, Sokolianskii.

Conclusion

On 8th January 1958, Sokolianskii received official word from the state prosecutor's office about his formal rehabilitation.[266] For nearly twenty years,

[265] Ibid., l. 12.
[266] Tat'iana A. Basilova, 'Ob istorii obucheniia slepoglukhikh detei v Moskovskom regione', *Klinicheskaia i cpetsial'haia psikhologiia*', 2, 2 (2013), p. 6.

he had lived within an awkward limbo with the regime. The Soviet authorities both imprisoned and praised him for his pedagogical research. Sokolianskii never understood why his records had been expunged, why he had been released so early and why he walked free, even when his fellow intellectuals languished and died in the Soviet penal systems in the far east. While Sokolianskii's academic career had been resurrected after his imprisonment, he lived in fear that such bliss was temporary. His return to Soviet society in the immediate post-war period had left him with the permanent scar of a marked man, an individual avoided by other academics and pedagogues.

Others questioned his early release, his status as a Ukrainian intellectual with nationalist tendencies and his closeness to convicted enemies of the regime. In a period well-known for its paranoia and fear, it is perhaps unsurprising that Sokolianskii was treated with suspicion and mistrust.[267] Sokolianskii described his own angst during this period, stating 'for 25 years I was cut off from society… I worked without public approval, without public encouragement, it was more mechanical work. I often lost courage. I often did not want to live.'[268] Despite such hardships, Sokolianskii continued to improve the lives of deafblind children in the Soviet Union. Such tenacity and dedication led to the formation of the research laboratory in the Moscow Institute of Defectology, the education of Iuliia Vinogradova and her impressive demonstration at Moscow State University. The ultimate success lay within his formal acquittal of his apparent crimes. Basilova explained that state prosecutors had refuted the original case sentence from 8th March 1934.[269]

Sokolianskii took advantage of his rehabilitated status to push for institutional support for deafblind education from the USSR Council of Ministers. In his formal request, Sokolianskii asked for two new schools; an academy for deafblind children and an orphanage which combined both mainstream and specialist education in one facility. According to Basilova, he wanted the orphanage to cater for 'the deafblind; children with severe pathological learning

[267] For further information, see also Shaun Morcom, 'Enforcing Stalinist Discipline in the Early Years of Post-War Reconstruction in the USSR, 1945-1948', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68, 2 (2016), pp. 312-344.
[268] Letter, Ivan A. Sokolianskii to Aleksandr M. Zheleznyi (17th January 1957) cited in Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 152.
[269] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 152.

difficulties, severe speech and motor disorders; children with sensory aphasia; the visually impaired; and those with hearing loss.'[270]However, his request had been declined by the Deputy Minister of Education on 18th December 1959. The letter stated

> 'it does not consider it possible to undertake the creation of such a school… It is not appropriate to create a children's institution, since even those deafblind children who are trained in self-service, work and literacy need to be constantly cared for at their home and therefore should be placed in a specialised institution.'[271]

However, the funding for a school for the deafblind in the Soviet Union would only be secured after Sokolianskii's death.

Less than two weeks after Sokolianskii's proposal had been denied, he attended a celebratory party for the 50th anniversary of his pedagogical work at the Institute of Defectology. Dozens of respected pedagogues, psychiatrists, academics and Institution staff came to pay their respects to Sokolianskii.[272] In addition, he received hundreds of telegrams, letters and notes from people across the Soviet Union. The employees of the Laboratory of Phonetics at the Institute of Defectology praised him 'for being an outstanding academic in the field of defectology… we hope for years to come that your vigorous energy and aspiration for the future that has always distinguished you as an advanced Soviet scientist will continue.'[273] Other such praise came from his protégé, Meshcheriakov and the *Surdo-pedagogical* and *Oligophrenic-Education* department at the Institute.[274]

Out of all the letters he received, one of the most touching responses came from the Director of the Institute of Psychology within the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, A. Smirnov. He proclaimed

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[270] Basilova, 'Ob istorii', p. 6.
[271] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 153.
[272] Within the *delo*, there are hundreds of letters of congratulations. FPS, f. 1, op. 5, d. 168.
[273] Ibid., op. 1, d. 11, l. 16.
[274] Ibid., ll. 1-3, 15, 20.

> ‘from a young age, you have dedicated yourself to selfless work with those deprived of the joy that give people the world of light, colour and sound… [you] have made many of these people happy, involved in socially useful work which compensate for their physical disabilities… It was not for nothing that the greatest humanist, M. A. Gorkii, showed great interest in your work and highly appreciated it. Your exceptional achievements in the field of teaching deafblind people… [are] your remarkable student, the scientist and writer Ol’ga Skorokhodova and now, Iuliia Vinogradova, who are not only widely known in our country, but are well-known abroad. These successful results are not by accident but were the result of painstaking years of hard work and perseverance of the researcher.’[275]

While they celebrated Sokolianskii and his life’s work, both might as well have been one and the same. Sokolianskii’s almost obsessive dedication to the field of *surdotiflopedagogika* established him as a world-leading pedagogue. The education of Ol’ga Skorokhodova, Iuliia Vinogradova and dozens of other deafblind students had proven enormously successful. Skorokhodova had become a celebrated pedagogue in her own right and worked within the Institute with her former teacher. Iuliia’s education would continue after the completion of her stay at the Moscow Institute. Her transition from her formalised education to the employment in the 1960s will be explored in the conclusion. Less than a year after the 50th anniversary celebrations, Ivan Sokolianskii died at the age of seventy-two on 27th November 1960. While his death signalled the end of his continued role in Soviet deafblind education, his legacy lived on through his method, his pedagogues and his students.

[275] Ibid., d. 5, op. 169, ll. 4-5.

Conclusion: *The Butterflies of Zagorsk*

In 1990, the British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC) commissioned a documentary on a school for deafblind children in the small city of Zagorsk, which lay just north of Moscow.[276] In the opening scenes of the film, deafblind children of all ages get ready for the day, helping each other to put on their clothes, brush their teeth and wash themselves. Several of the children engage in physical activities, in which they are encouraged by their pedagogue. In one clip, a deafblind teenage girl, named Oksana, learns the phonetics of key words with assistance from Professor Galina Vasina. The documentary struck an incredulous tone, in awe at how so many deafblind children were able to read, write, speak and pursue what the filmmakers deemed 'normal' lives. It focused on the daily life of Nataliia Korneeva, a deafblind research assistant with two young children and a seeing and hearing husband, fluent in Russian Sign Language. Korneeva discusses her life with her husband, before arriving at the Zagorsk school, in which she communicates with Oksana and several other deafblind children.

These children were the subject of the documentary, titled *The Butterflies of Zagorsk*. The school had received substantial funding, and new buildings were constructed to accommodate up to 200 new students with sensory disabilities by 1st September 1990.[277] For nearly twenty years, Sokolianskii had endeavoured to establish another Khar'kov, a permanent institution dedicated to *surdotiflopedagogika*. While he never lived to see the school he had worked so hard to construct, the Zagorsk School for the Deafblind was established in 1963. The school became the basis for deafblind education not only in the Soviet Union, but in the present-day Russian Federation.

Sokolianskii's death did not signal an end to deafblind education in the Soviet Union. While he had been the driving force behind its establishment in

[276] Zagorsk was renamed Sergiev Posad in 1991. *The Butterflies of Zagorsk*, directed by Ann Paul (1990).
[277] Tat'iana A. Basilova, *Istoriia Obucheniia Slepoglukhikh detei v Rossii* (Eksmo, Moskva, 2015), p. 187.

the 1920s, its apparent demise in the late 1930s and its resurrection in the 1950s, the discipline proved equally resilient after the death of its founder, especially through his protégé, Aleksandr Meshcheriakov, who would continue to practise deafblind education at the Zagorsk school.

Meshcheriakov had previously studied psychology at the Faculty of Philosophy at Moscow State University after his medical discharge from the Red Army in 1945. After completion of his initial degree, he pursued his postgraduate studies at the Institute of Psychology within the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences (APN), where he worked under the psychologist, Aleksandr Luriia in 1951.[278] With the defence of his doctoral thesis in 1953, Luriia introduced Meshcheriakov to Sokolianskii at his research laboratory at the Institute of Defectology. Meshcheriakov, impressed at the progress of the deafblind students, was in attendance of Iuliia Vinogradova's demonstration to the All-Union Conference of Psychologists on 5th July 1955.[279] The demonstration galvanised Meshcheriakov to work formally with Sokolianskii on deafblind education and he joined the pedagogues, Ol'ga Skorokhodova, Raisa Mareeva, Galina Vasina and Vera Vakhtel', Iuliia's former teacher.[280] This group of research assistants, pedagogues and teachers would form the basis for Soviet deafblind education after Sokolianskii's death.

After Sokolianskii's death, Meshcheriakov was appointed the head of the research laboratory for deafblind education at the Institute of Defectology in 1961. While he worked to establish Sokolianskii's dream for a school for the deafblind, he travelled with Skorokhodova to speak on educating deafblind children and adults at an international conference in the United Kingdom in 1962.[281] If a school for the deafblind was to be realised, Meshcheriakov needed to ensure that there was sufficient demand for an appropriate institution. Much like the initial census conducted by the Charity for the Deafblind in 1909 and Sokolianskii's own enquiries, requests were sent out to all schools for the blind and deaf in the Soviet republics. After combining such efforts with appeals on

[278] Karl Levitin, *One is Not Born a Personality: A Biographical History of Soviet Psychology* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1982), p. 134.
[279] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 160.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Ibid., pp. 161-162.

the radio, Basilova confirmed that there was a total of 340 deafblind people, with roughly a third of them younger than twenty years old.[282]

With data on the number of deafblind children and young adults, Meshcheriakov had established the need for an institution which catered for this number of students. In his application to the Ministry of Social Welfare, he asked for enough housing for an initial fifty students, with plans to eventually accommodate one hundred.[283] Meshcheriakov understood that previous demands by Sokolianskii had been denied. However, he tactfully utilised the influence of his fellow colleagues to encourage the Ministry to establish the school. Skorokhodova, aware of her celebratory status, appealed directly to Kliment Voroshilov, the former Marshall of the Soviet Union, to assist in the school's construction.[284] In combination with letters from Luriia, Zaporozhets, Eval'd Il'enkov and other eminent psychologists, the joint effort culminated in the establishment of a care home for deafblind children at an abandoned orphanage in Zagorsk.[285]

The school for the deafblind was opened on 1st September 1963.[286] While Meshcheriakov had been instrumental in the establishment of a new centre for deafblind research, he was not appointed the head of the school. In fact, he worked with the new Zagorsk school, while still maintaining his position at the research laboratory at the Moscow Institute.[287] A total of fifty students, initially from different regions of the RSFSR, were admitted into the school. The process for entry depended on different, often overlapping, factors. Children with congenital hearing and vision loss were immediately accepted into the school. The requirements for the children with acquired hearing or vision loss differed slightly. Admission depended on whether the child's vision loss prevented them from being able to read text and whether their hearing loss had

[282] Ibid., p. 168.
[283] Ibid.
[284] It is unclear how much influence Voroshilov had after his removal from the Central Committee in October 1960.
[285] Il'enkov, a famous Soviet philosopher, soon became a patron for the Zagorsk school, much akin to Gorkii's relationship with the Khar'kov orphanage.
[286] Mariia Mitasova, *Vykhod iz Temnoty*: *Istoriia odhogo Eksperimenta* (Moskva, Eksmo, 2016), p. 7.
[287] David Bakhurst and Carol Padden, 'The Meshcheryakov Experiment: Soviet Work on the Education of Blind-Deaf Children', *Learning and Instruction*, 1 (1991), p. 212.

led to the 'absence, or severe underdevelopment of profound speech.'[288] Aside from the severity of the child's disabilities, their social, familial and educational circumstances were noted. Meshcheriakov confirmed that 'when selecting pupils for a special school for the deafblind in Zagorsk, we made a study of a group of children whose training had been neglected and had come to us straight from their families.'[289] Whether the child was an orphan who had spent most of their life within a state institution or whether they had remained with their immediate family in a familiar environment were significant factors which contributed to determining whether they were accepted into the Zagorsk school.

Meshcheriakov adopted Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method for his own administration of the Moscow laboratory and the Zagorsk school. While he never claimed to be proficient in the theoretical side of deafblind education, he spent much of his research establishing a theoretical framework for the *ochelovechenie* method, which he titled *probuzhdenie* (awakening).[290] Much like Sokolianskii, Meshcheriakov emphasized that the deafblind child's immersion in self-care skills, language and literacy acquisition formulated the necessary skills needed for the formation of their own self. He explained that the process was intrinsic for the 'formation of the human personality of, the definition of what the personality entails, the correlation between social and biological factors in the formation of the human mind.'[291] According to Meshcheriakov, the experiences formulated through their education socialized the deafblind child.

Utilising the same theoretical framework as Sokolianskii, the child's participation in labour was identified as a key goal for their post-education life. Meshcheriakov viewed the child's experience of labour as a positive influence, in which

[288] Tat'iana A. Basilova, 'Izuchenie sostava uchrezhdenii dlia slepoglukhikh detei', *Differentsirovannyi podkhod pri obuchenii i vospitanii slepoglukhikh detei*' (APN SSSR, 1989), p. 4.
[289] Aleksandr I. Meshcheriakov, *Awakening to Life* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979), pp. 82-83.
[290] Meshcheriakov, like Sokolianskii, represented the practical side of defectology, in which other defectologists, such as Luriia and Vygotskii, devoted much of their research to theory rather than practice.
[291] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 26.

> ‘every person, as it were, creates himself anew each time, as he masters different forms of labour activity. It is also important that through his personal participation in labour, man reaches a correct understanding of his social relations and then, through the prism of those relations, arrives at a more reflective understanding of the world of things rendered human by labour.’[292]

Much as the internalization of the dactyl alphabet led to the easier acquisition of the flat-text alphabet, so the child acquires new skills through labour which are subsequently used to learn other techniques. By building upon a series of foundational skills, the deafblind child becomes increasingly more experienced in their knowledge and understanding of the labour process.

One of the pupils ready for labour was Iuliia Vinogradova. After Sokolianskii’s death in 1960, she had returned to the Institute to continue her studies until 1965.[293] She had completed her basic education in the fields of self-care, gesticulation, dactylology, verbal speech and literacy. She had advanced to the post-literacy, or *poslebukvarnyi*, stage. Her education had been conducted with the aim of her eventual entry into the workforce. Meshcheriakov reaffirmed Sokolianskii’s initial aims, in which he stated, ‘when they reached the age of sixteen those deafblind pupils who have acquired the necessary physical and mental ability are first introduced to a specific trade.’[294] However, the development of Iuliia’s work skills would be conducted concurrently with her education.

The next step for Iuliia within the *poslebukvarnyi* stage was her enrolment into an eight-year educational curriculum, which drew on the existing curriculum for primary and secondary school children in Soviet mainstream schools. Her foray into mathematics represented Sokolianskii’s initial attempt on the first year of the learning curriculum. While Sokolianskii had begun developing a system for post-literacy education, Meshcheriakov perfected the curriculum with work targets for each year of the program. While Iuliia had

[292] Ibid., p. 185.
[293] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 173.
[294] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening,* p. 179.

pursued her education usually within one-to-one environments, she now worked with three other deafblind children who were also inducted into the eight-year course, Nataliia H., Vasia U. and Toma V.[295]

While Iuliia continued her studies with the other children, she was taught how to operate machinery, complete labour tasks and fulfil her required production quotas. This was the culmination of Sokolianskii's entire method. While Skorokhodova was prepared for academic and literary pursuits, other deafblind children, such as Iuliia, were inducted into labour-based employment. Iuliia's increased spatial awareness and tactile familiarity with unfamiliar objects allowed her to thrive in such roles. Furthermore, her knowledge of mathematics, a new addition to Sokolianskii's method, facilitated her transition from education into employment. Nearly ten years previously, Sokolianskii had promised Iuliia's parents that Iuliia could pursue a career of her own.

To cater for her sensory disabilities, she learnt how to complete such tasks within her home conditions at the Institute, as opposed to within a factory or workshop. The All-Russian Association for the Blind (*Vserossiiskoe Obshchestvo Slepykh*, hereafter VOS) collaborated with the Institute to assist in the creation of an accessible environment for deafblind children to work at home.[296] They provided the 'necessary equipment, raw materials and instructions' needed for Iuliia.[297] It proved far simpler to establish a workshop catered for Iuliia's requirements rather than to integrate her into a factory setting. While such actions grated against Sokolianskii's desires for an included deafblind child, Iuliia's use of adapted machinery proved to be a highly successful and rewarding experience. She learnt a series of increasingly more complex operations, which were predominantly based around the production of key components of machines.

[295] Ibid., p. 267.
[296] For further information on the work opportunities provided by VOS for blind workers, see also Maria C. Galmarini, 'Turning Defects to Advantages: The Discourse of Labour in the Autobiographies of Soviet Blinded Second World War Veterans', *European History Quarterly*, 44, 4 (2014), pp. 651-669.
[297] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 273.

Meshcheriakov explained that previous observations of the deafblind had confirmed that, under the right conditions, they could easily learn the use of machines for labour processes. He stated that

> 'experience in teaching work skills to deafblind children has shown that they can master successfully not only work methods involving tools of manual labour (such as the hammer, screw-driver, pliers, fret-saw, pincers…) but also those requiring various types of mechanical equipment fitted with special protective devices making them safe for the sightless. Pupils completely lacking even residual hearing or sight learnt independently how to use a circular saw equipped with a simple safety device designed by their instructor.'[298]

Iuliia's labour task was the construction of furniture nails. Much like her education of the processes of her own self-care, she learnt the process through the 'chain of actions' method. She understood how to learn new tasks or routines through the chain method, which held positive outcomes. Not only did she learn the first operation extremely quickly, she fulfilled her daily quota within several days.[299] In the next operation, she was taught how to assemble steel rings for an agricultural machine, which involved the repeated action of impressing the rings through a special device. It was concluded that 'by the third lesson, Iuliia could carry out this work operation without wasting any materials and it soon emerged that given a whole working day, she would be able to exceed the daily production quota by a wider margin.'[300] Iuliia completed other such tasks, which included the manufacture of binding machines and the bending of hooks for women's buckles.

When Iuliia eventually moved to Zagorsk in 1965, she continued her progress through the eight-year curriculum. She worked at the newly established workshops which were a key feature of the school. The Zagorsk school had a dedicated workshop which predominantly focused on the

[298] Ibid., p. 180.
[299] Ibid., p. 274.
[300] Ibid

construction of safety pins. Meshcheriakov highlighted the benefits of the work, in which 'their participation in productive labour is of tremendous importance to these pupils: it enables them to overcome their sense of inferiority, helplessness and futility.'[301] Furthermore, the deafblind children received wages for the fulfilment of their production quotas. The income reinforced their inclusion amongst other seeing and hearing individuals, in which they received the benefits of their labour. Many of the students spent their money, which was theirs to use how they wanted, on watches, portable Braille typewriters and for their rail fares for going home to their families.[302]

When Iuliia was inducted into the manufacture of safety pins, she was initially introduced to the entire process. Each student was responsible for one aspect of the construction process, in which one would make the pin head, and another would join the pin head and the body of the pin together. Iuliia learnt each process, experienced each of the operations separately until she understood the complete series of actions. The chain method was routinely utilised as an effective way for disseminating the knowledge of each task of the entire process. Meshcheriakov also stated that while 'this reduces the labour productivity somewhat… it safeguards against work degenerating into a monotonously, repetitive, hardly comprehensible and mechanical activity.'[303]

With her immersion in a variety of labour-intensive jobs, Iuliia was placed onto a specialist six-month programme on sewing. She had already excelled in the craft before and during her time at the Institute. On the course, she perfected her stitching and learnt how to make dresses, aprons, trousers and hats from a wide range of materials. Iuliia excelled at the task, in which over an eighty-seven hour period, she produced seven dresses for young girls, nine curtains and three pairs of long trousers for boys.[304] In addition, Meshcheriakov referred to Iuliia's excellence with a needle in a letter to Aleksandr Luriia, in which he stated that '[she] is a top-notch seamstress; her handiwork can be bought at Moscow department stores.'[305] While very little information remains

[301] Ibid., p.180.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Ibid., p. 181.
[304] Ibid., p. 185.
[305] Letter, Aleksandr I. Meshcheriakov to Aleksandr Luriia (date unknown) cited in Levitin, *One is Not Born a Personality*, p. 140.

about what happened to Iuliia's output, the fruits of her labour may have been available to Soviet consumers. Not only was she subsequently paid for her production (of what seemed to be) well-made clothing, she expressed her enjoyment of the entire process. Iuliia explained in a letter home, 'forgive me for not writing to you for so long. I am very busy at the home for the deafblind, there are new machines in the sewing rooms now. I can work quickly and easily with a new machine. I am sewing sheets. I like the machine very much. I enjoy working in the sewing room a lot.'[306]

Iuliia's education provides an excellent insight into the truly pioneering methods of Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method, but it also highlights the inherent flaws of an apparently egalitarian society which failed to cater for the needs of its disabled citizens. The successful development of self-care and orientation skills helped establish a streak of independence within Iuliia which was fundamental for entry into the Moscow Institute of Defectology. Sokolianskii's personalised approach to Iuliia's education introduced her to a wealth of tactile-based languages, thus cementing her fluency in the written, gesticulated and verbal form. Not only was she subsequently praised for her proficiency in verbal speech, she was seen as an 'exemplary student', 'seriously attentive' and 'professional'.[307] Meshcheriakov also concluded that by 1970, 'Iuliia had a good command of verbal language, had mastered skills of oral speech and carried out productive work operations in the sewing room.'[308]

It seemed that after so many years, Iuliia had achieved the primary goal of the *ochelovechenie* method; the deafblind child's assimilation in society through their participation in socially useful labour. Sokolianskii had emphasized its importance as not only a conduit for independent behaviour, but also that it would integrate deafblind individuals into Soviet society. If the deafblind could be productive members of society, they would be treated as equals, able to contribute their toil toward the Soviet state. Iuliia had proven her place not only through manual labour, but through her production of dresses, trousers and curtains which may have even been sold to the Soviet public. Not only did Iuliia

[306] Letter, Iuliia I. Vinogradova to Lidiia A. Vinogradova (date unknown) cited in Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 274.
[307] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 119, l. 13.
[308] Meshcheriakov, *Awakening*, p. 275.

fulfil the designated quotas expected of workers within standardised workshop settings, she received her well-earned wages like any other employee.

While Iuliia's transition from an eager, but erratic, teenager in Boroshovo to a conscientious, well-spoken worker in Zagorsk was an achievement of *surdotiflopedagogika*, the same cannot be said of the society she resided within. The *ochelovechenie* method relied on the Vygotskian social model of disability, which placed the onus on society, rather than the individual. It was assumed that through the right conditions, the deafblind child would be in the perfect environment for their development. Such attitudes were confirmed when the Academy of Sciences proclaimed that 'the problem of human deafblindness no longer exists as a pedagogical problem' as part of the 30th anniversary celebrations of the October Revolution.[309] It was believed that the child's consciousness had been 'returned' to them through the means of Soviet pedagogy in a socialist society.[310] However, post-war Soviet society proved to be anything but an idyllic utopia.

Many deafblind children educated under Sokolianskii encountered similar issues which had excluded them from society before their education. They only formed genuine relationships with family members, educational staff or others who were deafblind as well. Even Ol'ga Skorokhodova, the shining success of Sokolianskii's *surdotiflopedagogika*, struggled to establish relationships with individuals outside of such circles.[311] Mainstream educational and workplace environments remained for the most part, largely inaccessible for individuals with sensory disabilities. While many deafblind children and adults worked within specifically adapted work settings, this still segregated them from the wider Soviet workforce.

In addition, much of Soviet society remained ignorant of the intellectual capabilities of deafblind individuals, believing that a person without sight and hearing was not really a person. In his conversations with individuals at the People's Commissariat for Education in Ukraine in 1931, Sokolianskii explained that Skrypnyk and others gave him a derogatory nickname, naming him 'the

[309] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.1, d. 36, l. 2.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Ol'ga I. Skorokhodova, *Kak ia vosprinimaiu, predstavliaiu i ponimaiu okruzhaiushchii mir* (Moskva, Pedagogika, 1972), p. 7.

main idiot… the inspector, even the chief, of all defective people, of all fools, blind and crippled.'[312] During Sokolianskii's demonstrations of Iuliia at the Moscow State University, Roginskii's remarks were complementary towards Iuliia's education but it also revealed a lack of understanding of the unique circumstances of deafblind children in general. Furthermore, previous historical investigations on the lives of Soviet disabled citizens revealed that many of them suffered marginalization and dehumanisation in the immediate post-war period.[313] While deafblind individuals were ready for their integration into society, society was not ready for them.

While Sokolianskii saw the practical value of research into providing humanising tools for his deafblind pupils, the regime did not consistently share the same views. The establishment of the Khar'kov school-clinic received institutional support from the Bolshevik state, but Sokolianskii was in constant battle with the Ukrainian Narkomos to support his work. With the structural changes of the Khar'kov school in the mid-1930s and Narkomos' rejection of Sokolianskii's attempts to seek funding for the reading machine, the Soviet state proved often detrimental to Sokolianskii's efforts to advance the education and upbringing of the Khar'kov pupils.

In addition, Sokolianskii's prison sentences in December 1933 and October 1937 further emphasized the lack of support he received from the regime. With both arrests due to Sokolianskii's apparent links to Ukrainian nationalist terrorist organisations, his status as an enemy of the state meant more than his contributions to Soviet disability education. It was strongly suspected that he was only released from both incarcerations earlier than expected because of his friendship with Gorkii. Unlike the regime, Gorkii remained a staunch ally of Skorokhodova and Sokolianskii's work. Without Gorkii's patronage, Sokolianskii may have suffered further punitive action from the regime.

[312] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 50.
[313] Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008), pp. 92-93; Galmarini, 'Defects to Advantages', pp. 663-667.

The combination of tepid state support and his incarceration had an impact on Sokolianskii's views of the regime. After he was released from prison in March 1934, he stated that

> 'after I was released… I could do the right thing, as others know how to fight against such Soviet conditions. I also learned that work for the Soviet government, which I had done so well, was the best way to fight the Soviet regime. Therefore, I had the moral right to be occupied with my own work, as I will now devote the best part of my life to deafblind people.'[314]

Sokolianskii's claim to oppose the regime through deafblind education is only overtly revealed in this memorandum from 1934. Interestingly, the attitude was expressed not after his final arrest in 1937, but soon after his first incarceration. Sokolianskii understood that the regime did not have the interests of the deafblind children at heart. While Sokolianskii's humanisation efforts aligned with the regime's state-wide ethos of rehabilitation of the 1920s, the regime ultimately proved indifferent to his efforts to 'humanise' deafblind children and to integrate them into wider society. Furthermore, the tepid support from Narkomos, multiple incarcerations and his eventual imprisonment during the mid-to-late 1930s provided additional evidence to the regime's unwillingness to fully support the assimilation efforts.

To Sokolianskii, the Stalinist state had lost its moral purity in its mission to construct a socialist state due to the increased use of punitive measures to terrorize the populace. He supported the socialist ideal rather than the Stalinist state, choosing to rely on Lenin's work as his primary ideology.[315] Sokolianskii strongly emphasized the importance of morality as a key element for the construction of communism, emphasizing that 'it is morality that contributes to building communism, known as the struggle for communism. And the struggle for communism is a struggle for the happiness of mankind.'[316] Such morality was necessary for the education of deafblind children, with the engagement in

[314] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 96.
[315] Ibid., op. 4.1, d. 117, ll. 79-80.
[316] Ibid.

socially useful labour the type of 'work that raises a person to the top of human morality.'[317] Sokolianskii's saw his attempts to 'humanise' deafblind students in extremely favourable terms. He understood that without his efforts, many deafblind children would be unable to pursue independent lives. However, the Stalinist regime prevented deafblind children from integrating into Soviet society. Sokolianskii separated the socialist state as a vehicle for revolutionary change for deafblind education, rather than the Stalinist 'regime' who he saw as damaging to the lives of deafblind children.[318] Skorokhodova had managed to become an assimilated deafblind individual despite the regime's detrimental efforts. Sokolianskii viewed the Stalinist state as an obstacle to the integration of deafblind children. If the regime had prevented tangible efforts to assimilate deafblind children, Sokolianskii believed he had the moral right to undermine such attempts and work against the regime.

However, Sokolianskii's singular efforts were initially ineffective during the last years of Stalinism. The Soviet authorities proved equally reluctant to fully support deafblind education after Sokolianskii's release from prison and *de facto* rehabilitation into the Soviet academic field. While Sokolianskii may have been inducted back into the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and Narkompros in the early 1940s, his request for a research laboratory for deafblind research was only granted in June 1950, nearly thirteen years after the Khar'kov school had been closed. While there was an obvious shortage of resources in the post-war period, the lack of institutional support revealed much of the regime's disinterest with Sokolianskii's work. It also validated his views against regime which had been expressed since the mid-1930s. Sokolianskii even tried to justify the lack of funding to himself, stating 'our current society is still far, far from perfect… and our society is still occupied with top-priority tasks.'[319] Furthermore, it confirmed that Sokolianskii's opinion that Soviet society was not adequately prepared to provide the necessary assistance for deafblind children.

Even with the opening of the research laboratory, Sokolianskii only received limited funding from the Ministry of Education. It was only enough to hire one assistant, Ol'ga Skorokhodova. In addition, the success of

[317] Ibid., l. 79.
[318] Ibid., op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 96
[319] Ibid., op. 4.1, d. 119, ll. 44-45.

Skorokhodova's autobiography, published with Sokolianskii in 1947, did not immediately lead to tangible institutional support for *surdotiflopedagogika*. Stalin's rejection of sign language as an alternative to verbal speech provided additional angst for Sokolianskii, who had championed its benefits since the 1920s. Stalin proved to be an antithesis for progressive deafblind education in the Soviet Union. In addition, the lack of funding prevented him from offering a place to Iuliia in the late 1940s. The lack of spaces at the Institute meant that Iuliia did not receive a formal education until 1955. Sokolianskii had to educate Iuliia via proxy and enlisted Iuliia's family to act as her teachers. The extended period out of formalised education was highly suspected to have negatively impacted her educational development. Furthermore, the regime's lack of support affected Sokolianskii's ability to educate other deafblind children in the Soviet Union.

The death of Stalin and the beginning of the Thaw provided the circumstances for *surdotiflopedagogika* to thrive once again. Instead of fighting against the Stalinist state, it was an opportunity for Sokolianskii to work with the new regime to properly integrate deafblind children into society. The Khrushchev state was extremely involved in the upbringing of children and youth, seeing them as the future of socialist society. Such ideals fit very well with Sokolianskii's *ochelovechenie* method. Iuliia's entry into the Institute in January 1955 represented a new start for Sokolianskii, to pursue deafblind education with the support of the state behind him. However, the initial excitement about the future of deafblind education was tempered. While Iuliia's education was considered a relative success, Sokolianskii's only received limited resources for her education. The lack of appropriate teaching spaces and Iuliia's limited living quarters impacted negatively on her education. Furthermore, Sokolianskii's funding requests for a new deafblind school were routinely rejected throughout period. While the regime had been content to formally rehabilitate Sokolianskii in 1958, they were only prepared to support his work at the Institute.

However, Sokolianskii's pedagogical work was not in vain. His *ochelovechenie* method remained a substantial accomplishment. It provided the necessary tools for deafblind children to experience a world which had previously excluded them. Instead of being shut away within their own mind, language and literacy gave them means to communicate, learn and explore with

others. Skorokhodova's literary achievements and Iuliia's proficiency in verbal speech and labour emphasized that deafblind children did not fit into the 'useless' disability paradigm. They established their own agency and identities. Most importantly, Sokolianskii's work lay the foundation for all future efforts in deafblind education in the late Soviet period. Meshcheriakov, building upon Sokolianskii's work, expanded the scope of *surdotiflopedagogika* at the Zagorsk school. Before his premature death at the age fifty in November 1974, Meshcheriakov had helped prepare four of his most gifted deafblind students for their entry into higher education at Moscow State University (MSU).[320] The young adults were known as the 'Zagorsk Four'.

These four had previously been educated at either the Moscow Institute or at the Zagorsk school. They included Yurii Lerner, Sergei Sirotkin, Nataliia Korneeva (one of the subjects of the *Butterflies of Zagorsk* documentary) and Aleksandr Suvorov. Only Sirotkin was congenitally deaf and partially blind, with the others acquiring deafblindness during the early years of their childhood. Sirotkin's education had been organised by Sokolianskii, and he spent his early years at the kindergarten for the deaf at the Institute under Mareeva and eventually under the personal tutelage of Vasina at the school for the deafblind.[321] Sokolianskii observed Sirotkin playing with toys with his mother: 'he fails to cope with it. His mother helps him with it, but she also fails to do so… Sirotkin cannot speak with words, but he can handle things ably enough to surpass the norm.'[322] All of the children eventually mastered verbal speech, displayed excellent literacy skills and were considered the best students of the Zagorsk school. Most importantly, Basilova stated that they collectively made the decision to continue their education on their own accord.[323] They were trained specifically for the undertaking through a group of pedagogues and teachers, led by Vasina, who helped them to pass their entry exams into university in 1971.

However, the entire process initially proved to be a chaotic learning curve for the students, the teachers and the university itself. The university

[320] Igor Hanzel, 'Ilyenkov and Language', *Studies in Eastern European Thought*, 70 (2018), pp. 10.
[321] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 126.
[322] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 4.1, d. 121, l. 37.
[323] Basilova, *Slepoglukhikh Detei*, p. 175.

neither had the facilities nor the teaching staff to provide accessible education for the deafblind students. Basilova explained that 'the whole first year of the deafblind student's work at Moscow State University was spent on reorganizing problems, organizing work and creating a collective body to provide for the deafblind child's education.'[324] In addition, both Suvorov and Sirotkin wanted to study philosophy, as opposed to psychology (the subject of choice of Korneeva and Lerner). MSU struggled to accommodate both sets of students within two separate faculties, which led to their reluctant enrolment within the Faculty of Psychology. Initially, the groups of pedagogues accompanied the four students to their teaching modules and translated the verbal and written material into Braille. However, this proved to be extremely taxing for the pedagogues, who were expected to complete such work in addition to their existing duties at the research laboratory at the Moscow Institute.

After the first year, the university began to take a more active role in the provision of accessible teaching. Through small increments, state institutions began to become more accessible for people with deafblindness. They provided recorded lectures (which were transcribed by members from VOS) and they funded MSU students to act as secretaries for the deafblind students.[325] The experiences of the Zagorsk Four drove such reforms. Their experiences forced the institution to become more accessible to people with sensory disabilities. Much like Sokolianskii himself, better conditions came from the very people involved in deafblind education, not the state itself. After completing the five-year course in six years, all the Zagorsk Four graduated from Moscow State University with degrees in Psychology.[326] They went on to become eminent members of the deafblind community. All the former students transitioned into different forms of deafblind pedagogy. Both Sirotkin, a future President of the European Deafblind Union, and Suvorov, followed Skorokhodova's example and completed PhDs in Philosophy and Psychology. Korneeva (now Krailtova), published academic papers, with her husband, on the problems of communication for deafblind individuals, while Lerner, who passed away in 2003, continued to work with the Zagorsk school in *surdotiflopedagogika*.

[324] Ibid., p. 177.
[325] Ibid., p. 178.
[326] Bakhurst, 'The Meshcheryakov Experiment', p. 202.

During Sokolianskii's studies in St. Petersburg in 1909, he had expressed a desire to work with deafblind students to his teachers, who, in an almost condescending tone, informed him of the futility of this task. He explained that

> 'my kind, but not very clever, teachers have long persistently hammered into my head the idea that deafblindness can be compensated only through love towards the poor people who have this disgraceful disadvantage. They said it is not worth training them as one should not expect any progress in their training.'[327]

Clearly, he ignored their advice and became the leading pedagogue in the field of Soviet deafblind education. The thesis has shown how, despite many pitfalls, Sokolianskii achieved his ambition. His practical application of Vygotskii's social model of disability proved to be a revolutionary addition to the already pioneering discipline of defectology.

Surdotiflopedagogika was developed within the utopian ideals of the early Soviet Union to truly recreate a citizenry, considered ripe for social and physical change, for a socialist paradise. Refashioning the disabled individual through the transformative mediums of work and education was part of Sokolianskii's process. While such hopes died with the increasingly insular and punitive progression towards Stalinist society, Sokolianskii's aims remained the same; to provide deafblind individuals with the tools needed to pursue their own paths. Sokolianskii accomplished his goals, and more than a dozen deafblind children benefited from his tutelage and became respected, equal members of Soviet society. Skorokhodova, the first of his students, continued to work on deafblind education at the Moscow Institute of Defectology. She helped to educate new deafblind students in Moscow and Zagorsk. After retiring from her academic study, Skorokhodova passed away in 1982 at the age of sixty-eight.[328]

[327] S-FPS, f. 1, op. 3.2, d. 51, l. 9.

[328] Tat'iana A. Basilova, 'K 100-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia Ol'gi Skorokhodovoi – slepoglukhoi poetessy, pisatel'nitsy i issledovatelia', *Klinicheskaia i Spetsial'naia Psikhologiia*, 1, 1 (2012), p. 5.

Iuliia's post-educational life is less clear. Her successful introduction to self-care and language education ensured her entry into the eight-year long curriculum as devised by Meshcheriakov. Iuliia's productive work within labour roles contrasted with the experiences of the Zagorsk Four. While they were prepared for higher education, Iuliia was not deemed ready enough for such endeavours. While she excelled in the production of industrial and consumer goods, the work was carried in a part-time capacity alongside her studies at Zagorsk. Iuliia's promising progress in mathematics led to Sokolianskii's initial hope that she could be a professional mathematician, but Basilova stated such efforts proved unsuccessful.[329] There is little evidence to suggest that Iuliia was ever in full-time employment after the completion of her education.

For most of the Soviet period, the only viable path for employment and integration for the deafblind students was to become involved in *surdotiflopedagogika* themselves. This was the case for Skorokhodova and the Zagorsk Four. However, this path was not applicable for other deafblind children, specifically Iuliia. In limited part-time employment and in need of assistance from the Zagorsk school, she faced difficulty to integrate herself into the Soviet Union. However, much of Iuliia's struggles were due to the regime. The regime failed to make society accessible for people with sensory disabilities. Even the Zagorsk Four faced severe obstacles during their attempts to enrol into higher education. The Soviet state largely failed to remove obstacles for people with deafblindness. It was only through the initiative of the deafblind themselves which provided the reformative change necessary for their education. Such efforts were often not enough.

The Soviet state simply did not recognise the humanity of deafblind children for most of its existence. It is somewhat ironic that the recognition of the humanity of Soviet deafblind individuals finally takes places in the 1990s, but by the BBC and not by the Soviet regime. Iuliia's struggles throughout her adolescence and childhood were indicative of a regime which questioned her position and failed to support its own citizens. Unfortunately, there is little evidence about her fate after she left the Zagorsk school. In a personal interview

[329] Tat'iana Basilova, *I. A. Sokolianskii, Biobibliograficheskii Ukzatel'* (Moskva, 1989), p. 18.

with Alesandr Suvorov, he claimed that Iuliia eventually distanced herself from the Soviet deafblind community and most likely passed away.[330] While it is unclear why Iuliia left the deafblind community, she may have felt disenfranchised from a group which had struggled to establish itself within a regime indifferent to their concerns. Nevertheless, Skorokhodova and Iuliia joined Sirotkin, Lerner, Korneeva, Suvorov and others in embracing Sokolianskii's method. While Soviet society failed to match such transformative efforts, these children themselves overcame such huge barriers to forge their own lives. Sokolianskii left behind a legacy which has since been adopted not only by other pedagogues, but by his former students. They have continued to improve the lives of the deafblind not only in the Russian Federation, but around the world.

[330] Aleksandr Suvorov, Personal Interview (26th April 2016).

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