Robert Stradling, ‘The scope for a wider and deeper European perspective in the teaching of 20th century history in secondary schools’.

Purpose of this paper

I have been asked to reflect on the potential scope for introducing a wider and deeper European perspective into the secondary school history curriculum and, in particular, to look at the scope for a wider and deeper European perspective on dictatorship and totalitarianism in teaching about the 20th century.

At first sight this may seem a rather surprising task. After all, most history curricula and textbooks cover the conditions in Europe after the First World War which gave rise to the spread of Fascism in Italy and National Socialism in Germany and the processes by which both Mussolini and Hitler came to power. Virtually all of the history curricula and textbooks will also trace the development of the Soviet Union as a global power and most, but by no means all, will look at the ways in which Stalin consolidated his power through the purges and the USSR evolved into a totalitarian regime. They will also look at the Cold War era and the decline and fall of Communism in the 1980s and early ‘90s.

The issue is not whether students should be presented with opportunities to learn about dictatorship and totalitarianism in the 20th century; most of them already do. Rather there are two other related issues here. The first is whether or not dictatorships can be looked at in greater breadth. That is to say, is there also scope for looking at the instability of some of the newly created democracies after 1919 and the emergence of authoritarian regimes and even constitutional and monarchist dictatorships during the 1920s and ‘30s and is there also scope for looking at the extent to which the post-war communist regimes were dictatorships, autocracies, oligarchies or ruled by overlapping elites which recognised few limits on their powers. The second key issue relates to what we want the students to learn from examining dictatorship and totalitarianism in the 20th century and, if we are clear on the intended learning outcomes, then how should we approach this topic or theme in the classroom?

I shall return to these issues later in this paper but before that it is necessary to briefly review the key developments that have been taking place in history education recently since this is the context which will influence, possibly even constrain, any developments which this symposium might wish to recommend.

Recent developments and trends in history teaching

As every historian knows, it is always unwise to generalise from limited evidence. It may well be that the following generalisations do not reflect developments in every country in Europe but they do highlight some of the key patterns that have been identified in a number of formal and informal surveys of history syllabuses, history teaching and history textbooks carried out over the last 25 years. These have been conducted by the Council of Europe, EUROCLIO (the European Standing Conference of History Teachers Associations) and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research.
Perhaps one of the most significant changes has been the shift in the balance between the teaching of modern and earlier history. Now it is common for more than 50% of the history syllabus to be concerned with the history of the 19th and 20th centuries. Typically the earlier periods are approached in a broad and generalised way. The timeframe tends to cover relatively long blocks of time and primary and secondary source material are drawn from several different countries in order to highlight some common features and patterns. Coverage of the 19th and 20th centuries, on the other hand, is much more specific. Both centuries are broken down into much shorter blocks of time and almost taught as if they were self-contained units.

Approaches to teaching school history have tended to follow trends in the academic discipline. As a result, from the early 1980s onwards, there were moves to include more social, economic and cultural history alongside political and diplomatic history. However, when it comes to teaching 20th century history the approach is predominantly political, even geo-political. It is usually presented as a century of wars, conflicts, international tensions, economic and political crises. Other developments and themes that reflect significant changes in people’s lives, such as technology, the emergence of mass culture, migration, transport and communications or the changing roles of women are often ignored or treated in a cursory way.

After the events of 1989 and the subsequent initiation of a number of international and cross-border projects and partnerships focused on in-service training for history teachers and textbook development, the idea of multiperspectivity began to gain currency in history education. It was not exactly a new idea. The concept had been actively promoted in Germany since the 1970s. But after 1989 the NGOs and IGOs (Inter-Governmental Organisations) also began to use the concept freely as a standard for good teaching and good textbook writing.

Multiperspectivity is a term more often used than defined. Nevertheless, there have been some attempts to describe its main characteristics. K. Peter Fritzsche has emphasised that it is a process, “a strategy of understanding”, in which we take into account another’s perspective (or others’ perspectives) in addition to our own. That process entails understanding that we too have a perspective which has been filtered through our own cultural context, reflects our own standpoint and interpretation of what has happened and why, our own view of what is and is not relevant, and may also reflect other prejudices and biases. In this respect, multiperspectivity is not just a process or strategy, it is also a predisposition. The preconditions for this are, first, a willingness to accept that there are other possible ways of viewing the world than one’s own and that these may be equally valid and equally partial; and, second, a willingness to put oneself in someone else’s shoes and try and see the world as they see it, that is, to exercise empathy.

Underpinning the idea was the growing recognition that history education has all too often been taught from a perspective that was monocultural, ethnocentric, exclusive rather than

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inclusive and based on the assumption that the national narrative coincided with the history of the largest national grouping and dominant linguistic and cultural community.³

When we draw on a multiplicity of points of view a number of technical challenges arise. We need to understand the motives behind these different perspectives, whether they are the perspectives of the authors or producers of the various sources or of the persons referred to in those sources. Essentially there are three elements to this process:

- Trying to understand the logic behind a particular perspective. Is it just a matter of proximity to or distance from events or do we also need to understand the context in which this perspective has been forged? Why would they think like this? Why might they have excluded some information that we find in other sources? Or why might they have chosen to present that same information in a different way?

- De-constructing the language of the text (using the word ‘text’ in its widest sense to include visual and audio-visual sources as well as documents) to separate the verifiable facts from opinions, hearsay and ideological ‘givens’.

- Collating and analysing contextual information about each source since this enables us to understand more fully where the person or group stating a point of view “is coming from”, their background, their associates, allegiances and affiliations.

Multiperspectivity can also extend the scope of the historical account by examining how the different perspectives relate to each other; how they have shaped and been shaped by each other. This is a dimension of multiperspectivity which focuses specifically on the dynamics of historical events and processes: how those representing different perspectives have interacted with each other, the mutual influences, connections and inter-dependencies that produce a more complex account of what happened and why. This can add an extra dimension to narratives – not just a sequence of ‘and thens’ but also an accompanying sequence of ‘meanwhiles’. So, for example, many history textbooks approach the Marshall Plan in a relatively simplistic way: The offer of US Aid is made, some communist countries, such as Czechoslovakia consider it, but are pressured by Moscow into rejecting it. In the meantime, West European states accept the aid and this is essential to their reconstruction. Apply multiperspectivity to this and the picture becomes much more complicated. In some West European countries there were real doubts, and not just amongst the Communists, about the long-term consequences of accepting US aid. Meanwhile, Tito felt sufficiently secure to pursue his own economic strategy, accepted the aid and Yugoslavia became a founder member of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Multiperspectivity can also highlight the mutual influences between groups or countries and shed more light on the role that history often plays in shaping the way groups in conflict perceive each other. For example, Soviet and Western perspectives of each other at the outbreak of the Cold War were clearly shaped by the mutual distrust which had built up between them since 1917 so that information about the other’s intentions was often mistrusted automatically even if it later proved to be accurate.

Looking at historical events from a variety of perspectives in the classroom and introducing students to some of the basic principles of historiography can be very challenging. For one thing it is counter-intuitive to the everyday notion that many students will have of the discipline of history. Either they find it difficult to cope with the provisional nature of the discipline or they assume that later historical interpretations must always be superior to earlier ones because methods must have progressed. It has a great deal of potential and the concept is widely accepted and promoted as best practice in history education but I would agree with von Borries that, as yet, it is not frequently realized in practice.\textsuperscript{4} It can be more time consuming than the traditional approaches to teaching and this is difficult if one is trying to deliver a content-rich chronological survey. Also many history teachers have not been trained to teach history in this way and find it very challenging. It can seem counter-intuitive to the everyday notion that many students have of history as a discipline. Textbook publishers realise that they need to allocate more space for each topic to accommodate the additional sources. Even when they do this the author’s normative account of what happened still predominates.

Multiperspectivity presupposes that students will have access to a wide range of primary and secondary history sources representing different perspectives. That reflects another important development in history education. During the 1980s in western Europe, history teaching and textbook writing began to give much more emphasis to the use of primary and secondary historical sources in the classroom, not just to help illustrate the text, which was already a well-established feature of textbook design, but in order to encourage students to critically analyse sources. In terms of textbooks, there has been a trend away from the conventional text towards workbooks which provide the student with a variety of sources and material to analyse and interpret (maps, photographs, statistical data, extracts from documents, eye-witness accounts).\textsuperscript{5} Sometimes the source material is designed to illustrate points being made in the text, but it may also be independent of the text and intended to familiarise the student with the process of analysing particular kinds of evidence. Initially this trend was most apparent in the textbooks published in western Europe but now there are signs that some of the publishing companies based in central and eastern Europe are also introducing elements of the workbook format into their history textbooks for schools.

The implications for teaching and learning of this switch to a much more source-based approach to history education are profound. It is difficult to see how critical skills and historical understanding can be acquired if the student is just a passive recipient of pre-digested knowledge. Some degree of enquiry-based learning is called for.

One other relatively recent development in history teaching which also needs to be taken into account here is the growing recognition that history teachers and school textbooks are not the students’ only sources of information and opinions about recent events and developments. The more recent the event the greater the range of sources seeking to provide interpretations and explanations: politicians, journalists, broadcasters, documentary and feature film directors. Students may also know people within their families who have had firsthand experience of these events. Finally, of course, students also access the Internet for historical information and a growing number of teachers encourage them to use particular websites for this purpose. Here too the students need to apply the same critical skills and historical

\textsuperscript{4} Op.cit p.287
understanding to these sources as they do to those which they encounter more formally in their school lessons and in their approved textbooks but the transference of these skills from the classroom to these other contexts does not happen automatically. It has to be learned and critically “reading” a film, a newscast or a documentary calls for additional knowledge and skills which have to be taught.

One other recent trend also needs to be highlighted because it has implications for the scope for a wider European perspective in history in general and for teaching about dictatorships and totalitarianism in particular. In the 1980s there were signs in western Europe of a greater willingness to look at the history of the 20th century from a European or even a global perspective. This varied widely from country to country and in some cases it would be fair to say that the European dimension tended to be introduced mainly to illuminate national history. In the western European curricula at that time the treatment of the recent history of central and eastern Europe was patchy, and tended to focus mainly on the Soviet Union. By contrast the tradition of teaching world history in some central and eastern Europe states meant that their curricula often had a broader focus.

In the early 1990s international and inter-governmental organisations such as the Council of Europe, the European Union and UNESCO and NGOs such as the Open Society Institute and EUROCLIO were working closely with governments and national history teachers associations in the Russian Federation, the other states of the former Soviet Union and post-communist states in central and eastern Europe. This involved supporting curriculum planning, textbook writing and teacher training usually with a particular emphasis on:

- the balance between local, national, regional, European and global history;
- teaching history in multinational and multicultural societies;
- teaching national rather than nationalistic history;
- teaching controversial and sensitive issues in history;
- developing a skills-based approach to learning history;
- introducing multiperspectivity into history teaching.

I was working as a part-time consultant on history education for the Council of Europe at that time and this took me to much of central and eastern Europe. At the initial partnership meetings we usually talked about how, traditionally, the history of modern Europe had been taught in both the west and the east. The same picture tended to emerge at every meeting. In central and eastern Europe the history of western Europe had focused mainly on the major European powers in each era, and their relationship with the United States in the 20th century. In the west we had focused mainly on Russia and Turkey with some coverage of events in central Europe that had a wider European significance and then, when it came to the 20th century, the focus was almost exclusively on the Soviet Union. We all quickly recognised, regardless of where we came from, that there were major gaps in our knowledge and understanding of European history, and, consequently, there were also major gaps in our students’ knowledge and historical understanding.

However, as the 1990s progressed we saw a growing emphasis on the teaching of national history, even, in some cases, the teaching of nationalistic history. The rationale that was usually presented for this was the need to promote a sense of national identity amongst young people. This was felt to be particularly important in those countries which are multinational, multicultural or multi-ethnic or which, by virtue of their geographical location, have been annexed, occupied, fought over and absorbed into various Empires throughout history.
At the same time in parts of Western Europe we have seen a similar pressure on schools to give greater priority to national history in the school curriculum. This has been particularly apparent in the former colonial powers such as Britain, France and the Netherlands, and in some of the states which have experienced rapid inward migration from the new member states of the European Union. Generally speaking this tendency reflects a view (untested empirically) that history education can promote a sense of social cohesion in countries with highly diverse, multi-ethnic populations.

Overall we can say that there has been a growing interest in broadening the European perspective on history in school curricula but the scope for doing this has been restricted by practicalities. The syllabus structured around a chronological survey is the norm in many countries but it offers only limited scope for introducing new topics and themes or for looking at existing topics and themes in a more comparative and multiperspectival way. In some countries there is more scope for a broader European perspective in the history courses taught to upper secondary students but less scope in those courses taught to younger pupils. The source-based approach to teaching and learning is popular but teachers and textbook publishers find it difficult to obtain and use sources drawn from other countries, particularly if they need to be translated.

The situation in 2011 appears to be mixed. A survey of its European-wide membership by EUROCLIO found that in most countries the proportion of the history curriculum devoted to national and regional history was increasing as new curricular reforms were introduced. Around two-thirds of the survey respondents were dissatisfied with this development and 69% were dissatisfied with the amount of progress being made in their country to ensure greater multiperspectivity in the textbooks and in the approach to teaching and learning promoted by the education authorities.

At the same time there have been counter pressures at the inter-governmental level with the object of promoting a wider European perspective in history teaching. While he was still President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin called for a multi-national project to develop a common European history textbook. In 2003 President Jacques Chirac and the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, launched a project to produce a joint French and German history text, Histoire-Geschichte, covering recent history and this was published in 2006. Apparently the main area of disagreement between the ten authors, who divided on national lines, was over the interpretation of the role of the United States in the world since the end of the Second World War. Also some of the IGOs and European NGOs have sponsored the development of regional, bilateral and multi-lateral history textbooks to encourage a wider and more comparative approach to history, particularly modern history.

So there is some scope for promoting a wider European perspective in history education but the key question that then arises is which perspective?

**The European perspective: Grand narrative or multiple perspectives?**

Recent thinking about teaching European history has been influenced by a wider debate about whether Europe is best defined by its common cultural heritage or by its diversity. Approaches which have focused on the common heritage have tended to portray European history as an unfolding and continuous narrative from earliest times to the present day. Here the identity of Europe is defined by reference to the Graeco-Roman philosophical tradition, Judaeo-Christian beliefs, a common artistic and archaeological heritage, the emergence of the
nation state and such shared historical experiences as feudalism, the Crusades, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. This is the perception which underpins some attempts to produce a European history book for schools, not least perhaps the most ambitious attempt so far: the *History of Europe* edited by Frédéric Delouche.

This book was the result of a collaboration in 1992 between six leading European publishers, led by the French publishers, Hachette. It was aimed at a mass public but with a particular focus on history teachers and students in secondary schools. In terms of sales it has been highly successful. It has been translated into 28 languages and several editions have been published. The contributors, under the editorship of Delouche, were historians, history teachers at the secondary school level and teacher trainers. Most of the authors came from Western Europe. Two represented central Europe: Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, economist and former Prime Minister of Poland and Jiri Grusa, poet, diplomat and politician from the Czech Republic. There were no contributors from eastern or south eastern Europe or the countries of the former Soviet Union. The expressed aim was “to present an overview of the history shared by all the peoples of Europe, set free from national and other prejudices inherited from the past.” Its purpose was to develop “greater understanding of how Europe has evolved over time and how our core values of individual freedom, representative democracy, and equality before the law were fought for and achieved.”

The original publication divided the 20th century into two periods of time: 1900-1945 and 1945-1985. A third period was subsequently added to cover developments in both western and eastern Europe between 1986 and 1996. The period before the First World War focuses on increasing competition between the Great Powers and the arms race; the inter-war years focuses primarily on the Depression and the rise of Mussolini and Italian Fascism and then the rise of Hitler and National socialism. Both regimes are described as dictatorships and as totalitarian, although the latter concept is not explained. There is a brief reference to the Spanish Civil War and the rule of Franco but there is nothing here about the emergence of other right-wing authoritarian dictatorships in the fragile democracies in central Europe, the Baltic states and the Balkans. Neither is there any focus on how Czechoslovakia and Finland managed to remain as functioning parliamentary democracies during the inter-war years in spite of the activities of fascist and other authoritarian movements.

The Soviet Union is referred to, almost in passing, as a totalitarian regime but there is very little historical content about the period between the 1917 Revolution and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. The process by which Stalin manoeuvred for power in the early 1920s then consolidated it after Lenin’s death through the purges of the Communist Party, the politburo, the army and the NKVD is covered in one short paragraph. These gaps reflect the approach which dominated much of history teaching in west European educational systems at that time (and indeed still does to a large degree): the preoccupation with viewing the whole period between 1919 and 1939 as nothing more than a prelude to the Second World War.

The coverage of the post-war period in Delouche covers most of the key events that you might expect to see on any timeline of the period. However, essentially it is a geo-political approach. The focus is on relations between the United States, Western Europe and the Soviet Union. There are short sections on the Soviet response to developments in Hungary in 1956 and to the Prague Spring in 1968 and the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 but generally there is very little here about developments in the individual states of central and

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eastern Europe until 1986. The dramatic changes which follow appear to be happening in an historical vacuum.

Now at this point you may be wondering why I have devoted so much time and space to a critique of one book. It is because the approach in that book is very similar to the approach adopted to the 20th century in many of the history textbooks published in western European countries in the 1980s and 1990s and these tendencies are still apparent in some textbooks that are currently in print. This approach has been predominantly western-centric. For the most part it has only covered events in central and eastern Europe if they were significant for the west. There is a greater emphasis on including primary historical sources in these textbooks but the vast majority are drawn from western archives. Those sources coming from the east tend to be visual which require a brief caption but do not need to be analysed or interpreted. Above all, the approach is political or even geopolitical. There is very little about day-to-day life under Communism and nothing that might help to explain the nostalgia which the older generation might have for the social benefits and subsidised public utilities that they would have enjoyed under the old regime.

By contrast, others have argued that what characterizes Europe is its diversity rather than its commonality: the different ethnic groups and nationalities, the variety of languages and dialects, the different ways of life and the variety of local and regional loyalties and allegiances. Perhaps this approach gives greater emphasis to the “darker side of European history”, such as tribalistic conflicts, nationalism, xenophobia, intolerance, genocide and ‘ethnic cleansing’ rather than the unifying forces in European history. But it has also highlighted the political and economic dynamics, the creativity and the cultural fertility which seem to flourish when tensions and conflicts exist and when power in all its forms (political, economic, cultural and religious) is fragmented or when the unifying forces associated with a common cultural heritage become fused with local traditions and circumstances.7

These two contrasting perspectives on Europe have different implications for the design of curricula, textbook writing and the way we teach history. The focus on the common heritage lends itself to the grand narrative approach to European history. The sources are included primarily to support the author’s account and interpretation rather than to offer multiple and contrasting perspectives on the same events and developments. The curricular equivalent is the content-rich, chronological survey described earlier. The scope for adding more content drawn from parts of Europe that have previously been overlooked is very limited. The scope for a genuinely comparative approach is also limited. If we are looking to extend the scope for studying 20th century dictatorships in this model the preferences are likely to be for either something very general such as “The Emergence of Totalitarianism” or the inclusion of a small additional unit focusing on the Stalinist era in the Soviet Union. Neither would present much opportunity for comparing and contrasting developments in different countries.

By contrast, those who see the main characteristic of Europe as being its diversity have tended to steer away from the comprehensive historical survey. So far this approach has only been adopted by a minority of education authorities in Europe and most of them have not wholly rejected the comprehensive outline survey. Instead, students do a chronological survey of national history and then follow this with a course focusing on a limited number of topics that can be looked at in greater depth, often with a greater emphasis on European and

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global developments. In some cases this has also meant a shift of emphasis from events to broad themes, such as industrialisation, nationalism, revolutions, democracy, and dictatorship.

In 1994 Hagen Schulze and Ina Ulrike Paul produced a sourcebook on European history which was organised around themes such as war and peace, freedom and despotism, hegemony and the balance of power. The aim was to provide students and history teachers with a collection of sources and materials which, through an emphasis on drawing comparisons and contrasts, can be used to locate events and trends in their national history within a broader European perspective and to identify similarities and differences between national developments and other patterns across Europe. Clearly such an approach offers a great deal of scope for including a theme such as Dictatorships or Totalitarian Regimes or even Dictatorship and Democracy. It can also help students to gain some understanding of the dynamic forces which have influenced and shaped their own country’s history and that of Europe too or regions within it. It can also help them to understand better how historical phenomena which appear to be common to a region or even the larger part of Europe can transform and be transformed by local and national traditions. In other words, that the same phenomenon retains some common features but also mutates to accommodate local circumstances.

As some critics have pointed out, there is a risk that through this approach students may acquire an atomised and fragmented picture of European history rather than an overview. In England some of the critiques of the English national curriculum for history have taken the line that students acquire detailed knowledge of particular themes and topics but no overall sense of English history. There is also the potential risk that the emphasis on comparison will mean that the unique and the particular in a nation’s history is subsumed by the need to focus on the more generalisable patterns. But it should be stressed that these are potential risks rather than inevitabilities. The ‘belt and braces’ approach adopted by some education authorities in Europe with both a chronological survey and a follow-up thematic course seems to be a good way of avoiding fragmentation. Similarly, the concern about losing the uniqueness of history in a morass of generalisations rather assumes an approach to comparative history which is at odds with practice. When historians compare apparently similar developments in two or more countries they are usually interested in the differences as well as the similarities and the same should be true of a comparative approach in school textbooks and in the classroom. The objective is to compare and contrast.

The need for flexibility

It is probably apparent by now that I have a preference for the thematic approach here. Students need a chronological overview of the 20th century in order to make sense of what happened. A good timeline and sufficient coverage of key events and developments should ensure this but all too often the 20th century in school curricula is overloaded with factual information. There needs to be time in the curriculum to also reflect on some of the key themes which help the student to understand what was happening and why and to reflect on the remarkable changes that have taken place in people’s lives in just 100 years. Politics and international relations did much to shape the century but so did economics, science and technology, demographic changes, industrialisation and urbanisation, globalisation and other social and environmental factors. There needs to be a better balance in curriculum design.

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There is a strong case for arguing that the two key political and diplomatic themes which bring coherence to teaching about the 20\textsuperscript{th} century are ‘conflict and cooperation’ and ‘dictatorship and democracy.’ The latter would not only provide scope for looking at the different movements which emerged in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and the kinds of regimes which they generated but it would also provide opportunities for looking at:

- why so many of the representative democracies newly created in 1919 succumbed to Fascist, right wing and authoritarian political movements in the 1920s and ‘30s;
- how a small number of the new democracies survived these internal and external pressures until 1939;
- how the other more established democracies coped with similar movements internally;
- the ambivalent relationship between the representative democracies and the dictatorships and totalitarian states through much of the century, including the willingness of the Western powers to support military and other forms of dictatorship and oligarchies in Latin America and the Middle East when it was in their global interests to do so.

The thematic approach also provides more scope for looking at everyday life in dictatorships and totalitarian states. It is relatively easy now to draw on source material that has come into the public domain about the experiences of people who came into contact with the Stasi, the Securitate, the KGB and other similar organisations, whether as victims or informers. But students also need access to material which sheds light on all kinds of aspects of everyday life: work, sport, recreation, education, family life, and so forth.

There is scope too for looking at the experiences of people who experienced two forms of dictatorship in the same century: the East Germans, the peoples of the Baltic States, the people of central and eastern Europe who experienced occupation by the armies of the Third Reich and then the Red Army.

However, we need to recognise that this kind of approach, which offers deeper and broader insights into life in dictatorships will not be possible in some states without major reforms to the history curriculum. So, we need to be flexible and look at other possibilities which may provide less depth and breadth but could still be preferable to what is currently taught.

One possibility, interestingly enough, has been proposed by the academic historian, Norman Davies. In his massive tome on European history he clearly aligns himself with those who see diversity as Europe’s defining characteristic:

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Yet political and cultural diversity is not merely one of Europe’s treasures. It is one of Europe’s most obvious characteristics. Any picture of Europe’s past which ignores here diversity, is committing an injustice. Any attempt to reduce European history to the interplay of the Great Powers is false by definition. In the nature of things, Great Powers are unrepresentative. In a very real sense, small nations and middle-sized
\end{quote}
states, whose fortunes have waxed and waned over the centuries, are most representative of the whole.”

From this starting point he then proceeds to suggest that when teaching national history in schools teachers should always begin a new topic, period or epoch by looking at the wider European dimension before focusing on the national situation. He goes on to suggest to teachers that when looking at the modern era start with a general introduction on industrialisation, imperialism, nationalism or some other broad theme “before exploring their relevance to one’s own country. If one does the opposite, and starts from a national chronological framework one is not likely to escape from it.” This would be one practical solution to the crowded history curriculum. It would ensure that the student is provided with a wider context for examining developments in his or her own country. It would also provide a more systematic and nuanced review of historical developments than the Grand Narrative with its tendency to restrict its coverage of dictatorships to the inter-war years.

However, many teachers will currently feel that there is not yet much scope for even the limited changes of the kind proposed by Norman Davies. As we have seen, this is because they have to deliver a content-rich syllabus focused mainly on national history, following official guidelines on the topics and themes to be covered, and using approved textbooks. Furthermore their scope for quantitative changes in content may also be restricted by the number of hours of history teaching that students receive. In some countries history is a compulsory subject for the whole of a student’s secondary schooling but for others it becomes an option at the age of 14. Across Europe the average student receives less than 2 hours of history teaching per week, approximately 80 hours per year, a total of 240 hours in those systems where compulsory secondary education is three years and 400 hours where compulsory secondary education lasts five years.

In these circumstances the change that teachers will need to consider is qualitative rather than quantitative. That is to say, the changes will need to be in how the teacher approaches the existing curriculum rather than in what they teach. Here there is an onus on the history teacher to provide a wider context for the students for each topic, event or development that is being covered: drawing attention to similar trends elsewhere, highlighting where similar circumstances did not lead to the same outcome and explaining why. In other words, whether through dialogue or use of learning materials and sources, the teacher makes connections for the student and helps them to look at the familiar in a different way.

Of course there are implications here for teacher training, both initial and in-service training, and teachers may need to access support materials that provide additional sources and perspectives from those that will be found in the approved textbook. But the same could also be said for the more ambitious solutions outlined earlier.

**What needs to be done?**

When I was approached to give a presentation at this symposium I was asked if I would also give my views on whether a European history textbook would be a good idea. Could such a book provide the material that would support any of the three strategies briefly outlined above for taking a broader and deeper look at European history in general and, more specifically, 20th dictatorships.

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There is no doubt that history teachers and their students need access to a wider range of primary and secondary source material on European history to supplement the material they usually use in their classrooms. One of the main reasons why multiperspectivity has not yet been widely realised in practice is that teachers experience real problems accessing sound and reliable source material from other countries. Language is an obvious restriction but also it is difficult to trace the provenance of a lot of the material to be found on the web and difficult to interpret its significance without any accompanying contextual information. Many history teachers use Wikipedia to supplement their teaching resources but, mostly, it will lead them to the same kinds of sources as those which usually appear in standard textbooks. More sophisticated search procedures, akin to archive searches, are needed if the teacher or student is going to be able to compare and contrast developments in different countries or different regions of Europe.

I doubt if a European history textbook will solve the problem. There seem to be four main ideal types around. First, there is the grand narrative approach and I do not propose to reiterate my criticisms of the book edited by Delouche. Second, there is the survey approach. A historian from each country is asked to write a brief history of his or her own country and the final result is a book of discrete and unrelated chapters. They tend to be descriptive, they avoid sensitive issues, the dark side of history, and they function primarily as a reference book rather than a source book. Third, there is the book written by a committee of historians and these usually take much longer to write than the other types because of the need to keep debating what should be included and what should be omitted. Finally there is the book written by a single author, such as the one mentioned earlier by Norman Davies. These are usually coherent accounts and there is a greater emphasis on historical interpretation but they also reflect the author’s own interests and fields of study.

My own preference is for finding a multi-media solution to this problem. While I was working with the Council of Europe I was involved in the development of a CD-ROM on Turning Points in Recent European History which gathered together primary and secondary sources from around Europe relating to five key years: 1848, the year of revolutions; 1913 and the Balkan Wars; 1918 and the Paris Peace Conferences, 1945 and the beginning of the reconstruction of Europe and 1989. Some of the sources were self explanatory but most required a certain amount of contextual explanation. However, while you can get 2000 plus sources, including extracts from documents, maps and images uploaded onto a CD-ROM and probably twice that on a DVD it was clear even then that a more organic solution was needed.

In 2006 I was approached by EUROCLIO to act as editor-in-chief for their new project, Historiana, a purpose-built website for history teachers and their students which would provide them with source material from across the whole Continent and from elsewhere whenever it related to significant global events or to European events and developments such as colonialism or the Age of Discoveries.

The website is still in the process of development and will not go online until next year but it is possible to say something about its structure and design and how this might relate to the theme of this symposium. Our focus is on developing historical understanding, skills and critical thinking. We are not aiming to produce a comprehensive historical account. Also we want the website to be organic. It is an enterprise that has no end date and EUROCLIO is looking at ways to ensure that the website will be sustained beyond this current funding phase.
Also it will not be an open source tool like Wikipedia. Firstly, there is no point in trying to compete with a resource which is already well-established. Secondly, we felt that we needed to build in some safeguards and quality assurance processes to ensure that Historiana was not misused by those who might have political rather than educational objectives. The contributors are volunteers. Some are interested in collating sources and uploading them on to the site. Others are producing case studies or long-term development studies using sources they have collected and incorporating sources from other countries that are provided by colleagues in the network. Currently we have contributors from over 30 European countries. In addition partnerships are being developed with museums and archives around Europe to provide material that will enable us to establish source galleries.

The website is structured around 8 broad themes:
- People on the Move
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Life & Leisure
- Work & Technology
- Ideas & Ideology
- Conflict & Cooperation
- Democracy and Dictatorship
- The Environment.

We opted for the thematic approach because we felt that it was not realistic to attempt to produce a comprehensive online encyclopaedia covering all the events which each European country regarded as important. It is designed as a resource to support teaching. It is not meant to be an alternative to the other learning resources that the teacher already uses.

Work is well underway on the first two themes and work has just begun on Conflict and Cooperation. There is a source gallery for each theme which the website user can access directly or they can enter the site through the overarching timeline or the timelines developed for each theme or they can go straight to a specific theme, time or location or even an individual person or group if they wish.

To facilitate comparison and the use of multiple perspectives the material on each theme – the case studies and the long-term development studies – are organized around a common set of key questions. In the case of People on the Move, for example, the key questions are:

- Why did they move?
- What were their experiences (before, during and after the move)?
- How were they received and perceived?
- What were the consequences (for them and others)?
- What was the legacy?
- What was the bigger picture at that time?

The case studies may be drawn from different countries or they may reflect experiences in particular regions or they could relate to the history of particular groups such as Sephardic Jews in Europe at a particular time. We refer to them as case studies because they are a case, or example, of something bigger, the theme. So, for example, one of the case studies in People on the Move is the Sudetenland Germans in 1945. It can be looked at by anyone who is specifically interested in the Sudetenland at that time or because they are interested in
forced migrations at the end of the war or throughout the 20th century. The long–term development studies tend to look at sub-themes such as refugees or forced migration or economic migration.

A similar structure and approach will be adopted for Democracy and Dictatorship. The aim will be to focus on the different forms of dictatorship and democracy which emerged and why; the international conditions under which they emerged; how they responded to changing circumstances; the factors which sustained or destroyed them; the legacy that remains. But above all, we also want the material to convey what it was like to live in these regimes at a particular point in time.

One final comment about this new development. The intention is not simply to provide the user with access to more and more historical information. We want to help them to critically analyse these sources, compare and contrast and undertake enquiry-based work online. The website will be designed to facilitate this online. In addition history teachers will be able to register online to access another area of the site which includes teaching and learning units, learning activities and online seminars.

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